

Prisoners of faith

release
PRISONERS

EMAIL ALERT

DECEMBER 2011

Siagh Krimo Algeria



Siagh Krimo with his wife
Photo: International Christian Concern

Siagh Krimo, an Algerian convert from Islam to Christianity who faces a five-year prison sentence for blasphemy, has again had his court case postponed.

Krimo, 29, was arrested on April 14, 2011, and detained for three days in Oran for giving a CD about Christianity to a neighbour. On May 4, he was sentenced to 5 years in prison for blasphemy, based on the neighbour's accusation that he had insulted the Muslim prophet Mohammed. During the court hearing the witness for the prosecution failed to appear. The CDs seized from Krimo's home were not presented, and Krimo himself denied insulting Mohammed.

The prosecutor then reportedly asked the judge to have Krimo's sentence reduced to two years' imprisonment. However, to the surprise of many, the judge ignored the request and handed down a five-year sentence, the maximum punishment for blasphemy.

Because his lawyer then lodged an appeal, Krimo was not required to serve the prison sentence until after the hearing, if the conviction was upheld. The initial appeal hearing scheduled for October 3 was postponed to November 17, and then further postponed to December 1. It has again been adjourned.

In what was seen as a welcome answer to prayer, November 16, saw human right activists, journalists, concerned Muslims and Christians assemble outside the Ministry of Justice in Algiers demanding that Krimo's prison sentence be overturned. To many Algerians, Krimo's conviction is viewed not merely as an offence committed against a Christian, but as a

direct violation of the human rights of all Algerians.

Kaddour Chouicha, a representative of the National Coordination for change and Democracy, said, 'The Algerian constitution allows freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, and freedom of thought. The judge exceeded his powers by ruling in accordance with his ideology over his regard for the law.'

Krimo's trial follows a series of convictions in recent years targeting Algerian Christians for proselytizing or for failing publically to observe the practices of Islam, such as fasting during Ramadan. Evident in the recent demonstrations, however, is a steadily growing acceptance of Algeria's Christian minority. Recent government decisions - such as the July 18 resolution that granted Protestant Church of Algeria (EPA) churches permission to apply for official registration - have been welcome improvements.

Yet while Algeria's central Government has made positive steps to promote religious freedom, provincial authorities and district courts have at times undermined those efforts by reaching a judgement based on personal conviction rather than the rule of law.

HELPING CHRISTIANS IMPRISONED FOR THEIR FAITH

'I am in chains for Christ' Philippians 1:13

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PLEASE PRAY

- ▶ That God will encourage, strengthen, protect and give wisdom to Krimo and his wife at this time.
- ▶ That the Algerian courts will review the case and dismiss all charges.
- ▶ For God's protection for Krimo and his family.

PLEASE WRITE

When writing please do not mention Release International, advance your political opinions or include anything which could be insulting to the authorities.

Please do not write to the authorities at this stage but send a card of encouragement assuring Krimo and his wife of your prayers

Cards may be sent to: Siagh Krimo, C/O Release International, PO Box 54, Orpington, BR5 9RT

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