

Amnesty Urges Algeria to Stop Arrests & prosecutions of Ahmadis

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Algeria must halt its clampdown against members of the minority Ahmadiyya religious movement, said Amnesty International, ahead of the appeal hearing on June 21 of six Ahmadis sentenced to up to four years in prison for charges relating to the exercise of their religion.

At least 280 Ahmadi men and women have faced investigation or prosecution over the past year, since a wave of arrests began after failed attempts to register an Ahmadi association and inaugurate a new mosque in 2016.

“The clampdown against Ahmadis over the past year is alarming. This wave of arrests and prosecutions of Ahmadis is a clear indication that the authorities are stepping up restrictions on religious freedom in the country,” said Heba Morayef, North Africa Research Director for Amnesty International.

“Algerian authorities should ensure that the cases against Ahmadis which are solely related to the peaceful practice of their religion are dropped, and immediately release those detained.”

There are an estimated 2,000 Ahmadis in Algeria. Ahmadis consider themselves to be Muslim, however, Algerian officials have made public statements calling them heretics and a threat to Algeria.

In March 2016, Algerian authorities refused an attempt by Ahmadis to register as an association under Algerian law. On 2 June 2016, the police raided a newly-built Ahmadi mosque in Larbaa, in the province of Blida, on the morning of its planned inauguration, and shut it down.



Since then, Algerian authorities have initiated judicial proceedings against more than 280 Ahmadis. The charges they face include membership in an unauthorized association, collecting donations without a license, practicing worship in unauthorized places, disseminating foreign propaganda harmful to national interest and “denigrating” the “dogma” and precepts of Islam.

According to members of the Ahmadi community, over a third of those facing criminal proceedings have already been convicted and sentenced to prison terms of up to four years or fines of up to 300,000 Algerian dinars (about \$2,750).

These have been the harshest sentences so far handed to Ahmadis for the peaceful exercise of their religion.

Most are at liberty pending the outcome of their proceedings, and four are currently imprisoned.

On 21 June, six Ahmadis will appear before the Court of Appeals in Batna. They were convicted in first instance of administrating an unregistered association, collecting donations without a license, and distributing foreign literature threatening national interest.

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