

24 October 2019

Morocco: Human rights defender Rabi Al Ablaq's health is in critical condition after more than six weeks on hunger strike.

Human rights defender **Rabi Al Ablaq**'s health has severely deteriorated after spending over six weeks on hunger strike to protest against the physical abuse and ill-treatment he has been subjected to in Tangier prison. The prison administration is refusing to provide him with adequate medical assistance.

[Rabi Al Ablaq](#) is a human rights defender and journalist at the news websites Badeel and 24 Rif. He is a member of the Rif Movement, which demands equal social, economic, and cultural rights for the Rif region in Morocco. The Rif Movement also advocates for the protection of Amazigh identity and indigenous language, and calls for the release of members of the Rif Movement who have been detained as political prisoners.

Rabi Al Ablaq and several other human rights defenders from the Rif Movement have been continually harassed by the Moroccan authorities. Rabi Al Ablaq was arrested on 12 May 2017 from Al Hoceima city by the Morocco secret police. After being held for more than one year in preventive detention, the Casablanca Appeals Court charged the human rights defender with 'conspiracy against the state', and he was sentenced to five years in prison. Rabi Al Ablaq is being held at Tangier prison which is 290 kilometers from his home city Al Hoceima. The human rights defender has been continually ill-treated and physically abused by the prison guards. He was stripped and threatened with sexual abuse in order to coerce him into approving and signing the interrogation dossier.

On 6 September 2019, Rabi Al Ablaq started an open ended hunger strike as a protest against the physical abuse to which he was subjected, and to demand a fair trial after the Casablanca Appeals Court refused to hear his defence before his sentencing. Six weeks into the hunger strike, the human rights defender's health has become critical. Despite being incapable of movement the Tangier prison administration is refusing to transfer him to a hospital.

Rabi Al Ablaq has been on hunger strike several times to protest against abuse and unfair judicial proceedings against him. In July 2017, he went into a coma and spent 13 days in intensive care, following a thirty-nine day hunger strike.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the continued imprisonment and poor health of Rabi Al Ablaq, as it believes that his imprisonment and ill-treatment are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defending human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the Moroccan authorities to:

1. Immediately release Rabi Al Ablaq and quash his sentence as Front Line Defenders believes that he has been targeted solely as a result of his legitimate human rights work.
2. Ensure that the treatment of Rabi Al Ablaq, 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. Provide the necessary medical treatment for Rabi Al Ablaq.
4. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the physical and sexual abuses against Rabi Al Ablaq, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards.

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 12 (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”* and to Article 18 (2): *“Individuals, groups, and non-governmental organisations have an important role to play and a responsibility in safeguarding democracy, promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms and contributing to the promotion and advancement of democratic societies, institutions and processes.”*

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

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson

Executive Director