

OPINION Birds-eye-view

A Bird's Eye View - Jailed in the EU without charge

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Adlene Hicheur, a French-Algerian physicist, was arrested in October 2009 on suspicion of conspiring with an Algerian branch of al-Qaeda, but has not yet been charged.

Humans are getting arrested in European Union countries, and their lives are being destroyed for no apparent reason. We have the case of Adlene Hicheur, a French-Algerian physicist working on antimatter at the European Organization for Nuclear Research, or CERN's, enormous particle collider. He was arrested in October 2009 on suspicion of conspiring with an Algerian branch of al-Qaeda.

Hicheur still remains in preventive custody in a Paris prison. He has not been charged with any crime. His lawyers and family said he did nothing more than surf Islamic political websites. No trial has been scheduled.

Under French law, a human suspected of terrorist connections can be held in provisional detention for up to four years depending on the nature of the alleged offense without being charged or tried. What is even more incredible about this story is that the Swiss government closed its own investigation into Hicheur last fall and said it had found no evidence of wrongdoing; France, however, extended Hicheur's detention by four months.

Nearly 100 scientists, including the Nobel laureate Jack Steinberger of CERN, signed a letter in December to Sarkozy, saying, "It seems to us that there is no justification for the prolonged detention of almost 14 months so far, of Dr. Adlene Hicheur, an internationally recognized scientist, held in much esteem by his colleagues."

What shocks us birds with this story is that it is happening in France and not the United States. It is taking place in the European Union, which is supposed to be a champion of respecting human rights. At least this is what the EU is telling Turkey. Furthermore it is France leading the war against Col. Moammar Gadhafi in order to restore democracy in Libya. It is France who has restricted the rights of women to wear a burqa in public. Democracy à la carte is what Sarkozy wants. You cannot detain, without reason, innocent citizens of that country and at the same time bomb the Libyans for democracy. This is called hypocrisy. And you humans should stop it. Because it is a shame.

To change the subject to something more pleasant: We discovered in London, for the last seven years, a Bird's Eye View Film Festival has been going on. It was founded by Rachel Millward and Pinny Gryllis to promote emerging women filmmakers. So we are proud to lend our name to such a prominent film festival that helps young women filmmakers.

Ponder our thoughts, dear humans, for your benefit.

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