

URGENT ACTION

SAHRAWI PRISONERS ON HUNGER STRIKE

Thirteen Sahrawi prisoners have been on hunger strike since the beginning of March, to urge the Moroccan authorities to release them. They were arrested more than five years ago and were sentenced to jail after a grossly unfair trial by a military court in 2013.

The 13 men – **Sidahmed Lemjayed, Ahmed Sbai, Mohamed Bachir Boutanguiza, Naâma Asfari, Hassan Dah, Cheikh Banga, Mohamed Bani, Sidi Abdallah Abhah, Mohamed Bourial, Mohamed Embarek Lefkir, Bachir Khadda, Abdallah Toubali and Brahim Ismaili** – have been on hunger strike in Salé 1 Prison, near the capital, Rabat, over 1,100 km from their families in Laayoune, Western Sahara since 1 March. They are protesting against their imprisonment as well as that of eight others after an unfair trial. In addition to significant weight loss, they are now apparently suffering extreme fatigue, intense headaches, abdominal pain and loss of consciousness.

Many Sahrawis were arrested in 2010 after the forced dispersal of a protest camp in Western Sahara led to violence, in which 11 members of the Moroccan security forces and two Sahrawis were killed. A Moroccan military court convicted 25 Sahrawi protesters and activists for the violence and sentenced them to up to life in prison, in a flawed and unfair trial marred by allegations of torture not investigated by the military court. Of those who were convicted, 21 are now serving their sentences.

The Moroccan authorities revised military justice law in 2014, ending the jurisdiction of military courts over civilians. This was an important positive step but as the law is not retroactive it did not address the judicial status of those civilians, including these 21 prisoners, who had been imprisoned by military courts before the law came into effect, in July 2015.

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

- Calling on the Moroccan authorities to release, or give a fair retrial to the 21 prisoners (Ahmed Sbai, Mohamed Bachir Boutanguiza, Sidi Abdallah Abhah, Mohamed Bani, Brahim Ismaili, Sidahmed Lemjayed, Abdallah Lekhfawni, Abdeljalil Laâroussi, Naâma Asfari, Hassan Dah, Cheikh Banga, Mohamed Bourial, Mohamed Tahliil, Mohamed Lamine Haddi, Abdallah Toubali, Hocine Zaoui, Daich Daf, Mohamed Embarek Lefkir, Mohamed Khouna Babeit, Larbi Elbakai, and Bachir Khadda), respecting the presumption for release pending trial as defined under international human rights law.
- Urging them to ensure all the 13 on hunger strikers receive any medical attention they may require;
- Calling on them to order independent and impartial investigations into their allegations of torture and other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 MAY 2016 TO:

Minister of Justice and Liberties

Mustafa Ramid
Ministry of Justice and Liberties
Place El Mamounia – BP 1015
Rabat
Morocco
Fax: +212 5 37 73 47 25

Salutation: Your Excellency

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

And copies to:

President of the National Council for Human Rights

Driss El Yazami
CNDH, Place Achouhada
Rabat, Morocco
Fax: + 212 5 37 54 00 01

Email: elyazami@cndh.org.ma

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HER EXCELLENCY HH PRINCESS LALLA JOUMALA ALAOUI Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco, 49 Queens Gate Gardens SW7 5NE, 0207 581 5001-4, ambalondres@maec.gov.ma

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The 13 Sahrawi prisoners, Sidahmed Lemjayed, Ahmed Sbai, Mohamed Bachir Boutanguiza, Naâma Asfari, Hassan Dah, Cheikh Banga, Mohamed Bani, Sidi Abdallah Abhah, Mohamed Bourial, Mohamed Embarek Lefkir, Bachir Khadda, Abdallah Toubali and Ibrahim Ismaili are among Sahrawis arrested after a protest camp in Gdim Izik near Laayoune, Western Sahara, was forcibly dispersed on 8 November 2010. Eleven members of the security forces and two Sahrawis were killed in the violence sparked by the dismantling of the protest camp.

Several of those detained said the security forces had tortured and otherwise ill-treated them in custody, including during interrogation to extract “confessions” during the first weeks of pre-trial detention. Twenty-four detainees, including human rights activists, were tried by a military court that did not investigate allegations of torture and other ill-treatment made by at least 17 of them. 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 Military Court of Rabat relied heavily on the contested “confessions” to convict the 25 defendants (the 24 detainees and one man tried in his absence), on 17 February 2013, of membership of a criminal organization, violence against Moroccan public officers and desecration of a corpse, and sentenced them to between two years’ and life in prison. Morocco’s Court of Cassation has yet to rule on the petitions the men lodged since then.

The Special Rapporteur on torture and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) expressed concern at the lack of investigations into the prisoners’ torture allegations. 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.

See also this public statement, *Morocco: Free or retry 21 Sahrawis jailed five years ago*, 4 December 2015, (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde29/2800/2015/en/>).

Names: Ahmed Sbaïi, Mohamed Bachir Boutanguiza, Sidi Abdallah Abhah, Mohamed Bani, Brahim Ismaïili, Sidahmed Lemjayed, Abdallah Lekhfawni, Abdeljalil Laâroussi, Naâma Asfari, Hassan Dah, Cheikh Banga, Mohamed Bourial, Mohamed Tahlil, Mohamed Lamine Haddi, Abdallah Toubali, Hocine Zaoui, Daich Daf, Mohamed Embarek Lefkir, Mohamed Khouna Babeit, Larbi Elbakai, and Bachir Khadda.
Gender m/f: m

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