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President of the Republic of Algeria
Abdelmadjid Tebboune
Presidence de la Republique
Place Mohammed Seddik Benyahiya
El Mouradia

Alger 16000
Algérie

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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, most recently made at Dar El Beïda Criminal Tribunal at the Court of Algiers on 8 December 2024.

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. He was convicted for activities protected under international human rights law, including online publications exposing alleged corruption within the Algerian military and criticising the government, his participation in and his support for the «Hirak» pro-democracy protest movement and communications online with other activists as well as members or alleged members of Rachad – a political opposition group labelled as «terrorist» by the Algerian authorities based on a process of designation that does not conform to international human rights standards. On 23 January 2025, upon retrial, the Blida Military Appeals Court in Algiers sentenced him to a 10-year prison term after convicting him of a broadly defined charge of disclosing confidential information relating to national defence to a foreign entity. He was initially convicted and sentenced to death in his absence in this case in 2021. In two separate cases, on 28 August 2024, the Blida Military Appeals Court upheld Mohamed Benhlima’s life sentence and another five-year prison term, also for charges related to desertion and espionage. Mohamed Benhlima is awaiting his appeal trial in yet another case in which he was convicted and sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment on 12 July 2023 for multiple charges including «membership and participation in a terrorist group», «undermining national unity» and «inciting an unarmed gathering», using statements extracted under torture as «evidence». He faces dozens of further criminal investigations in relation to the exercise of his human rights.

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, to quash his convictions and sentences and to 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, impartial, effective and independent 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,

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**Copie**

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