

21 May 2020

### **Western Sahara: Arbitrary detention of human rights defender Ibrahim Mrikli**

On 15 May 2020, human rights defender **Ibrahim Mrikli** was arbitrarily detained in El Ayoun by several Moroccan police officers dressed in plain clothes. He has been charged with ‘insulting public servants’, ‘stone throwing’ and ‘violating quarantine regulations’.

[Ibrahim Mrikli](#) is a human rights defender and a member of the Nushatta Foundation for Media and Human Rights, a Western Sahara-based NGO which has been working in the field of media activism and human rights advocacy since it was established in 2013. Ibrahim Mrikli works as a photographer with the Nushatta Foundation, documenting human rights violations committed by the Moroccan authorities in Western Sahara.

On 15 May 2020 at approximately 11pm, Ibrahim Mrikli was on his way to the local pharmacy when he was stopped and arrested by several Moroccan police officers dressed in plain clothes. He was then taken to the Security Station in El Ayoun, where he was held in solitary confinement until 9:00am the next morning. Ibrahim Mrikli was interrogated for two and a half hours, during which he was physically and verbally abused and expressly told by the interrogator that his lawyer was not allowed to be present during the interrogation. Ibrahim Mrikli’s phone was confiscated during the interrogation and inspected by the officers.

On 17 May 2020, Ibrahim Mrikli was charged with ‘insulting public servants’, ‘stone throwing’ and ‘violating the quarantine regulations’. These charges were based on alleged confessions given by Ibrahim Mrikli during the interrogation, however the human rights defender refutes the claim that he confessed to these crimes. Ibrahim Mrikli was released on a bail of 3000 Dirham (approximately 300 Euros) on the same day. The hearing is yet to be scheduled.

Ibrahim Mrikli has previously been harassed and subjected to arbitrary detention by the Moroccan authorities. In January 2019, he was detained for two months, and in July 2019, he was also sentenced to four months’ imprisonment. In both instances he was charged with ‘insulting public servants’ and ‘stone throwing’.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned regarding the arbitrary detention of Ibrahim Mrikli and the charges brought against him. Front Line Defenders believes that the arbitrary detention and charges are in direct reprisal for his peaceful and legitimate human rights work, documenting violations in Western Sahara.

#### **Front Line Defenders urges the Moroccan authorities to:**

1. Immediately drop all charges against Ibrahim Mrikli as it is believed that they are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the physical abuse of human rights defender Ibrahim Mrikli, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Return Ibrahim Mrikli’s phone which was confiscated during the arrest, as it is not manifestly linked to the charges against him;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Western Sahara are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

**Front Line Defenders Board of Trustees**

Denis O'Brien, Noeline Blackwell, Jim Conway, Mary Lawlor, Maria Mulcahy,  
Kieran Mulvey, Mary Jane Real (Philippines), David Sykes, Arnold Tsunga (Zimbabwe)

**Front Line Defenders International Advisory Council**

James L. Cavallaro, Maryam Elahi, Michel Forst, Hina Jilani, Maina Kiai

Front Line, The International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders trading as Front Line Defenders, is registered in Ireland as a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. Registered Office: Second Floor, Grattan House, Temple Road, Blackrock, Co Dublin, A94 FA39, Ireland.

Company No. 593190; Registered Charity No. 20045241; CHY 14029