

# Algerian Christian Stands Retrial for Insulting Prophet Muhammad

Siagh Krime, an Algerian Christian who was arrested for proselytizing, is scheduled to stand trial on Thursday.

Krime, who is 29 years old and married with an infant daughter, was arrested on April 14 and held for three days in Oran for giving a neighbor a CD about Christianity. On May 4, Krime was sentenced to five years in prison for blasphemy based on the neighbor's accusation that he had insulted the Muslim prophet Muhammad.

"In the argument which led to the conviction of my client, there is no evidence," Krime's lawyer, Muhammad Ben Belkacem, told the Algerian daily *Liberté*. "Even the person who complained was never presented at the hearing ... [All evidence], including DVDs seized at the home of Siagh Krime, were never presented in court ... As for insulting the Prophet, [Krime] totally denies it!"

Krime is gaining significant recognition among Christians and human right activists in Algeria who are calling for his immediate acquittal, International Christian Concern reports.

The Protestant Church of Algeria (EPA) is mobilizing a "massive presence" that will gather at the courthouse along with journalists and activists on November 17 for the scheduled reexamination of Krime's case, an EPA spokesman told ICC. Krime's trial is not only important to Christians in the country, but also to human right activists.

"There is outrage surrounding [Krime's] case," *Liberté* reported according to an English translation. "In the judgment, the term 'ridda' was used, which means 'apostasy.' A

teacher at the Faculty of Law and human rights activist accused the judge of acting 'by ideology and not guardian of the law.' And our partner in turn recalled that 'Algeria's ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights means it must comply with Article 18 on freedom of conscience, religion and thought.'"

Aidan Clay, ICC regional manager for the Middle East, says Krime's trial follows a series of convictions in recent years targeting Algerian Christians for evangelism or for failure to publically observe the practices of Islam, like fasting during Ramadan.

"While Algeria professes to uphold religious freedom, it also embraces a blasphemy law that, by its very nature, can be used to prosecute anyone not adhering to the practices of Islam," Clay says. "ICC calls for the immediate acquittal of Mr. Krime whose prison term may be enforced as early as Thursday."

ICC is urging Christians to call the Algerian embassy in your country to ask officials to acquit Siagh Krime:

United States: + 1 202 265 2800

Canada: + 1 613 789 8505

United Kingdom: + 44 207 221 7800

Germany: + 49 30 43 73 70