

URGENT ACTION

FREE POLITICAL OPPONENT JAILED FOR HIS ACTIVISM

Moroccan lawyer and political activist Mohamed Ziane, 84 years old, remains arbitrarily detained since 2022 in El Arjat 1 Prison and is currently being held in prolonged solitary confinement, not being able to join other prisoners or take a walk in the area outside. He was initially sentenced to three years in prison on charges related to insulting public officials. While serving his sentence he was tried in a separate case in relation to embezzlement and misappropriation of funds, for which he received a five-year sentence, handed down by the Rabat Court of Appeal on 8 April 2026. According to his lawyer, Mohamed Ziane's health has seriously deteriorated. In June 2026, prison authorities imposed disciplinary measures after he expressed solidarity with detained activists and critics of the authorities during a phone call with his lawyer. As a result, he was temporarily barred from purchasing food and even bottled drinking water from the prison commissary, exacerbating his kidney condition. Moroccan authorities must immediately release Mohamed Ziane and quash his convictions, and pending his release ensure that he receives adequate healthcare and is held in conditions that meet international standards.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Head of Government Aziz Akhannouch
Palais Royal Touarga Rabat 10070, Morocco
Fax: +212 53 7771010
Twitter/X: @ChefGov_ma

Your Excellency,

I write to express my grave concern over the continued arbitrary detention of Mohamed Ziane, an 84-year-old lawyer, former minister and political activist in El Arjat 1 prison, near Rabat, and his deteriorating health. He was initially convicted in 2022 on charges including "insulting public officials and the judiciary", "insulting a constituted body" and defamation in relation to public statements he made, and sentenced to three years in prison.

In 2024, before the expiry of his initial sentence, a separate case was opened against him in connection with trumped up allegations of embezzlement and misappropriation of funds from the Moroccan Liberal Party, of which he was president. He was convicted on these charges and, on 8 April 2026, the Rabat Court of Appeal, following a retrial, increased his sentence from three to five years' imprisonment. His lawyers have filed a new appeal before the Court of Cassation, which remains pending.

According to his lawyer, Mohamed Ziane is being held in prolonged solitary confinement, which is prohibited by international standards, and is prevented from communicating with other prisoners. His health has seriously deteriorated during detention. He lost 30kg, suffers from chronic kidney disease, and has developed severe dental deterioration due to poor nutrition and deficiencies in calcium and fluoride.

I am further concerned by reports that in June 2026 prison authorities imposed disciplinary measures after Mohamed Ziane expressed solidarity with detained activists and critics of the authorities during a phone call with his lawyer. As a result, he was temporarily prevented from purchasing food and even water from the prison store, despite the concerns for his health. His lawyer has submitted complaints to the prison administration regarding these measures and their impact on his health.

Morocco is bound by its obligations under international human rights law, including the prohibition of arbitrary detention and torture and other ill-treatment, and the requirement to ensure adequate healthcare for people deprived of their liberty.

I urge you to immediately release Mohamed Ziane, whose detention is linked solely to the exercise of his

rights to freedom of expression and association. Pending his release ensure that he has access to adequate health care, including treatment appropriate for his age and chronic health conditions, end his prolonged solitary confinement and ensure that he can communicate regularly with his family and lawyers.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mohamed Ziane, 84, is a prominent Moroccan lawyer, former minister of human rights and former president of the Moroccan Liberal Party. In 1996, he resigned from his role in the Moroccan government saying he no longer agrees with their policies. As a lawyer, he has defended victims of human rights violations such as activists, journalists, and human rights defenders. He has been repeatedly prosecuted in reprisal for his work and activism. He has been in detention since November 2022.

In a case dating from 2022, he served a three-year prison sentence following a complaint by the Ministry of Interior. The charges included insulting public officials and judicial bodies, influencing judicial proceedings and spreading false allegations according to Articles 263 and 265 of the Moroccan Criminal Code following a public statement in which he criticized Moroccan authorities and security services and accused them of corruption.

While he was imprisoned, Ziane was prosecuted in 2024 in a separate case concerning the alleged mismanagement of funds by the Moroccan Liberal Party during the 2015 legislative elections, under Article 241 of the Moroccan Penal Code. According to his defence team, the proceedings were after the party publicly criticized the Moroccan intelligence services in 2021. The Rabat Court of Appeal initially reduced Ziane's sentence from five years to three years' imprisonment. However, the Court of Cassation subsequently quashed the judgment and ordered a retrial. On 8 April 2026, the Rabat Court of Appeal reinstated the original five-year sentence. His defence has filed a further appeal before the Court of Cassation.

His lawyer further reports that since June 2026 he has been subjected to harsh treatment and increased surveillance inside the prison as the prison administration denies him walks in the courtyard and access to the commissary while keeping him in a solitary cell with limited contact and visitations from his family and lawyers. The defence argues that these measures were imposed because he peacefully expressed political opinions and solidarity with other detainees.

Mohamed Ziane's case is part of a wider pattern of Moroccan authorities using criminal laws to silence dissent and punish individuals simply for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association. In recent years, journalists, human rights defenders, and activists, including Soulaïmane Raïssouni, and Saida El Alami, have faced prosecution and imprisonment following trials that Amnesty International considered to raise serious fair trial concerns and to be linked to their criticism of authorities, journalism, or human rights work.

Morocco is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture, which require authorities to respect freedom of expression and to ensure humane treatment and adequate healthcare for all people deprived of their liberty.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic, French, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 17 February 2027

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Mohamed Ziane (He/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde29/6727/2023/en/>