

(English version)

Question for written answer E-001098/25
to the Commission
Mathilde Androuët (Pfe)
(14 March 2025)

Subject: The Commission's response in the Slimane Bouhafs case

Slimane Bouhafs, a Berber who has converted to Christianity and is an activist for freedom of expression, democracy and minority rights, was granted refugee status by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 2020 ⁽¹⁾. He was imprisoned several times by the regime between 2010 and 2020, including on false accusations of 'terrorism'. While he was a refugee in Tunisia, he was abducted and returned to Algeria in 2021, where he suffered physical abuse. He was released together with another activist, Kamira Nait Sid, in 2024, after three years in prison ⁽²⁾, but is now deprived of all his rights and identity papers. His life is now in danger ⁽³⁾.

Nevertheless, the Commission supports the Algerian state through technical, financial and humanitarian cooperation ⁽⁴⁾, while the former Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, has repeatedly recalled the EU's commitment to freedom of religion or belief ⁽⁵⁾.

1. Has the Commission looked into the Slimane Bouhafs case?
2. What action does it intend to take in practice and what means does it have at its disposal to pressure the Algerian regime to comply with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which it has ratified?

Submitted: 14.3.2025

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

Human rights and democracy, including the right to freedom of religion or belief, are a key element of EU-Algeria relations, enshrined in Article 2 of the EU-Algeria Association Agreement ⁽¹⁾.

On this basis, the EU closely monitors the situation of human rights in the country including in relation to individual cases such as the one referred to in the Honourable Member's question.

Promotion and protection of freedom of religion and belief, which includes the right for everyone to have and adopt freely their religion or belief of their choice, continues to feature among the priorities of the external agenda of the EU on human rights, as highlighted in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy ⁽²⁾.

The EU regularly addresses human rights issues, including the fulfilment of international human rights obligations, in the framework of the EU-Algeria Association Agreement and through regular contacts with government officials at all levels. In this regard, the EU prioritises frank and constructive dialogue, which it considers the most effective course of action.

¹ 'Algeria: Activist sentenced following refoulement: Slimane Bouhafs', Amnesty International, 29 August 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde28/7149/2023/en/>.

² 'Human rights defenders Kamira Nait Sid and Slimane Bouhafs released from prison', Front Line Defenders, 3 September 2024.

³ <https://www.facebook.com/Tagduda.info/videos/appeal-de-d%C3%A9tresse-de-slimane-bouhafs/218730642069359/>.

⁴ 'The European Union and Algeria', Delegation of the European Union to Algeria, 5 August 2021, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/algeria/european-union-and-algeria_en?s=82.

⁵ 'Standing up for Freedom of Religion or Belief', European External Action Service, 21 August 2020, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/standing-freedom-religion-or-belief_en.

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

⁽²⁾ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu_action_plan_on_human_rights_and_democracy_2020-2024.pdf