

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Jubilee Campaign

1-703-503-2260

information@jubileecampaign.org

RELEASE DATE:

3 September 2021



ALGERIA/TUNISIA: Christian Political Refugee Abducted, Disappeared, Repatriated to Home Country for Likely Prosecution

WASHINGTON, D.C., 3 SEPTEMBER 2021 - Jubilee Campaign is concerned about the status of Algerian political activist Suleiman Bouhafis who [disappeared from his home](#) in Tunisia and reappeared days later in the capital of Algeria. The Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights has reported its concerns that Bouhafis may be brought before a judge. Earlier, in September 2020, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees formally granted Bouhafis political refugee status in Tunisia because Algerian authorities had accused him of terrorism for his alleged membership in an Amazigh self-determination organization. Historically, Algeria has unscrupulously classified human rights activists and political dissidents as 'terrorists' for their lawful advocacy. Additionally, prior to his more recent terrorism charges, Bouhafis was arrested by Algerian authorities in September 2016, charged with "offending Islam" and "harming the image of the Prophet", and sentenced to [three years in prison](#). Bouhafis was issued a presidential pardon and was released from prison in 2018 after two years, at which point he fled to Tunisia.

The commonly shared fear is that Tunisia, in contravention of its obligations as signatory to the [1951 Convention](#) Relating to the Status of Refugees, its 1967 Protocol, as well as the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, violated the non-refoulement clause by either directly repatriating Bouhafis or allowing Algerian actors to abduct and transport Bouhafis to Algeria where "his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion". A neighbor of Bouhafis who wishes to remain anonymous for security reasons informed Amnesty International that a black car had pulled in front of Bouhafis' home in Hay Tahrir, at which point three plainclothes individuals entered the home and forced Bouhafis outside and into the car before speeding away. In the four days that Bouhafis was disappeared, neither Tunisian nor Algerian authorities had made any public statements on the incident. Jubilee Campaign echoes [Amnesty's calls](#) that "Tunisian authorities must conduct prompt and thorough investigations into the circumstances of the abduction, enforced disappearance and forced return"; moreover, we urge Algerian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Bouhafis on account that his right to due process have been egregiously usurped.

We also wish to emphasize that Mr. Suleiman Bouhafis [will not be safe](#) in either Algeria or Tunisia. While detained in Algeria for blasphemy, he was physically assaulted on numerous occasions likely for his minority faith, and authorities repeatedly denied him access to legal counsel. It is reasonable to presuppose that Bouhafis may similarly be subjected to an unjust trial and wrongful conviction

by Algeria's justice system if his terrorism charges are maintained. In Tunisia as well, Bouhafs explained that he had faced numerous threats by Tunisian Islamists, was unable to find employment despite holding two degrees, and feared for the safety of his family including one of his children who is still a student. The only assurance that Bouhafs will be safe from wrongful prosecution and mistreatment in detention, and that his family will be shielded from retaliation and persecution, would be prompt action by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to intervene and securely resettle Bouhafs and his family in a third country with a satisfactory human rights record.

Jubilee Campaign is a non-profit organization which promotes the human rights and religious liberty of ethnic and faith minorities in the most oppressive countries. We assist individuals seeking asylum from religious persecution as well as promote the care and well-being of larger groups of refugees fleeing persecution.