



Oral Statement

Human Rights Council 55th Session

Agenda Item 4: General debate on human rights situations that require the Council's attention

20 March 2024

Delivered by Markus Hofer

Mr. President,

In Algeria, since December 2020, there have been at least 52 prosecutions against Christians, concerning the peaceful practice of Christian faith with twenty-six prosecutions in the last 15 months alone. Since 2018, at least 43 churches have closed due to the authorities' systematic campaign to close Protestant churches.

Pastor Youssef Ourahmane, vice-president of our national member, the Protestant Church of Algeria, was sentenced *in absentia* to two years in prison and a fine on charges of holding in March 2023 an unauthorized religious assembly and holding worship in a building not permitted for worship. The charges are based on the 2006 Ordinance to Regulate non-Muslim Worship.

Pastor Ourahmane was not informed of the first instance court proceedings or the charges until after those proceedings had concluded. In a first appeal in November 2023, the court reduced his sentence to one year in prison and a fine. He filed a second appeal. The hearing is scheduled for March 26.

We call on Algeria to bring its legal framework, in particular Ordinance 06-03, in line with Article 18 of the ICCPR, to allow re-opening of all Protestant churches, and to overturn convictions of individual Christians including that of Pastor Ourahmane.

Thank you.