

Adlene Hicheur : A Denied Life

Overview of the Case and Call for Awareness

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Disclaimer

- Needless to say, everything said here is expressed in a private capacity

Who is Adlene Hicheur?

- 49-year-old Algerian physicist
- Raised and educated in France (BSc, MSc in theoretical physics at ENS Lyon with highest distinctions, PhD in particle physics at LAPP)
- Member of BaBar, ATLAS and long-time LHCb collaborations
- Internationally respected researcher in particle physics

Arrest and Conviction (2009–2012)

- Arrested in France in October 2009 on suspicion of terrorism
- Detained in custody for more than two years without trial
- Charges based on online message exchanges
- Convicted of terrorism-related (correctional) charges and released shortly afterwards
- Received strong support from international scientific community
 - creation of CISAH (Comité International de Souten à Adlène Hicheur)

[Nature news : Physicist languishes in French prison](#)

[Nature editorial : The case of Dr Hicheur](#)

[Nature news : French standoff raises fears for incarcerated physicist](#)

[Nature news blog : French physicist jailed for 5 years on dubious intent of terrorism charges](#)

Relocation to Brazil

- Moved to Brazil in 2013
- Invited professor at Federal University of Rio de Janeiro
- Worked successfully until end 2015

Deportation

- October 2015 : House search by Fed Police
- November 2015: Interview (along with lab chief) by Fed Police
 - French-related info disclosed, but reassured that there was nothing against him
- July 2016 : Suddenly and mysteriously deported to France without any justification and despite being registered as Algerian worker
- No chance to contest legality of deportation
- Deportation occurred despite protests from Brazilian colleagues

[Nature news : Mystery deportation of particle physicist leads to swell of protest](#)

[Nature editorial : Researchers should join protests over detained scientist](#)

House Arrest and Move to Algeria

- Upon arrival in France, placed under house arrest, again without any formal accusation
 - had to report to police three times a day and was not allowed to leave home between 8:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.
- Renounced French citizenship after five months
- Relocated to Algeria in December 2016

LHC scientists bring conference to deported physicist



[Nature news : LHC scientists bring conference to deported physicist](#)

Schengen Area Entry Ban

- Discovered ban when applying for visa to Italy
- Ban prevents Adlene from entering Schengen Area, despite having enjoyed travel freedom there from 2012 to 2016
- Prevents collaboration with European institutions
- Never formally notified of ban
- Appealed in Paris Administrative Court in 2019
- Authorities refused to disclose reasons
- Case against ban is still being processed
- Cannot proceed to the European level without first passing through all the French courts

Academic Work in Algeria

- Associate professor at University of Constantine
- Continued research in particle physics
- Professional isolation and disillusionment with the state of the country's academia
- Decided to try to leave Algeria to find a new job in science

Taiwan (2020)

- Selected for an academic position at National Taiwan University, Belle/Belle II experiment
- Team formed, work plan decided
- Appointment blocked by university administration in the step of preparing immigration paperwork

Rwanda (2022)

- Invited to teach a course on experimental particle physics at East African Institute for Fundamental Research (EAIFR), a branch of ICTP; course scheduled Oct 2022-Jan 2023
- On arrival in Kigali French authorities' report was flagged revealing prior case and Schengen ban; was given a one-month entry and later only a one-month "bridge visa" stamped "permit denied"
- Appeal (with EAIFR support) ignored by authorities, which confirmed end date of "bridge visa"; EAIFR noted this treatment was unprecedented for invited scientists

Vietnam (2024-2025)

- Between March-Dec 2024, built partnership in Vietnam and was selected as foreign physics lecturer at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology; paperwork completed in March 2025 and taught temporarily in June–July 2025
- After entering Vietnam on a work visa in August 2025, immigration officers repeatedly questioned him about his movements and reviewed his Temporary Residence Registration
 - He received confidential confirmation of undisclosed reporting
- A landlord's delayed registration was used to allege administrative violation and as an excuse for request to leave Vietnam immediately, just few days before start of semester

Costa Rica (2023) and Peru (2025)

- Selected for an LHCb position at Consejo Nacional de Rectores (CONARE), Costa Rica; appointment blocked by local university administration
- Shortlisted for an LHCb position at Universidad de Ingenieria y Tecnologia (UTECH), Lima, Peru; process blocked at interview stage by local university administration

Nature 2016 Editorial

“... a fundamental legal principle in a democracy is ‘double jeopardy’, which says that someone cannot be tried twice for the same offence. Yet this is effectively happening to Hicheur, both in Brazil and France. Likewise, another principle is that those who have served their sentence should have the right to pursue a new life unhindered — yet Hicheur, who by all accounts was successfully making a fresh start after moving to Brazil in 2013, and contributing productively to the country’s science, has been denied this chance.”

Current Situation (2025–2026)

- ~15 years after his release, Adlene is stranded in Algeria with no income
 - Cannot even visit his family, friends and colleagues due to the Schengen ban
 - ban is a disproportioned decision harming his life and hindering legitimate academic exchanges
- Working independently on LHCb data since 2021
- Corresponding author on several publications
 - for ex., LHCb measurement of $|V_{ub}|/|V_{cb}|$, muonic $R(D_s^*)$ ongoing with Frascati group
- Reviewer for major physics journals

Effects on Family

- Family links are deeply affected
- Some side effects: Adlene's brother, a scientist specializing in cognitive neuroscience, has had his appointments in Asia cancelled for "administrative reasons" a couple of times.
 - Left academia because of that, stranded as well...

Call for Action

- Lift ban on entering Schengen Area
 - We are organizing an online petition
 - Draft available [here](#)
 - Asking for your support to sign it and circulate it
- After 15 years stop the persecution and allow resumption of normal life
- Support academic freedom and civil rights
- Help Adlene find a remunerated job, for example in IT