

15 September 2017

Morocco – Human rights defender and lawyer Abdessadeq El Bouchtaoui summoned for interrogation

Human rights defender and lawyer **Abdessadeq El Bouchtaoui** has been summoned for interrogation by Moroccan authorities. He will have to appear on 18 September 2017 at 10.00 am at Tétouan police station.

[Abdessadeq El Bouchtaoui](#) is a human rights defender and lawyer who represents activists in Al-Hoceima who have faced charges in relation to protests. He is also the attorney of the family of Emad El-Attabi, who died as a result of clashes between police and protesters in July 2017 during which over 80 people were injured. The human rights defender has denounced excessive use of force by Moroccan forces against non-violent protesters and restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly. He is also the co-founder of the National Association for Human Rights in Morocco.

Abdessadeq El Bouchtaoui was summoned on 7 September 2017. He was told that he was being investigated in relation to his legal representation of Al-Hoceima activists. The human rights defender was previously interrogated on 11 August 2017 at Tétouan police station. He had received summons on 9 August during a court hearing visit with family members to request the retrieval of the body of Emad El-Attabi.

His summons and questioning follows his criticism on Facebook of the repression of Al-Hoceima protests, which were held in response to a speech in which King Mohammed VI described those criticizing government development policies and protesters as “collaborating against the homeland”. The King responded to the protests stating that law enforcement agents were “showing restraint and commitment to the rule of law as they maintained security and stability.”

During the protests, police forces used tear gas, resulting in the hospitalization of several protesters, including Emad El-Attabi, who died after being hit by a tear gas canister on 20 July 2017. Police were also recorded punching protesters, including during other [earlier demonstrations](#).

Front Line Defenders condemns the judicial harassment of Abdessadeq El Bouchtaoui, which appears to be the result of his work as a human rights lawyer and the exercise of his freedom of expression.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Morocco to:

1. Halt the summons and immediately cease all further harassment of Abdessadeq El Bouchtaoui, as Front Line believes that this judicial harassment is carried out solely as a result of his legitimate work in defence of human rights;
2. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Morocco and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.