

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED JOURNALIST IN CRITICAL CONDITION

Moroccan journalist Rabie Lablak has been on hunger strike for over 45 days in Tanger 2 prison where he was transferred in April 2019 after being detained in Casablanca prison in May 2017 for his involvement in the Hirak El-Rif protests. Lablak is protesting the alleged torture and ill-treatment he has suffered at the hands of Moroccan security officials. Lablak's hunger strike continues for more than 45 days while the prison administration denied knowledge of the strike and confirming that Rabie never informed the administration of his strike and that his activities prove he is in good health.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Mr. Mustapha Ramid
 Minister in charge of Human Rights
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 et Rue Oued El Makhazine
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Your Excellency,

On 6 September 2019, detained journalist **Rabie Lablak** began a hunger strike that he announced to his family upon a visit. His brother announced the hunger strike publicly after the visit. Friday 25 October 2019, his lawyer Souad Brahma confirmed that his health is in critical state, upon a visit. He was barely able to talk or walk and was brought to her with the help of two people; "He visibly lost so much weight and his body was so weak". After the lawyer's visit, Lablak was admitted to the prison's health facility that, according to his lawyer, is poorly equipped and is not adequate to manage his critical state of health. While his family and lawyers are alarmed about his health, the prison administration issued three statements last week denying knowledge about the hunger strike and continues to neglect his deteriorating health during his strike.

In June 2018, Rabie Lablak was sentenced to five years in prison for "spreading false information and the usurpation of the profession of journalism" in what his lawyer alleges was an unfair trial. Rabie's hunger strike continues for more than 45 days. Last week, a delegation from the Moroccan Council for Human Rights visited Lablak. The doctor in charge of prisons at the council, who was part of the delegation, was appalled by the state of Lablak's health and confirmed the urgency of transferring him to a hospital. Despite all these confirmations, Rabie's life continues to be endangered because of the authorities' neglect.

I therefore ask you to immediately and unconditionally release Rabie Lablak and quash his conviction. Pending his release, I call on you to ensure he has access to qualified health professionals and health care provided in line with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy, and informed consent. I finally call on you to investigate the conditions of his detention and the lack of adequate health care provided during his hunger strike.

Yours sincerely,

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Rabie Lablak is one of several Moroccan journalists, activists and human rights defenders who were sentenced to prison in 2017 for their involvement in peaceful protests as part of the Hirak El-Rif in Morocco. He was transferred from Okasha Prison in Casablanca to Tangier 2 Prison in Tangier on 11 April 2019. This has further isolated Rabie and his fellow detainees, as it made it almost impossible for families to visit detained relatives since it is very far from their homes. At the time of his transfer, Rabie was on a hunger strike, to demand freedom and protest an unfair trial process.

Between 26 May and 15 July 2017, Moroccan law enforcement officers arrested 54 individuals with ties to Hirak El-Rif including protest leader Nasser Zefzafi, peaceful protesters Nabil Hamjike, Ouassim El Bousestatii, Achraf El Yakhloufi, Mohamed Jelloul, and Mohamed El Mejaoui, journalists Hamid El Mahdaoui and Rabie Lablak and citizen-journalists Mohamed El Asrihi, Hussein El Idrissi, Fouad Essaidi; and neighbours and friends of Nasser Zefzafi, including brothers Ibrahim and Othmane Bouziane.

The Hirak El-Rif called for social justice and improved public services in the long-marginalized northern region of Morocco. Defence lawyers say many are facing trumped-up charges because of their peaceful protest, dissent, or online coverage of the demonstrations. Since May 2017, police have arrested hundreds of people over the Rif protests, many of them arbitrarily, including peaceful activists and some journalists and many have already been sentenced to prison terms of up to 20 years on protest-related charges.

Several of the Hirak El-Rif detainees have gone on hunger strike since 2017, including 35 in Ain Sbaa 1 Local Prison in 2017. Some went on hunger strike to protest against apparent reprisals against hunger-strikers during cell and strip-searches on 20 September 2017. Morocco's General Delegation for Penitentiary Administration and Reinsertion has repeatedly denied the hunger strikes of Hirak EL-Rif detainees in public, even though several detainees met judicial officials and were moved to the prison infirmary because of their deteriorating health.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic or French

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 11 December 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Rabie Lablak(He/him)