

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000478/25
to the Commission**

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(4 February 2025)

Subject: Imprisonment of Boualem Sansal

Boualem Sansal is a well-known Algerian writer and tireless defender of freedom of expression. On 16 November 2024, he was arbitrarily arrested by order of the Algerian Government. His arrest takes place against a backdrop of growing tensions between Algeria and France, and demonstrates the Algerian regime's worrying slide into totalitarianism. It also seems to be a retaliation against France's recent recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara.

Boualem Sansal is a prominent figure in the French-speaking world and a free-thinking intellectual. His persecution is therefore a direct attack on the fundamental values that the EU defends, in particular freedom of expression and the protection of human rights.

In light of this:

1. Does the Commission plan to take retaliatory measures against, or impose sanctions on, those behind this slide into authoritarianism, in line with the EU's goal to promote democracy and fundamental rights?
2. What specific actions does the Commission intend to take to both support persecuted writers and intellectuals around the world (particularly those who live under authoritarian regimes in non-EU countries), and ensure that they are not silenced as a result of any state reprisals?

Submitted: 4.2.2025

Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(2 May 2025)

Human rights and democracy are a key element of EU-Algeria relations, enshrined in Article 2 of the Association Agreement⁽¹⁾. The EU monitors developments and regularly raises its concerns on human rights and democracy with representatives of the Algerian government through open dialogue.

On this basis, the EU has repeatedly, and at different levels, raised the case of Boualem Sansal⁽²⁾ with the Algerian authorities with the objective to secure his release. In order to achieve this objective, continued dialogue still appears to be the most effective course of action.

The EU remains committed to respecting, protecting and promoting the freedom of opinion and expression in its external action. The EU thus continues to protect and promote media freedom and pluralism, online and offline, and takes action to counter disinformation, including by raising public awareness.

The EU recognises that writers and intellectuals can often face heightened risks in environments where freedom of expression is restricted.

The EU contributes to the safety and protection of those exercising their freedom of expression through diplomatic actions, by supporting relevant media initiatives and by providing assistance via the EU human rights defenders protection mechanisms.

Any decision on imposing EU restrictive measures (sanctions) is for the Council to make, acting in unanimity.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A22005A1010%2801%29#>

⁽²⁾ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/algeria-speech-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-arrest-franco-algerian-writer-boualem_en