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### **Mocking the government and religion: 3 years in prison**

HRWF (06.01.2021) - Walid Kechida, 25, was sentenced to three years in jail and fined 500,000 dinars (3,075 EUR) on 4 January for satirical social media posts allegedly mocking the government and religion.

According to Kaci Tansaout from the CNLD prisoners' rights group, he was accused of insulting Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, 75, and "offending the precepts" of Islam in online posts.

His lawyers said they would appeal the decision.

Kechida has already spent eight months in detention awaiting trial.

On 1 January, the office of the President announced that he had signed into law the country's new constitution, months after the document was approved following a referendum that saw a record low voter turnout. The document received scant support, with less than 15 percent of the population voting in its favour during the November vote. This referendum was overshadowed by the novel coronavirus pandemic and followed calls for a boycott.

The new constitution was pitched as a response to the demands of the Hirak protest movement. However, it keeps Algeria's presidential regime in control and expands the powers of the army, a central pillar of the state.

The repressive character of the regime has not changed with the new president. In mid-December, two Coptic Christians were sentenced to between two and three years in prison for allegedly mocking religion.

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### **Two Kabyl Christians sentenced to heavy prison terms**

***Human Rights Without Frontiers calls upon the European Parliament and EU High Representative/ Vice-President Borrell to ask President of Algeria Abdelmadjid Tebboune to put an end to the persecution of Christians***

HRWF (04.01.2021) - On 16 December, a court in Amizour sentenced Abdelghani Mammeri, a young Coptic Orthodox to six months in prison and a fine of 100,000 DA (\*). During the trial, the Prosecutor of the Republic demanded two years in prison and a fine of 200,000 DA. The young Christian, a convert, was accused of "offending the Prophet and showing disrespect to religious principles". He was poorly defended by his lawyer who even advised him to recant his new faith.

On 3 December, Mebrouk Bouakaz, was tried by the same court on the same grounds. The prosecutor demanded six months in prison and a fine of 200,000 DA but the judge sentenced him on 17 December to three years in prison and a fine of 50,000 DA.

There was a strong presence of radical Islamists in the court room to put the judiciary under pressure. No political party criticized the ruling.

Both Christians will appeal the decision.

Read more on religious freedom in Algeria [in HRWF Database](#)

(\*) 1 Algerian Dinar – 0.0062 EUR

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