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Morocco: Pro-Palestinian activist and human rights defender Ismail Lghazaoui sentenced to one year in prison

On 10 December 2024, The Court of First Instance in Casablanca sentenced the pro-Palestinian activist and human rights defender **Ismail Lghazaoui** to one year in prison and a fine of 5,000 Moroccan Dirhams (equivalent to 478 euros) for “inciting to commit felonies and misdemeanors by electronic means.”

[Ismail Lghazaoui](#) is a Moroccan pro-Palestinian human rights defender, activist, and agricultural engineer who peacefully advocates for Palestinian people’s rights, denouncing Morocco’s normalisation of relations with Israel. He has been actively involved in the [‘boycott of Carrefour’ campaign](#), initiated in response to the call launched by the Palestinian civil society, in particular the [BDS movement](#), to boycott companies as a form of non-violent international pressure on Israel. He has also been involved in the [“Mask off Maersk”](#) campaign, a strategy to stop the flow of weapons to Israel. Due to his peaceful activism, the human rights defender was arrested by the Moroccan authorities and sentenced to one year in prison.

On 10 December 2024, Ismail Lghazaoui was sentenced by the Court of First Instance in Casablanca to one year in prison and a fine of 5,000 Moroccan Dirhams (equivalent to 478 euros) for “inciting to commit felonies and misdemeanors by electronic means.” Neither the Court nor the prosecution provided any information regarding the specific misdemeanour or felony the human rights defender was accused of inciting.

On 19 November 2024, Ismail Lghazaoui was summoned to appear before the National Judicial Police Squad in Casablanca. After the usual procedures, he was detained for 48 hours and interrogated. On 21 of the same month, the human rights defender appeared before the King’s Prosecutor at the Ain Sebaa Court of First Instance in Casablanca. The Court rejected his request for bail and charged him with “inciting one or more persons to commit a felony or misdemeanor if the incitement has no subsequent effect,” in accordance with article 1-299 of the Moroccan Criminal Code. On 26 November 2024, The Ain Sebaa Court of First Instance in Casablanca set a new date to hear the charges of “inciting one or more persons to commit a felony or misdemeanor if the incitement has no subsequent effect,” issued against Ismail Lghazaoui. During the hearing, the defense team renewed its request for provisional release, but this request was rejected for the second time by the Court and the hearing was postponed until 3 December 2024.

On 25 October 2024, Ismail Lghazaoui was arrested by the Moroccan police while on his way to join a demonstration in front of the US Consulate in Casablanca in protest against the US administration’s support of the genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza, committed by Israel. The human rights defender was assaulted and arrested by agents believed to be from the National

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Judicial Police's specialised squad for political cases. He was taken to the Casablanca Security Directorate headquarters, where his identity was recorded before he was later released.

BDS Morocco has released a [statement](#) stating that it considers the sentencing of Ismail Lghazaoui to be a denial of his right to solidarity with the Palestinian people and a serious indicator of the increasing infringement of rights and freedoms in Morocco, in particular, the freedom of expression and the freedom of assembly and peaceful protest. The denial of these rights indicates a regression in the human rights achievements for which the Moroccan people have been struggling. The movement also considers the Court's verdict in Ismail Lghazaoui's case to have been arbitrary, as the prosecution failed to specify the misdemeanour or felony Ismail Lghazaoui was accused of inciting. The human rights defender's defence team similarly argued that this rendered the prosecution of Ismail Lghazaoui legally invalid.

Front Line Defenders condemns the prosecution and detention of Ismail Lghazaoui, believing it to be a clear act of reprisal by the authorities in Morocco for his legitimate and peaceful work as a human rights defender. The prosecution of Ismail Lghazaoui is part of a pattern of restrictions on the right to freedom expression and assembly, intimidations, harassment and reprisals against human rights defenders and peaceful activists in Morocco supporting the Palestinian people.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Morocco to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release human rights defender Ismail Lghazaoui;
2. Cease the targeting of pro-Palestinian activists and human rights defenders in Morocco;
3. Ensure that all human rights defenders in Morocco can carry out their human rights activities and exercise their right to freedom of expression without fear of reprisals, in line with Morocco's international human rights obligations and commitments.

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