

IRF Roundtable Members Call on Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission co-Chairs to Advocate for the Release of Algerian Christian Hamid Soudad



WASHINGTON, D.C., 19 OCTOBER 2021 – As USCIRF releases its latest country update on Algeria, Jubilee Campaign, along with 18 other human rights organizations and advocates, call on the co-Chairs of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission to work for the release of the Algerian religious prisoner of conscience Hamid Soudad, and to pressure Algeria to improve its religious freedom and human rights situation.

In January 2021 authorities both arrested and sentenced Mr. Soudad, within two days of each other, to five years in prison for sharing a Facebook post in 2018 depicting Muhammed pushing a pram carrying his wife Aisha. The letter notes that the more-than-two-year delay of raising charges against Mr. Soudad for the alleged harm incurred by his post, and the disproportionately long five-year prison sentence, both point to the arbitrary nature of the arrest and the authorities' clear persecution of Mr. Soudad solely on the grounds of his religious conversion and membership in the Protestant Church of Algeria, as reflected in the court judgement.

The letter also cites the broader religious freedom issues and human rights concerns in Algeria. Most notably, the arbitrary arrest of Algerian Christian convert and political activist Slimane Bouhafis – a UNHCR recognized refugee in Tunisia who in August 2021 became a victim of enforced disappearance and cross-border abduction into Algeria. The Algerian authorities are now charging him with terrorism-related charges for his political activism, and are also reportedly charging him for alleged blasphemy. In light of the Algerian governments' increased arrests and detentions of individuals on the grounds of their religion or belief, often via blasphemy charges, their closure of houses of worship, and the Algerian governors' disregard for court rulings that favor minorities, the letter urges the co-Chairs of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission to call on the State Department to designate Algeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC). The letter references H. Res 512 in favor of this appeal, which concludes that countries that apply blasphemy laws should be designated as a CPC.

[Download the Full Letter](#)

Recent Jubilee Campaign related activities on Algeria:

29 September 2021: *Joint oral intervention presented at the Human Rights Council on the deteriorating situation of human rights in Algeria by Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS).*

3 September 2021: *Jubilee Campaign press release regarding the enforced disappearance of Slimane Bouhafis released.*

22 August 2021: *Jubilee Campaign submission to the UN Human Rights Council 48th Session Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention raising the case of Hamid Soudad.*

13 August 2021: *Jubilee Campaign sign-on letter to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression is submitted, which appeals to the Special Rapporteur to urge Algerian authorities to drop all charges against Soudad and release him immediately and unconditionally.*

June 2021: *Jubilee Campaign submits a rejoinder to “Response of the Government of Algeria to allegations concerning the closure of Protestant churches and places of worship” following a UN Special procedures communication.*

Jubilee Campaign is a non-profit organization which promotes the human rights and religious liberty of ethnic and religious 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 religious and ethnic persecution.

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