

PRESS RELEASE

Confirmation of the Prison Sentence Against Fethi Ghares: Calls for the Opposition to Return Ring Hollow While Political Criticism Is Punished by Imprisonment

The Trade Union Confederation of Productive Forces reacted with profound indignation to the decision of the Criminal Chamber of the Algiers Court of Appeal upholding the judgment against political activist and National Coordinator of the Democratic and Social Movement, Mr Fethi Ghares, sentencing him to two years' imprisonment and a fine of 300,000 Algerian dinars over statements and political positions critical of the President of the Republic and the government's general policies.

The Confederation expresses its full and unconditional solidarity with Fethi Ghares, as well as with all members and activists of the Democratic and Social Movement, whose activities were suspended and whose premises were closed for hosting political debates and human rights activities and for opening its spaces to independent voices.

This solidarity is not a matter of political expediency. At a pivotal moment, the headquarters of the Democratic and Social Movement hosted the meeting at which the Trade Union Confederation of Productive Forces was reactivated and opened its doors to the Confederation's activists at a time when independent political and trade union spaces were facing restrictions and exclusion. The Confederation will not forget this principled stand.

The confirmation of Fethi Ghares's conviction comes after statements by the President of the Republic, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, inviting opposition figures living abroad to return to Algeria and affirming that every Algerian has the right to criticise the authorities, express their views and propose alternatives. This ruling nevertheless exposes a glaring contradiction between the rhetoric of openness directed at Algerians abroad and the reality of restrictions, prosecutions and custodial sentences imposed on opposition figures inside the country.

This issue directly concerns the Confederation, as several of its leaders were forced to leave Algeria because of pressure and prosecutions linked to their trade union activities and opposition views. Neither they nor other opposition figures living abroad can place any trust in calls for their return unless such statements are backed by clear legal, political and judicial guarantees.

Accordingly, the Trade Union Confederation of Productive Forces calls on the President of the Republic to give concrete effect to his statements within the country, including through the following measures:

- Take all lawful steps to bring an end to the proceedings against Fethi Ghares and to have his conviction set aside, and guarantee his right to engage in political activity and express his views freely and safely.
- End judicial proceedings arising from the peaceful expression of opinions and political positions.

- Lift the restrictions imposed on the Democratic and Social Movement and allow it to resume its activities freely and reopen its premises.
- Release all prisoners of conscience and end the use of criminal law provisions to criminalise political criticism.
- Establish effective legal and institutional guarantees for the safe return of opposition figures and trade unionists living abroad, while respecting their right to continue their activities and express their views once they return to Algeria.

The Confederation reaffirms that political criticism is not a crime, that opposition does not constitute a threat to the State, and that pluralism cannot exist in a context marked by prison sentences and the closure of the premises of political parties and trade union organisations.

More than ever, Algeria needs genuine political openness, meaningful dialogue and national reconciliation founded on respect for rights, freedoms and the rule of law—not calls for return conditioned on silence or the abandonment of political positions and convictions.

No to the criminalisation of opinion and political expression.

Full solidarity with Fethi Ghares, the Democratic and Social Movement and its activists.

Freedom for all prisoners of conscience.

Algiers, 21 July 2026

National Executive Committee

