

1 October 2019

Morocco: Woman human rights defender Hajar Raissouni sentenced

On 30 September 2019, the Court of First Instance in Rabat sentenced human rights defender **Hajar Raissouni** to one year of imprisonment, and a fine of 500 Durham (50 EUR). Hajar Raissouni was arrested on 31 August 2019 on charges of “undergoing an illegal abortion” and “adultery”.

[Hajar Raissouni](#) is a woman human right defender and journalist at **Akhbar Alyoum** newspaper, where she covers issues related to corruption and the detention of anti-corruption activists in the Rif region in the north of the country. She has also been critical of the lack of provision of public services.

On 31 August 2019, Hajar Raissouni was arrested by the Moroccan police without a warrant in Rabat. She was detained at a local police station for the first 48 hours of her detention without being allowed to receive family or lawyer visits. The interrogation included questions about her family and work. She was forced to undergo a gynaecological examination and was refused adequate medical treatment. Forty-eight hours after her arrest, she was transferred to Arjat Local Prison.

On 23 September 2019, her lawyer submitted a complaint regarding the illegal circumstances of her arrest, which was rejected by the Court of First Instance in Rabat. The circumstances of Hajar Raissouni’s arrest indicate that her arrest is solely motivated by her human rights work.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned that the accusations against woman human rights defender Hajar Raissouni are solely motivated by her peaceful and legitimate human rights work and activities.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Morocco to:

1. Immediately release Hajar Raissouni and quash her sentence, as Front Line Defenders believes that she is being targeted solely as a result of her legitimate human rights work;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Hajar Raissouni, while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the *‘Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment’*, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Morocco are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw attention to Article 6 (b and c): “*Everyone has the right,*

individually and in association with others: (b) As provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms; (c) To study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters”, and to Article 12 (1 and 2): “(1) Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. (2) The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.”

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson

Executive Director