

URGENT ACTION

TORTURED WHISTLEBLOWER SENTENCED TO LIFE

Mohamed Benhlima, a former military officer, whistleblower, and anti-corruption activist who was forcibly returned from Spain on March 24, 2022, is serving a life sentence in the Blida military prison stemming from the exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. He has complained to the court of torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, prolonged solitary confinement, and beatings at least six times since May 2022, but the Algerian authorities have not announced an investigation. Authorities must quash his convictions and sentences, drop any further charges stemming from his exercise of human rights, and release him immediately.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter to the government official(s) listed. Use the sample letter below as a guide or use your own words.
- [Click here](#) to report your action(s) on **Fourth UA 43.22**. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

President of the Republic of Algeria
Abdelmadjid Tebboune

Presidence de la Republique
Place Mohammed Seddik Benyahya, El Mouradia,
Alger 16000 Algérie
Fax: +213 021691595
Email: President@el-mouradia.dz

Send a copy of your letter to the address below

CC: Algerian Embassy in the United States
Ambassador Sabri Boukadoum
2118 Kalorama Road NW,
Washington DC 20008
Email: mail@algerianembassy.org

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern about the ongoing arbitrary detention and judicial harassment of whistleblower, activist, and former military official, **Mohamed Benhlima**, since his forced return from Spain in March 2022. His claims that he was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, while held at the Blida military prison in 2022, have not been investigated despite multiple complaints and statements in court.

Civil and military judicial courts have convicted Mohamed Benhlima at least four separate cases on charges stemming solely from his exercise of his rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association.

Mohamed Benhlima is held in the Blida military prison, where prison authorities have on occasion denied him family visits without providing a reason or only allowed him to see them for 10 minutes in the presence of guards.

I urge you to release Mohamed Benhlima, quash his convictions and sentences, and drop all the charges against him related to his exercise of his rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association. Pending his release, I urge you to ensure that he is held in conditions meeting international standards and to launch an immediate and effective investigation into his complaints of torture and other ill treatment. Finally, I urge you to grant him access to his family and lawyers and to refrain from any act of intimidation against them.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mohamed Benhlima exposed alleged corruption in the Algerian military on his [YouTube](#) channel and Facebook page between 2019 and 2022. He also participated in the Algerian Hirak protest movement that erupted in February 2019 and fled to Spain, fearing prosecution, in September 2019. Since his forced return from Spain, Algerian authorities have initiated dozens of prosecutions against him.

On March 24, 2022, the Spanish authorities refused his asylum and [forcibly returned him](#) to Algeria in blatant violation of their obligations on non-refoulement within hours, without notifying his lawyers of the order of expulsion. The decisions were made despite concerns over risks of arbitrary detention and torture or other ill-treatment in Algeria, raised by his lawyers and several human rights organizations including Amnesty International, which also [called on the authorities not to deport him](#).

Mohamed Benhlima was informed on May 8, 2022 that the Blida Military Court had sentenced him to death in absentia in 2021 for an overly broad charge of disclosing confidential information relating to national defense to a foreign entity. Upon his forced return to Algeria, he appealed and secured a retrial. On April 30, 2024, the Blida Military Court sentenced him to 10 years of prison, upheld by the Blida Military Appeals Court on January 23, 2025. In another case, on July 12, 2023, the First Instance Tribunal of Dar El Beïda in Algiers sentenced him to seven years in prison on charges stemming from critical remarks he made online about government officials and the army and his participation in Hirak protests. He was convicted based on his forced “confessions”, which he later retracted in court saying they were extracted under torture. He is awaiting an appeal in this case. In another case, on August 28, 2024, the Blida Military Appeals Court upheld his conviction to a life sentence on appeal for disclosing confidential information to a foreign entity based on online publications about army corruption. The activist submitted an appeal before the Court of Cassation. On August 28, 2024, the Blida Military Appeals Court also sentenced him to five years in prison on appeal for desertion for his departure to Spain.

On December 8, 2024, Mohamed Benhlima declared in front of the Dar El Beïda Criminal Tribunal at the Court of Algiers: “[military agents] tortured, harassed, and raped me” while in detention in the Blida military prison in 2022. Mohamed Benhlima raised allegations of torture to a judge in court at least six times between May 2022 and December 2024 and has disclosed information to his family and lawyers about torture and other ill-treatment. Following his forced return from Spain, authorities forcibly disappeared Mohamed Benhlima until he appeared in court on April 5, 2022. Authorities held him in solitary confinement between April and June 2022, during which the activist was allowed to exit his cell once a day for 10 minutes, without contact with other prisoners, and he was refused access to reading material. The Algerian authorities never announced any investigation into his claims despite his family formally requesting an investigation in a letter to the Algerian authorities on June 25, 2022, submitting a complaint to an Algiers public prosecutor in September 2022, and again writing to the public prosecutor in 2023 and 2024. Mohamed Benhlima’s family has expressed fear for his life in December 2022 after he disclosed to them that he was considering suicide. Before his forced return, he had been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), severe depression, and anxiety.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic, French, or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: September 21, 2025

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Mohamed Benhlima (he/his/him)