

Association des Kabyles de Suisse (AKS)

Madame Chair, since 1962, the Algerian government has pursued the assimilation of the Kabyle people through urbanization and an Islamic expansion in Kabylia, while closing around 37 churches and restricting Christian worship, an obvious barrier. In 2021, an amendment to the Penal Code Article 87bis broadened the definition of terrorism to include acts “undermining national integrity and enabling a climate of repression marked by arbitrary arrests, torture, discrimination, and the denial of cultural and linguistic rights”. Obvious barrier. The human rights rapporteur Mrs. Mary Lawlor, 2023, as well as the last country periodic review, have pinpointed the severe shortcomings in the juridical system, particularly the said Article 87bis. We want the international community to be aware that, as we speak, there are more than 400 Kabyle, whose only crime is expressing their opinion or identity, are in jail, of whom 38 are innocent but condemned to death. Thousands of citizens, among whom are artists, writers, and journalists, are forbidden from traveling abroad. Incoming Kabyle activists are merely taken to jail. A zinc mine over an area of 130 square kilometers in Kabylia that is considered to be an ecocide with dramatic human consequences is being exploited. Therefore, our organization calls for: the release of all prisoners of conscious; the suppression of Article 87bis of the Criminal Code, which is an obvious barrier to social cohesion; the recognition of the Kabyle people and their right to self-determination; the immediate cessation of the operation of the zinc mine in Kabylia. Thank you.