

URGENT ACTION

SAHRAWI HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER RETURNS HOME

Human rights defender Aminatou Haidar was allowed to return to her home in Laayoune on 17 December. She and her family have since been kept under constant surveillance, and several visitors have been preventing from seeing her.

Aminatou Haidar returned home on the evening of 17 December after a month on hunger strike in Lanzarote airport in protest at being expelled from Morocco on 14 November for stating on her landing card that her home is in Western Sahara, a territory Morocco annexed in 1975, rather than "Moroccan Sahara" and for leaving blank the question on her nationality.

Since returning home she has not been able to resume her normal life and work in defence of human rights, as the Moroccan authorities have kept her under constant, overt surveillance, and have stopped everyone who tries to visit her. Police and other security agents have been stationed close to her house round the clock. They have followed Aminatou Haidar whenever she goes out. They have turned back the foreign journalists and supporters who have tried to visit her. Her family members, friends and supporters from Western Sahara and elsewhere in Morocco have been harassed, intimidated and reportedly some were assaulted when they have tried to visit her. Several have been detained and questioned by security agents, including agents from Directorate for the Surveillance of the Territory, Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire (DST). Others have been stopped and ordered to report to a police station, where they have been detained for some hours, interrogated and then ordered to go away.

Aminatou Haidar is in poor health as she suffers from anaemia and a stomach ulcer. However she is recovering slowly from the effects of the hunger strike. She may travel to Spain to continue the medical treatment she began there, as she believes she will not be able to get adequate medical attention in Morocco and Western Sahara.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic, French, English or your own language:

- Urging the Moroccan authorities to allow Aminatou Haidar to travel freely, both within Morocco and Western Sahara and abroad;
- Urging them to ensure that other Sahrawi human rights defenders, in particular Aminatou Haidar's friends, colleagues and supporters, can visit her home without fear of harassment and intimidation;
- Urging them to ensure that Aminatou Haidar and all human rights defenders are able to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association without fear of reprisals.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 FEBRUARY 2010 TO:

Prime Minister

Abbas El Fassi
Département du Premier Ministre
Palais Royal
Touarga
Rabat, Morocco
Fax: +212 5377 69995
Email: courier@pm.gov.ma
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Interior

Taieb Charkaoui
Ministère de l'Intérieur
Quartier Administratif
Rabat, Morocco
Fax: +212 5377 62056
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Justice
Mohamed Naciri
Ministère de la Justice
Place Mamounia
Rabat, Morocco
Fax: +212 5377 30772
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 326/09 (MDE 29/014/2009). Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE29/014/2009

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Amnesty International has called on the Moroccan authorities many times to respect Aminatou Haidar's right to freedom of movement, freedom of expression, association and assembly as well as the right of human rights defenders to collect and disseminate information and views on human rights issues without fear of harassment or intimidation. The Moroccan authorities appear to be adopting an increasingly repressive approach to the exercise of these rights by Sahrawis, in breach of their obligations under international human rights treaties, notably the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Morocco is a state party, and the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms known as the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Further information on UA: 326/09 Index: MDE 29/005/2010 Issue Date: 15 January 2010

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