

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Morocco: Amnesty International seeks clarifications on arrest and expulsion of two delegates**

Amnesty International today wrote to the Moroccan authorities requesting written clarifications on the reasons for the arrest, detention and expulsion from Morocco of two Amnesty International delegates on 11 June 2015 and the lifting of any access bans that may have been imposed on one of them. Nearly a month since the incident the Moroccan authorities are yet to provide such information to the organization.

In a letter sent to Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane, Amnesty International expressed its dismay at the arrest, detention and expulsion from Morocco of John Dalhuisen, Amnesty International's Director for Europe and Central Asia, and Irem Arf, Refugee and Migrant Rights Researcher, on 11 June 2015. Both delegates had arrived in Morocco on 8 June to take part in a fact-finding visit on the situation of migrants and refugees at the border with Spain. Three days later they were arrested and questioned at police stations in Rabat and Oujda, respectively, including about whom they intended to meet. Amnesty International asked the Moroccan authorities to provide the reasons behind their arrest and detention and stressed that although Irem Arf was able to inform the organization of her whereabouts, John Dalhuisen was effectively held incommunicado for more than four hours after police officers failed to notify his family and denied his requests that he do so himself, in violation of Article 66 of Morocco's Code of Criminal Procedure.

Amnesty International told the Moroccan authorities of its surprise at the content of a statement by Morocco's Interior Ministry on 11 June 2015 which said that both delegates had been expelled because their visit had not been pre-authorized. Amnesty International reminded the Moroccan authorities that the organization had been able to access Morocco freely since 1993 and that it had informed them of the delegates' upcoming visit on 19 May 2015, as it was accustomed to doing before any visit to the country. Amnesty International also drew attention to the fact that, after a delegation from the organization was denied access to Morocco on 12 October 2014, the Moroccan authorities sent it written assurances on 24 November 2014 that "there had never been any question of imposing restrictions on visits by Amnesty International delegations" and reiterated this position several times during a meeting with the organization in Rabat on 18 May 2015.

Amnesty International questioned the vague grounds given by the Moroccan authorities at the time for the expulsion of John Dalhuisen and asked them to lift any access ban they had imposed on him. He had received an expulsion order which gave as official grounds a "threat to public order" and barred him from re-entering the country.

Amnesty International reiterated its commitment to dialogue and reminded the Moroccan authorities that it has been seeking to meet with the Interior Minister since November 2014 to address issues related to the organization's access to the country for research purposes, but to no avail. The organization said that it was now waiting for the Moroccan authorities to propose a date for a high-level meeting after they had suggested the idea in May 2015.