

URGENT ACTION

SAHRAWIS ON HUNGER STRIKE AGAINST TORTURE

Seven Sahrawi men were severely beaten on 17 September in Laayoune Local Prison, Western Sahara. They have gone on hunger strike in protest.

Seven Sahrawi men, **Mohamed Baber, Abdessalam Loumadi, Abdelmoutaleb Sarir, Mahmoud El Haissan, Aaliayne El Moussaoui, Abdelkrim Bouchalga** and **Abdelfattah Dallal** were reportedly subjected to torture and other ill-treatment from around 4.30 to 11pm on 17 September 2014 by staff at Laayoune Local Prison where they are detained, according to local sources. The seven men were handcuffed, severely beaten in the prison courtyard in front of other detainees, and verbally abused.

Eyewitnesses reportedly indicated that all have sustained significant bruising and injuries to their wrists from handcuffs, while Aaliayne El Moussaoui's left arm is fractured, and Mohamed Baber is limping due to a leg injury. The prison administration did not allow Abdelmoutaleb Sarir's sister to see him when she made her usual weekly visit on 18 September at 10am. Lawyers were able to visit him that afternoon, as well as Abdessalam Loumadi, Mahmoud El Haissan, Aaliayne El Moussaoui and Abdelkrim Bouchalga who said all seven were going on hunger strike in protest at the beatings.

Six of the seven detainees had already reported being tortured or otherwise ill-treated by police officers in detention after they were arrested, earlier in 2014. They complained about their treatment repeatedly to the judicial authorities, but no investigation or forensic medical examination are known to have been ordered. Four were sentenced to prison terms based on "confessions" which they said they were coerced to make.

Please write immediately in Arabic, French or your own language:

- Calling on the Moroccan authorities to ensure that Mohamed Baber, Abdessalam Loumadi, Abdelmoutaleb Sarir, Mahmoud El Haissan, Aaliayne El Moussaoui, Abdelkrim Bouchalga and Abdelfattah Dallal are treated humanely and protected from further torture and other ill-treatment and have access to their families and lawyers;
- Calling on them to ensure all seven detainees have immediate access to any medical care they may require and that no punitive measures are taken against them for going on hunger strike;
- Calling on them to order a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into reported torture and other ill-treatment, including forensic medical examinations, and bring those found responsible to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31 OCTOBER 2014 TO:

Director of General Delegation for
Penitentiary 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

Minister of Justice and Liberties
El Mustapha Ramid
Ministry of Justice and Liberties
Place El Mamounia
Rabat, Morocco
Fax: + 212 5 37 73 47 25

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

National Council for Human Rights
President

Driss El Yazami
CNDH, Place Achouhada
Rabat, Morocco
Fax: + 212 5 37 72 68 56
Email: elyazami@cndh.org.ma

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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The seven detainees were all arrested in connection with protests in Laayoune, Western Sahara, in 2014.

Abdessalam Loumadi, Abdelmoutaleb Sarir, Aaliayne El Moussaoui and Mohamed Baber were arrested in Laayoune on 21 January, 19 February, 17 March and 13 May, respectively, for their alleged involvement in protests in Laayoune in January 2014. They reported being tortured or otherwise ill-treated in police custody during which they say they were forced to sign “confessions” they were not allowed to read, and insisted they are innocent of the charges levelled against them. Despite multiple complaints about their treatment to judicial authorities, no investigation or forensic medical examination are known to have been ordered, and the “confessions” were not excluded from proceedings and were used as evidence towards convictions.

On 7 May, the Laayoune Court of Appeals convicted Abdessalam Loumadi of forming a criminal gang, arson, obstructing a public road, damaging public property, insulting and assaulting security officers, and armed gathering and carrying weapons with the intention to threaten the safety of people and property. His conviction was confirmed on appeals. On 10 September 2014, the Laayoune Court of Appeals convicted Abdelmoutaleb Sarir, Aaliayne El Moussaoui and Mohamed Baber on similar charges in first instance. No date has been set for their appeal.

Abdelfattah Dallal was arrested in Guelmim, southern Morocco, on 30 July 2014, in relation to the same events. He is currently in pre-trial detention while the authorities investigate his alleged involvement in arson.

Mahmoud El Haissan, a media worker and Laayoune correspondent of the Polisario-affiliated RASD-TV, and Abdelkrim Bouchalga were arrested in Laayoune on 4 July in relation to a protest in Laayoune earlier that evening. Both reported being tortured or otherwise ill-treated in police custody, during which they were forced to sign “confessions” they were not allowed to read. They were both charged with obstructing a public road, insulting and assaulting security officers, armed gathering, and damaging public property and placed in pre-trial detention. They are still being investigated and no date has been set for their next hearing.

In recent years, Sahrawi activists and human rights defenders have faced restrictions, including harassment, surveillance by the security forces, limitations to their freedom of movement, and in some cases prosecution for threatening Morocco’s “internal” and “external” security. They have also been unable to obtain legal registration for their organizations, apparently due to politically-motivated administrative obstacles.

Sahrawis have also been imprisoned after holding demonstrations calling for the right to self-determination for the people of Western Sahara, and some reported being tortured or otherwise ill-treated during questioning by Moroccan law enforcement officials, allegations which have not been properly investigated. The Moroccan authorities often accuse Sahrawi activists of working for the Polisario Front, which runs a self-declared government-in-exile in the Tindouf refugee camps in Algeria.

For several years, Amnesty International has been calling for a UN human rights monitoring mechanism to be set up, with the power to look at both Western Sahara and the Tindouf camps, to provide independent and impartial reporting on the human rights situation, including allegations of torture and other ill-treatment. It would play a key role in documenting human rights violations that would otherwise go unreported, and prevent unfounded accusations in other cases.

Names: Mohamed Baber, Abdessalam Loumadi, Abdelmoutaleb Sarir, Mahmoud El Haissan, Aaliayne El Moussaoui, Abdelkrim Bouchalga, Abdelfattah Dallal
Gender m/f: m

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