

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 29/06/97  
Distr:PG/SC

To: Health professionals  
From: Medical office / Maghreb Sub-regional Program  
Date: 28 July 1997

*MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION*

Abdelkader SFEI  
MOROCCO

**Keywords**

Theme: prisoner of conscience, denial of medical care

Affiliation:

**Summary**

AI is seeking the release of a 35-year-old prisoner of conscience, Abdelkader Sfeï, who has been in prison since his arrest in August 1985. Abdelkader Sfeï has a history of health problems including chronic rhinitis and sinusitis and recently is reported to have suffered renal crises and to have developed asthma and hypotension. He has suffered two bouts of tuberculosis in the past. AI is urging that he be provided with whatever diagnostic and therapeutic procedures he requires and that he be released immediately and unconditionally.

**Recommended Actions**

Letters are requested from health professionals to the addresses given below:

stating that you are writing about Abdelkader Sfeï (prisoner no. 20955, Kenitra prison)

expressing concern at his continued imprisonment and the conditions in which he and fellow prisoners are held

noting with concern that he is reported to be suffering from asthma and low blood pressure

seeking information about his current state of health and the provision of medical care in Kenitra prison

urging that he be released immediately and unconditionally from prison on the grounds that he is a prisoner of conscience held solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of association and expression.

**Addresses**

M. Priss BASSI  
Ministre de l'Intérieur  
Ministère de l'Intérieur  
Quartier Administratif  
Rabat, Maroc

*Salutation: Excellence / Your Excellency*

Fax: + 212 7 76 20 56, or + 212 7 76 64 89, or + 212 7 76 68 61

M. Abderrahmane AMALOU

*Salutation: Excellence / Your Excellency*

Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice

Palais de la Manounia

Rabat

Maroc

Fax: + 212 7 73 89 40, or + 212 7 72 37 10

Salutation: Excellence / Your Excellency

**COPIES TO:**

M. Driss DAHAK

Président du Conseil Consultatif des Droits de l'Homme (CCDH)

Place des Chouhada, B. P. 1341

Rabat

Maroc

Fax: +212 7 726856

and to diplomatic representatives of MOROCCO accredited to your country.

Date: 28 July 1997

<b>PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE</b>  <b>Abdelkader SFERI</b>  <b>MOROCCO</b>
--

Abdelkader Sferi, born 1962, has spent nearly 14 years of his life in prison since his arrest in 1983 on charges of "conspiracy against the authorities", an "attack against the security of the state" and membership of an unauthorised organization. Abdelkader Sferi has a history of health problems since his imprisonment including chronic rhinitis and sinusitis, and rheumatism. He suffered bouts of tuberculosis in 1986 and 1988. He was recently reported to have developed asthma and hypotension, and to have suffered renal crises (*crises néphrétiques*). AI is urging that he be provided with whatever diagnostic and therapeutic procedures he requires and that he be released immediately and unconditionally as a prisoner of conscience.

### Background

Abdelkader Sferi was one of 51 supporters of the Islamic youth organization, *al-Shabiba al-Islamiya*, arrested and prosecuted in the 1983-1984 period in Morocco. A further 20 youths were tried *in absentia*, and the defendants were collectively known as the "group of 71". The activities which provoked the arrests and trials included pasting up anti-monarchist posters, distributing leaflets and participating in demonstrations. Some of these were carried out on 23 June 1983 at the time of the second anniversary of the 1981 general strike. Abdelkader Sferi was one of 13 defendants (six detainees and seven *in absentia*) who were sentenced to death in July 1984. His sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in March 1994. He was one of only four of the group of 71 to be excluded from a general amnesty in July 1994.

Abdelkader Sferi

He and other prisoners had undertaken many limited hunger strikes over prison conditions and inadequate medical treatment. In September 1995, while held in Oukacha prison in Casablanca, Abdelkader Sferi announced that he would start a hunger strike which would continue on two days a week for an unlimited period. On 30 November 1995 he was forcibly transferred to Kenitra Central Prison. This made it more difficult for his family to visit because of the distance (Kenitra is approximately 150km from Casablanca where his family live) and the costs involved. On 1 January 1996, he started a full-time unlimited hunger-strike in Kenitra prison, together with four other prisoners, in protest against the transfer and the poor condition in Kenitra prison. About two weeks later he was transferred to Avicennes Hospital in Rabat. He and the other prisoners stopped their hunger strike in February because of deteriorating health. Abdelkader Sferi is reported to have suffered from kidney problems.

In June 1996 the authorities greatly reduced the transfer of prisoners to medical facilities outside the prison. In the past few years, the authorities have increasingly limited the possibility of transfer of prisoners to hospital for specialist care. Although there is some medical care available inside the prison, it is reported to be poor and insufficient to deal with prisoners suffering serious problems. One prisoner at Kenitra, Mohamed Salim al-Saitouni, died on 5 July 1996. The prisoners and the authorities attribute the death to different causes but so far the death has not been the subject of an official investigation.

On 28 April 1997 Abdelkader Sferi undertook a 24 hour hunger strike to protest again at prison conditions and this was followed by a 48 hour strike starting 6 May and a 72 hour strike beginning 12 May 1997. He is reported currently to be denied adequate medical care for his health problems. Amnesty International is urging his immediate and unconditional release as a prisoner of conscience and that he be provided with whatever medical evaluation and treatment he requires.

--oOo--