

URGENT ACTION

SAHRAWI PRISONER'S HEALTH CRITICALLY DETERIORATING

Since his transfer to Ain Sbaa 1 Local Prison, Abdeljalil Laaroussi's health is critically deteriorating. During the Gdim Izik mass trial in July 2017, which included 22 other Sahrawi activists, he was sentenced to life imprisonment. Abdeljalil is on hunger strike since 20 November.

Since his transfer from El Arjat Local Prison, near the capital Rabat, to Ain Sbaa 1 Local Prison in Casablanca, on 16 September, Abdeljalil Laaroussi's health has been critically deteriorating, a result of the poor prison conditions of Ain Sbaa 1 Local Prison. According to his family and one of his lawyers, he now suffers from rectorrhagia and epistaxis, high blood pressure, and has heart disease. He was hospitalized three times during the trial. Abdeljalil is given four different medicaments daily by the prison administration, but he has not seen a doctor since his transfer. According to his family, his treatment is not adapted to his pressing medical needs, especially in the absence of a medical follow-up. His family also reported that, on at least one occasion, the prison administration denied the family to visit Abdeljalil without giving any justification. When visiting on 23 November, they were forced to wait for three hours to be able to visit him for 15 minutes. This is unusual, as other families are normally allowed to visit family members for at least two hours.

On 20 November, Abdeljalil started a hunger strike calling on the authorities to be transferred to Laayoune Local Prison, in Western Sahara, in order for his family to be able to visit, or alternatively to Kenitra local prison, where seven other fellow detainees are held. On 10 October, his family filed a complaint to the prison administration about the poor detention conditions, following the complaints of other detainees' families.

Abdeljalil Laaroussi was sentenced to life imprisonment on 19 July by the Rabat Court of Appeal in the mass trial of 23 Sahrawi defendants, which dealt with the deadly clashes in Gdim Izik, Western Sahara in 2010, during which 11 security force members and two Sahrawi civilians were killed. On 16 September, 19 detainees were transferred from El Arjat Local Prison, near the capital Rabat, and separated into seven different prisons in Morocco.

Please write immediately in Arabic, French or your own language urging Moroccan authorities to:

- Ensure Abdeljalil Laaroussi has immediate access to adequate medical care in compliance with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy and informed consent;
- Ensure that detention conditions conform to international standards, including the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Mandela Rules), and that he has regular, unrestricted access to his family, and lawyers of his choice;
- In keeping with the Mandela Rules, which provides in Rule 59 that prisoners shall be allocated, to the extent possible, to prisons close to their homes, grant the transfer of Abdeljalil Laaroussi and the other 19 Gdeim Izik prisoners to Laayoune, in Western Sahara, to allow family visits, unless there are clear, legitimate reasons for not doing so;
- Ensure that no reprisals are made against hunger strikers.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 JANUARY 2018 TO:

Director of General Administration for
Prison Administration and Reinsertion
Mohamed Saleh Tamek
Angle Avenue Arar et rue El-Jouz
Hay El Riyad, Rabat, Morocco
Fax: + 212 5 37 71 26 19
Salutation: Dear Sir

Minister of Justice
Mohammed Aujjar
Ministry of Justice and Liberties
Place El Mamounia – BP 1015
Rabat, Morocco
Fax: + 212 5 37 72 13 737
Twitter: @MincomMa
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
Minister of State for Human Rights
Mustapha Ramid
Inter-ministerial Delegation for Human
Rights
Avenue Ibn Sina et rue Oued El
Makhazine, Agdal, Rabat
Fax: +212 5 37 67 11 55
Email: contact@didh.gov.ma
Twitter: @didh_mar

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 71/16. Further information:
www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde29/3721/2016/en

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 19 July, the Rabat Court of Appeal convicted Abdeljalil Laaroussi and 22 other Sahrawi activists in connection with the deadly clashes in Gdim Izik, Western Sahara, which were a result of a protest camp forcibly dispersed on 8 November 2010. Eleven members of the security forces and two Sahrawi were killed in the violence sparked by the dismantling of the protest camp.

The 23 activists were sentenced to between two years and life imprisonment for violence against Moroccan public officers, among other charges. 21 have already served over six years in prison. Two defendants were sentenced to time served and released, and two who were released with time served in 2013 were charged again by the Court of Appeal but remained free. Currently 19 are serving their sentences.

In 2013, the defendants had been convicted by the Military Court of Rabat 2013 almost exclusively on the basis of their "confessions," which were allegedly obtained under torture. Several of those detained claim that the security forces had tortured and otherwise ill-treated them in custody, as well as during the interrogations to extract "confessions" in the first weeks of pre-trial detention. Amnesty International criticized the trial of the 24 Sahrawi civilians by a military court which deprived them of their right to a fair trial. The Special Rapporteur on torture and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) expressed concern over the lack of investigations into the prisoners' allegations of torture and other ill-treatment. The WGAD also called on the authorities to review the verdicts based on the principle that no civilian should be tried before a military court.

In 2015, a new law ended military trials for civilians, bringing Morocco into conformity with international legal norms. The following year, the Court of Cassation ordered a new trial of the Gdim Izik group before the Appeals Chamber of the Rabat Court of Appeals. During the trial, which opened on 26 December 2016, the court agreed to have doctors accredited to the court perform medical examinations on 21 defendants in order to assess their torture and other ill-treatment allegations. The court refused the request for an investigation for the three defendants not in custody anymore.

According to his lawyer, Abdeljalil wears diapers, which he showed at the Court of Appeal, and explained that this condition is due to an alleged rape that occurred when he was arrested in 2010.

On 16 September, after the Court of Appeal's verdict, the 19 Sahrawi prisoners were separated into seven different prisons in Morocco up to over 1000 kilometres away from their families in Laayoune, Western Sahara. After their transfer from El Arjat Local Prison, several families filed complaints about the poor prison conditions. One of the prisoners, Brahim Ismaili, also sentenced to life imprisonment, was transferred on 2 November to a psychiatric ward within the Tiflet II local prison, after he started a second hunger strike on 1 November. The prison administration did not provide any justification for his transfer. Since their transfer from El Arjat Local Prison on 16 September, where they were held after the trial, at least 10 detainees have been four times on hunger strikes, which has led to their health conditions worsening. Their demands include the transfer to Western Sahara and improvement of the detention conditions.

Right after Court of Appeal's verdict in July, the detainees appealed the sentence to the Court of Cassation, which has yet to rule on the admissibility of the appeal.

For more information see *Morocco/Western Sahara: Torture Allegations Cast Shadow over Trial*, 17 July 2017 (www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/07/moroccowestern-saharatorture-allegations-cast-shadow-over-trial/).

Name: Abdeljalil Laaroussi and Brahim Ismaili, El Bachir Khadda, Abdallah Toubali, Mohamed Bani, Sidahmed Lemjayed, Mohamed Embarek Lefkir, Mohamed Tahlil, Naama Asfari, Mohamed Bachir Boutanguiza, Sidi Abdallah Abhah, Ahmed Sbai, Mohamed Bourial, Cheikh Banga, Hassan Dah, Mohamed Khouna Babeit, Mohamed Lamin Haddi, Hocine Zaoui, Abdallah Lekhfawni
Gender m/f: male

Further Information on UA: 71/16 Index: MDE 29/7511/2017 Issue Date: 11 December 2017