

April 26, 2018

H.E. Abdelaziz Bouteflika
Président de la République Algérienne
Palais d'El Mouradia
Alger
Algérie

Your Excellency:

Re: The criminal charges against lawyer Ahmine Noureddine

I write on behalf of the Law Society of Ontario* to voice our grave concern over the judicial harassment of lawyer Ahmine Noureddine. When serious issues of apparent injustice to lawyers and the judiciary come to our attention, we speak out.

Ahmine Noureddine is a human rights lawyer who represents members of the Amazigh Ibadi religious minority community and other individuals in the Ghardaia Province, Algeria.

In June 2015, 48 people died in a violent clash between the Amazigh Ibadi and the Maliki sect in Ghardaia. Among the deceased was an individual who was killed as a result of severe beatings by the security forces when they intervened. Ahmine Noureddine filed a complaint against the security forces on behalf of the deceased's brother. According to information received, the deceased's brother, as a result of pressure by authorities, retracted the complaint and falsely stated that he has not asked Ahmine Noureddine to file the complaint on his behalf.

According to reports, in November 2017, Ahmine Noureddine was charged with "false communication" and "insulting a regulatory body" (the police) by the prosecution of the Ghardaia court. A hearing took place on March 5, 2018 and was adjourned to May 28, 2018.

The Law Society of Ontario is deeply troubled by Ahmine Noureddine's situation and urges Your Excellency to comply with Algeria's obligations under international human rights laws, including the United Nations' *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*.

Article 16 of the *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers* states:

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Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Article 17 states:

Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

Article 18 states:

Lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions.

Furthermore, Article 23 provides:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organizations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organization.

The Law Society urges the Government of Algeria to:

- a. withdraw the charges against Ahmine Noureddine immediately and unconditionally;
- b. cease any current and further judicial harassment of Ahmine Noureddine;
- c. guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Ahmine Noureddine;
- d. put an end to all acts of harassment against lawyers in Algeria;

- e. ensure that all lawyers and judges in Algeria are adequately safeguarded by the authorities such that they are able to carry out their professional duties and activities free from intimidation, hindrance, harassment, improper interference, the threat of criminalization, or other human rights violations; and
- f. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.

Yours truly,

Paul B. Schabas
Treasurer

**The Law Society of Ontario is the governing body for more than 50,000 lawyers and 8,000 paralegals in the province of Ontario, Canada. The Treasurer is the head of the Law Society.*

The mandate of the Law Society is to govern the legal profession in the public interest by upholding the independence, integrity and honour of the legal profession for the purpose of advancing the cause of justice and the rule of law.

cc:

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Roberta Taveri, International Human Rights Policy Adviser, The Law Society
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