

MOROCCO

HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER SENTENCED IN ABSENTIA

On November 21, 2022, security agents arrested and imprisoned prominent human rights lawyer Mohamed Ziane. This was almost an hour after the Rabat court of appeal confirmed his sentencing of three years imprisonment in absentia. The 11 charges against him are unrelated and include bogus charges of insulting public officials and institutions, defamation, and marital infidelity. The only recognizable charge against him, that of sexual assault, should be dealt with through proceedings that meet international fair trial standards.

Since his arrest and imprisonment on November 21, 2022, Mohamed Ziane has been held in a cell alone in Arjate 1 prison in Salé, a city next to the capital Rabat. He is forbidden from communicating with other prisoners and is only permitted visits from his lawyer. In detention, prison guards have denied Mohamed Ziane access to any reading or writing materials.

Write to the Head of Government urging him to:

- immediately drop all bogus charges held against Mohamed Ziane
- investigate the allegation of sexual assault in an independent, impartial and transparent process

Write to:

Head of Government Aziz Akhannouch
Palais Royal Touarga
Rabat 10070, Morocco
Fax: 00 212 53 7771010
Twitter: @ChefGov_ma
Salutation: *Your Excellency,*

And copy:

Her Excellency Souriya OTMANI
Ambassador
Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco
38 Range Road
Ottawa, ON K1N 8J4
Tel: (613) 236-7391, -7392, -7913, 6064 Fax: (613) 236-6164
Email: sifamaot@bellnet.ca

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mohamed Ziane (79) is the ex-minister for Human Rights in Morocco. In 1996, he resigned his role in the Moroccan government, saying he no longer agreed with their policies. Since leaving government, he has defended several activists, journalists and victims of human rights violations.

In 2021, the ministry of the interior made 11 accusations against Mohamed Ziane. In February 2022, the Rabat First instance tribunal found him guilty of the 11 counts and sentenced him to three years in prison and a 5000MAD fine. His lawyer appealed the verdict but was not informed of a date for the appeals process. On November 21, 2022, the appeals court confirmed the sentencing and ordered his immediate imprisonment on request by the public prosecution, under articles 392 and 414 of the penal procedure code, which allows the prosecutor to order that the accused be put in detention immediately. In detention, prison guards have denied Mohamed Ziane access to any reading or writing materials. Mohamed Ziane has ongoing health conditions which require special treatment that is not provided in the prison. On December 2, 2022, his lawyer filed a request for his release at the Rabat appeals court. On December 5, 2022, the court refused the request for his release without explanation.

In November 2021, a complaint was filed against Mohamed Ziane for sexual harassment, blackmail, making immoral allegations, and threats. Sexual harassment accusations must each be considered on their merits and Amnesty International is not well placed to assess their veracity. Amnesty International notes that there has been a recent pattern of sexual assault charges being brought against critics of the government in the context of detention or prosecutions related to the exercise of their right to freedom of expression. In one case of a detained newspaper publisher [Omar Radi](#), the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) found that his detention in relation to rape accusations amounted to “judicial harassment attributable to nothing other than his investigative journalism”. In the case of journalist Suleiman Raissouni, detained since June 22, 2020 on sexual assault charges, the WGAD concluded that the violations of his right to a fair trial are of such gravity that they render his detention arbitrary.

***** Please take action at your earliest convenience.**