

End the Schengen Ban and Ongoing Restrictions on Our Colleague Adlene Hicheur

We submit this petition to request the immediate lifting of the Schengen entry ban imposed on Adlene Hicheur, an Algerian physicist and our colleague. We also request an end to the ongoing restrictions that prevent him from leading a normal academic and personal life.

As documented in several Nature articles*, the persecution of Dr. Hicheur continues more than fifteen years after it began. He was placed under preventive arrest in France in 2009, convicted on terrorism-related charges after two years of detention, and released shortly thereafter. Although he consistently denied any involvement in terrorism, he did not appeal the conviction in the hope of ending the cycle of prolonged incarceration.

After being released from prison in 2012, Dr. Hicheur moved to Brazil, where he worked as a particle physics researcher and professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) until 2016. He was then suddenly removed from his home in Rio de Janeiro without explanation or formal accusation, taken to the airport, and forced to return to France. This occurred despite protests from his Brazilian colleagues and the UFRJ rector.

In France, he was placed under house arrest again without formal accusation. After six months, in December 2016, he voluntarily renounced his French citizenship. He was then permitted to leave France for Algeria. However, the French government banned him from entering the Schengen Area without prior notification, which effectively prevented him from accepting academic positions or participating in international scientific collaborations. This disproportionate decision harms his life and hinders legitimate academic exchanges. Since 2019, he has been engaged in legal proceedings to lift the ban, yet no final decision has been issued.

After unsuccessfully attempting to resume his research career in Algeria, he sought academic positions abroad. He has received multiple job offers, most recently in 2022 from the East African Institute for Fundamental Research, an ICTP branch in Rwanda, and in 2025 from the Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology in Vietnam. In both cases, local authorities asked him to leave the country shortly after he started working, following undisclosed reports from foreign authorities.

Currently, Dr. Hicheur is stranded in Algeria without an income. Nevertheless, he continues to conduct world-class physics research as part of the LHCb experiment despite severe professional and material constraints.

We believe that, after more than fifteen years, Dr. Hicheur deserves the right to live a normal life and contribute fully to science. We therefore call upon the relevant authorities to:

- End the ongoing persecution that has extended beyond Europe;
- Lift the Schengen entry ban imposed by the French authorities;
- Restore his fundamental civil and human rights, including freedom of movement, association, expression, communication, and the freedom to pursue his work as a scientist.

*[1] <https://www.nature.com/articles/news.2011.584>

[2] <https://www.nature.com/articles/478155a>

[3] <https://www.nature.com/articles/nature.2012.10293>

[4] <https://blogs.nature.com/news/2012/05/french-physicist-jailed-for-5-years-on-dubious-intent-of-terrorism-charges.html>

[5] <https://www.nature.com/articles/537287a>

[6] <https://www.nature.com/articles/537279b>

[7] <https://www.nature.com/articles/news.2010.592>