

URGENT ACTION

TRADE UNIONIST ACQUITTED

On 20 May, long-standing trade unionist Frédéric Vuillaume was acquitted by the court in Dijon, eastern France. He was tried on charges of ‘atroupement’ (participation in an assembly that is likely to disrupt public order) for exercising his right to peaceful assembly and was risking up to one year in prison and a fine. His acquittal marks a victory for the right to peaceful protest in France.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

On 20 May, **Frédéric Vuillaume** was acquitted by the court in Dijon soon after the end of his first trial hearing. The judge dismissed the charges against him and pronounced him ‘not guilty’. Frédéric Vuillaume was on trial with charges of ‘atroupement’ (participation in an assembly that is likely to disrupt public order) for exercising his right to peaceful assembly by attending a demonstration in December 2019 in Dijon. He was risking up to one year in prison and a stern fine.

On 20 May, Frédéric Vuillaume was supported by Amnesty France’s staff and local activists, as well by many friends and supporters who came to offer their voices and solidarity for his fight for justice. He told Amnesty: *“I thank everyone, and this is a victory for the right to peaceful protest in France. It is also a great victory for me too. It doesn’t erase the violent arrests, the hours in police custody, but at least I am done with trials... for now. I thank everyone for all the efforts, all the emails sent to the Prosecutor to defend the right to protest and the right to freedom of expression. This was very important. It is thanks to you all, to your mobilization, that we got there. I could not have done it by myself. Without your solidarity, your determination. Today is a victory, a really great victory, Thank you all!”*

Anne Sophie Simpère, advocacy officer in Amnesty France, said: *“We went to support Frédéric at the court in Dijon. There were dozens of supporters, trade unionists, Yellow Vests and Amnesty activists welcoming him. He was very moved by our support. For him it is essential to defend the right to peaceful protest. He has been fighting for social rights for years as a unionist and wants to continue doing so. Frédéric thanked Amnesty activists for their presence, for the messages of solidarity, and for the thousands of emails sent to the Prosecutor. It is important for him not to feel alone in the authorities’ sight. When the verdict was announced, people in the room applauded. Normally you are not allowed to do that, but there was such a relief, surprise, joy, that people could not hold back. And outside the others were waiting for Frédéric, singing slogans of freedom. He looked so relieved and lighter as he left the court. After two years of harassment against him, we remain vigilant. Amnesty’s mobilisation sends a signal, and we hope that it will protect him in the future and allow him to demonstrate peacefully without risk of being arrested.”*

Frédéric’s case is illustrative of the harassment that thousands of peaceful protesters faced and continue to experience systematically due to provisions in the French law that criminalize conduct protected under international human rights law and standards, as documented in Amnesty’s report [‘Arrested for protest. Weaponizing the law to crackdown on peaceful protesters in France’](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur21/1791/2020/en/) (available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur21/1791/2020/en/>). His acquittal represents a victory for people’s right to peaceful protest in France. Amnesty documented launched its report.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Frédéric Vuillaume (he/him)

THIS IS THE SECOND AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 52/21

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur21/4104/2021/en/>

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