

Joint statement by Kaddour Chouicha of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LADDH), on behalf of ISHR, MENA Rights Group, CIVICUS, Euromed Rights, and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies.

Mr President,

This is a joint statement.

My name is Kaddour Chouicha. I am a human rights defender, a university professor and a unionist.

The Algerian authorities prevented me from travelling to take part in meetings around the UPR of Algeria in August 2022. Travel ban measures and harassment are part and parcel of an effort to intimidate human rights defenders.

In the period that preceded the UPR, instead of establishing a constructive dialogue with civil society, the Algerian authorities suspended and dissolved numerous political parties and civil society organisations, including the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights of which I was a member. The decision to dissolve the organisation was taken without providing us the possibility to oppose it in court, as we learned of the decision, months later, through social media.

In April 2021, my wife and myself were charged in a criminal case, which includes “conspiracy against state security”, facing arbitrary prosecution on the basis of article 87 bis of the penal code which breaches international human rights standards. This article is increasingly used to target human rights defenders, peaceful activists and journalists. Most recently, Algeria reviewed its law on trade unions to restrict the freedom of assembly of unions.

Today, we regret that Algeria did not adopt several important recommendations, especially with regards to amending the counter-terrorism law to meet international law requirements, to guarantee the protection of human rights defenders, and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of assembly and expression.

We call on Algeria to:

- *Release individuals arrested for exercising their fundamental freedoms, including human rights defenders, and drop all charges against them;*
- *Reverse the decision to dissolve civil society organisations and guarantee the right to freedom of assembly and association;*
- *Put an end to reprisals against human rights defenders, including through travel bans, and ensure the right of defenders to engage with the UN and its mechanisms without fear of reprisals.*