

18 December 2018

Western Sahara : Judicial Harassment of human rights defender **Brahim Dihani**

On 18 December 2018, human rights defender Brahim Dihani was interrogated and charged with “breaching the right to privacy” for his documentation of peaceful protests in the city of Al Ayoun over the past months.

Brahim Dihani is a human rights defender who works to monitor and document peaceful protests within the Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Violations of Human Rights Committed by the Moroccan State, or **ASVDH**. ASVDH is an independent human rights NGO that operates in occupied Western Sahara. The organisation has been denied registration by the Moroccan authorities since its foundation in 2005.

On 17 December 2018 Brahim Dihani received an oral summons from the Moroccan police demanding that he present himself before the Royal Public Prosecutor in the First Instance Court in the city of Al Ayoun. The summons order was triggered by two police reports issued after the human rights defender was arrested on 27 October and 4 December. Prior to these arrests he had been documenting peaceful protests organised by the Coordination of Sahrawi Human Rights Activities in the city of Al Ayoun.

The Royal Public Prosecutor upheld the charge related to a breach of the right to privacy for publishing photos and videos of people without their consent, according to article 447-2 of the Moroccan criminal code, as amended by new law 103.13 on the protection of personal data. The new law allows for the prosecution of those taking photographs or filming in public places. Under this charge, Brahim Dihani could face a sentence of up to three years in prison and a fine of up to 20000 MAD (2000 euro). The first hearing for the human rights defender is due to take place on 16 January 2019.

Front Line Defenders condemns the ongoing judicial harassment of **Brahim Dihani**, as it believes the charges against him are solely motivated by his peaceful and legitimate work in the defence of human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the Kingdom of Morocco to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally drop the charges against human rights defender Brahim Dihani;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Brahim Dihani ;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Western Sahara are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.