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PUBLIC STATEMENT

LATEST DEVELOPMENT
March 3, 2026

France must protect teachers from threats and preserve classroom freedom

Amnesty Freedom condemns the murder of Samuel Paty, a teacher who was killed in October 2020 after a lesson on freedom of expression and an online campaign targeting him.

What we know

Samuel Paty was killed in October 2020. French courts held separate proceedings for minors and adults. On December 20, 2024, an adult trial resulted in eight convictions. An appeal trial opened on January 26, 2026, and on March 3, 2026, Le Monde reported a more lenient appeal verdict for most defendants, except for Abdelhakim Sefrioui. The case illustrates why officials should assess threats early and why each defendant's role must be decided individually by a fair court. [1–5]

Our position

A teacher was killed after an online campaign targeted him for a lesson on freedom of expression. Schools must be able to protect staff from threats, and teachers must be free to discuss difficult material. Responsibility belongs to individuals, never to communities as a whole. [6–7]

Our calls

Amnesty Freedom calls on the authorities to:

1. Give schools a clear protocol for escalating credible threats.
2. Help staff preserve evidence of harassment.
3. Provide rapid protection when personal information is circulated alongside threats.
4. Ensure security responses protect students and staff from discrimination and collective blame.

Supporting information

1. France's anti-terrorism court convicts 8 people of involvement in the 2020 beheading of a teacher
2. Six French teenagers convicted in connection with 2020 beheading of teacher Paty By Reuters
3. Eight on trial in France over murder of teacher who showed Prophet caricature
4. Appeal trial for men convicted of 2020 beheading of teacher Samuel Paty opens in France | Euronews
5. Appeals trial for murder of Samuel Paty: More lenient verdict except for 'activist' Abdelhakim Sefrioui
6. Council of Europe, European Convention on Human Rights
7. United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

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Note to editors: *This statement is based on the public sources listed above. The date shown is that of the most recent development recorded in those sources; later developments may not be reflected.*

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