

URGENT ACTION

SAHRAWI ACTIVIST DETAINED INCOMMUNICADO

The family and lawyer of imprisoned Sahrawi activist Mohamed Lamine Haddi have not heard from him since 9 April, when he called them each to tell them that the prison authorities had threatened to put him in “cachot”, a small, dungeon-like cell, if his family did not stop publically calling for his release. Mohamed Lamine Haddi has been held in solitary confinement in Tiflet II prison, Rabat, since 2017, when he was sentenced to 25 years in the unfair “Gdeim Izik” mass trial. His health deteriorated significantly following his 69-day hunger strike in protest of his ill-treatment in January 2021.

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

Head of Government of the Kingdom of Morocco
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Your Excellency,

*I am writing to express my grave concern about the incommunicado detention of Sahrawi activist **Mohamed Lamine Haddi** held in Tiflet II prison in Rabat, Morocco.*

Mohamed Lamine Haddi's lawyer and family have not heard from him since 9 April, when he called to inform them that the prison director of Tiflet II had threatened to put him in a small, dungeon-like cell, if his family continued to publicise his case. According to his lawyer, the prison authorities previously detained Mohamed Lamine Haddi in such a cell in 2018 as punishment. His lawyer described the cell as a small room of 2m² with no window, tap nor toilet. It is known as the “punishment cell” or “coffin” because it is the same size. Since 9 April, his family called the King's prosecutor and the prison director several times, with no response. Mohamed Lamine Haddi's lawyer and family both called the prison separately on 1 June and the phone was hung-up on them at the mention of Mohamed Lamine Haddi's name.

Mohamed Lamine Haddi's health has been deteriorating since his 69-day hunger strike in January demanding an end to his ill-treatment. On 23 March, he told his family that prison guards ended his hunger strike by force-feeding him, that he did not receive any medical care during his hunger strike and that he was suffering partial paralysis, trembling, memory loss and severe pain. His lawyer is concerned that the lack of news from him since April indicates the worsening of his health. Since 17 September 2017, the authorities have held Mohamed Lamine Haddi and other Gdeim Izik prisoners in solitary confinement in Tiflet II prison. Mohamed Lamine Haddi is confined alone in his cell for at least 23 hours per day, with no contact with other inmates. Family visits have been banned since March 2020, due to COVID restrictions.

In light of the above, I urge you to end the solitary confinement of Mohamed Lamine Haddi, grant him immediate access to adequate medical care and ensure that his detention conditions conform to international standards. I also urge you to ensure that he has regular access to his family and lawyers, and 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, to grant the transfer of Mohamed Lamine Haddi and the other Gdeim Izik prisoners to El-Ayoun to be closer to their families. Finally, I urge you to hold a fair retrial for Mohamed Lamine Haddi and the other Gdeim Izik prisoners in line with international standards.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mohamed Lamine Haddi is a Sahrawi activist who participated in the 2010 *Gdeim Izik* camp protesting Sahrawis' social and economic conditions. In November 2010, he was arrested in the violent clashes following the dismantling of the camp. In 2013, he was sentenced to 25 years in prison on charges of participation in and aiding a "criminal organisation," and participation in violence against public forces which caused intended death under Articles 293, 129 and 267 of the Moroccan Penal Code. The military court which tried him and other Sahrawis did not investigate the defendants' claims that they had been forced to sign confessions under torture. A civilian court confirmed his sentence in 2017, using the statements that he said had been made under torture.

According to Mohamed Lamine Haddi's lawyer, during his first year in Tiflet II prison, he was only permitted to leave his cell for 15 minutes once per day, alone. Since then, he has been allowed out of his cell for maximum 1 hour per day, alone. During the winter, he is not allowed hot showers like other prisoners and on 14 December 2020, the prison director ordered all his private belongings be confiscated. Since being in Tiflet II, Mohamed Lamine Haddi has been banned from visits by his lawyer and family visits were banned in March 2020. The context of COVID-19 does not justify family visits being banned for such a prolonged period of time. On 16 January 2021, Mohamed Lamine Haddi's lawyer wrote to the King's prosecutor and the Director of Tiflet II prison asking for an investigation into his prison conditions. Neither replied. Before starting his hunger strike, Mohamed Lamine Haddi told his lawyer that he would rather die than be kept in the conditions of Tiflet II, which is 1227km from his family in El-Ayoun, Western Sahara.

Mohamed Lamine Haddi started a hunger strike on 17 January 2021. His weekly 15 minute calls to his family were banned from 22 February 2021. His family issued a statement on 13 March 2021 declaring that his fate was unknown to them. Mohamed Lamine Haddi was allowed to call his mother for one and a half minutes on 23 March to tell her that the prison authorities force-fed him. His mother told Amnesty International that he sounded very weak and he could barely speak. He told her that he was suffering a partial paralysis on his left side. On 25 March, Mohamed Lamine Haddi was permitted to call his mother to tell her that he had been temporarily transferred to Kenitra prison to sit university exams. This transfer was made without any prior notification to Mohamed Lamine Haddi or his family. Mohamed Lamine Haddi told his family that he is still experiencing partial paralysis, as well as memory loss and pain in his left hand. Prison authorities continue to deny him access to a doctor. Authorities followed this same procedure with detained Sahrawi activist Abdeljalil Laaroussi in 2017. His lawyer told Amnesty International that, in order to hide his health status, authorities transferred Laaroussi to Bouzarkene prison to take university exams and forced him to be photographed.

Two other Gdeim Izik prisoners, **Sidi Abdallah Abbahah** and **Bachir Khadda**, are also held in solitary confinement in Tiflet II, 1227km from their families who all live in El-Ayoun. According to their lawyer, they are all victims of psychological torture, harassment and ill treatment. They are held in cells of around 5m² for at least 23 hours a day. Sidi Abdallah Abbahah told their lawyer that the prison guards and prison director frequently insult them and threaten them with torture, death and taking away their right to have showers. Since 2017 they have held several hunger strikes against the prolonged isolation and ill-treatment.

Human rights international standards, such as the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, define solitary confinement as spending 22 hours or more per day without meaningful human contact. They provide that prolonged solitary confinement – over 15 consecutive days – is considered cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Under the Moroccan Prison Law, solitary confinement is an exceptional measure imposed only as a security or protective measure for prisoners. Morocco's Penal Code also criminalizes torture.

Western Sahara is the subject of a territorial dispute between Morocco, which annexed the territory in 1975 and claims sovereignty over it, and the Polisario Front, which calls for an independent state in the territory. In recent years, access to Western Sahara has grown increasingly difficult for external monitors as the human rights situation has continued to deteriorate. The UN Security Council has ignored calls by Amnesty International and others to add a human rights component to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), which would allow for monitoring and reporting on human rights abuses.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: [Arabic – French - English]

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 6 August 2021

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

NAME AND PRONOUN: Mohamed Lamine Haddi (He/Him/His)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde29/3946/2021/en/>