

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED JOURNALIST ENDS HIS HUNGER STRIKE

On 31 October 2019, detained journalist Rabie Lablak ended his 45 day-long hunger strike, which he started in protest of the alleged torture and ill-treatment he has suffered at the hands of Moroccan security officials. The prison administration claimed that Rabie never informed the administration of his hunger strike and that his activities proved he was in good health. In April 2019, Rabie Lablak was transferred to Tanger 2 prison after being detained in Casablanca prison in May 2017 for his involvement in the Hirak El-Rif protests.

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

Mr. Mustapha Ramid
Minister in charge of Human Rights
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et Rue Oued El Makhazine
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Your Excellency,

On 31 October 2019, the National Council for Human Rights (CNDH) announced that detained journalist **Rabie Lablak** decided to end his hunger strike after 45 days due to the deterioration of his health condition. Lablak began his hunger strike on 6 September 2019 in protest of the alleged torture and ill-treatment he has suffered at the hands of Moroccan security officials since his arrest in 2017.

On Friday 25 October 2019, Lablak's lawyer Souad Brahma confirmed that his health was critical. He was barely able to talk or walk and was brought to her with the help of two people; "he visibly lost so much weight and his body was so weak". After the lawyer's visit, Lablak was admitted to the prison's health facility that, according to his lawyer, is poorly equipped and inadequate to manage his critical state. While his family and lawyers were alarmed about his health condition, the prison administration issued three statements denying knowledge about the hunger strike and continuously neglected his deteriorating health during his hunger strike.

A delegate from the Moroccan Council for Human Rights visited Lablak on 20 October 2019. The doctor in charge of prisons at the council, who was part of the delegation, was appalled by the state of Lablak's health and confirmed the urgency of transferring him to a hospital. Despite all these confirmations, Rabie was denied access to adequate medical care and thus his life was put in danger.

In June 2018, Rabie Lablak was sentenced to five years in prison for "spreading false information and the usurpation of the profession of journalism" in what his lawyer alleges was an unfair trial.

I therefore ask you to immediately and unconditionally release Rabie Lablak and quash his conviction. Pending his release, I call on you to ensure he has access to qualified health professionals and healthcare provided in line with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy, and informed consent. I finally call on you to investigate the conditions of his detention and the lack of adequate healthcare provided during his hunger strike.

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Rabie Lablak is one of several Moroccan journalists, activists and human rights defenders who were sentenced to prison in 2017 for their involvement in peaceful protests as part of the Hirak El-Rif in Morocco. On 11 April 2019, he was transferred from Okasha Prison in Casablanca to Tangier 2 Prison in Tangier. This has further isolated Rabie and his fellow detainees, as it made it almost impossible for their families to visit detained relatives since it is very far from their homes. At the time of his transfer, Rabie was on a hunger strike, to demand freedom and protest an unfair trial.

Between 26 May and 15 July 2017, Moroccan law enforcement officers arrested 54 individuals with ties to Hirak El-Rif including protest leader Nasser Zefzafi, peaceful protesters Nabil Hamjike, Ouassim El Bousestatii, Achraf El Yakhoulfi, Mohamed Jelloul, and Mohamed El Mejaoui, journalists Hamid El Mahdaoui and Rabie Lablak and citizen-journalists Mohamed El Asrihi, Hussein El Idrissi, Fouad Essaidi; and neighbours and friends of Nasser Zefzafi, including brothers Ibrahim and Othmane Bouziane.

The Hirak El-Rif called for social justice and improved public services in the long-marginalized northern region of Morocco. Defence lawyers say many are facing trumped-up charges because of their peaceful protest, dissent, or online coverage of the demonstrations. Since May 2017, police have arrested hundreds of people over the Rif protests, many of them arbitrarily, including peaceful activists and some journalists and many have already been sentenced to prison terms of up to 20 years on protest-related charges.

Several of the Hirak El-Rif detainees have gone on hunger strike since 2017, including 35 in Ain Sbaa 1 Local Prison in 2017. Some went on hunger strike to protest against apparent reprisals against hunger-strikers during cell and strip-searches on 20 September 2017. Morocco's General Delegation for Penitentiary Administration and Reinsertion has repeatedly denied the hunger strikes of Hirak EL-Rif detainees in public, even though several detainees met judicial officials and were moved to the prison infirmary because of their deteriorating health.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic, French or English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 18 December 2019.

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Rabie Lablak (he/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde29/1296/2019/en/>