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Marrakech, Morocco – June 20, 2024. French authorities arrested rights activist Aksel Bellabacci Thursday morning in Paris upon an international arrest warrant issued at the behest of Algeria. The Movement for Self-Determination of Kabylia (MAK) issued the following statement.

“We learned with amazement that Mr. Aksel Bellabacci was taken into custody this morning, June 20, 2024 in Paris.

“Mr. Bellabacci, a leader of MAK-Anavad, has lived in France for many years and is awaiting political refugee status in the country of Voltaire.

“According to the information communicated so far, Mr. Bellabacci responded to a summons from the Paris police and was taken into custody as a result of an international arrest warrant issued against him by Algeria. The warrant allegedly cites his alleged involvement with the 2021 forest fires that devastated thousands of hectares in Kabylia and cost the lives of several hundred people.

“While all independent and informed observers unanimously implicate the Algerian army in what amounts to arson, the Algiers regime has pointed the finger at the MAK in order to justify classifying the organization as a “terrorist organization” and launching an unprecedented wave of repression, that has culminated in the imposition of 53 death sentences.

“The MAK has been calling for an international investigation into these events for three years now.

“France taking Mr. Bellabacci into custody foreshadows a very serious and dangerous precedent.

“Does the French justice system intend to collaborate with the banana-republic justice system of the Algerian military junta?

“Will the French state give in, in light of its geopolitical interests, and violate its obligations under the Geneva conventions, including all the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by French, European, and international law?”

“The fanciful nature of the Algerian accusations relating to the fires of summer 2021 will finally come to light,” **MAK President Ferhat Mehenni** tweeted. “Although there is no evidence, the French justice system is required to examine Algeria’s request.”

“While Algeria also alternatively accused both Israel and Morocco of starting the fires, no evidence has ever been provided against either the MAK or these two countries,” he asserted.

Ferhenni declared, “we await, with confidence, the judicial decision in accordance with the truth, the facts, and the innocence of Aksel and the entire MAK. The whole world will know what type of criminals sit at the heart of Algerian power.”

About

MAK is a people’s movement founded in Kabylia by Ferhat Mehenni in 2001, dedicated to the independence of Kabylia and the realization of the rights of the Kabyle people. It is the representative of the primary political opposition in Algeria.

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- 30 -

*This material is distributed by Elisabeth R. Myers on behalf of
The Movement for Self-Determination of Kabylia.
Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.*