

# ACT NOW

# MOROCCO CHEKIB EL-KHIARI

**PLEASE CALL ON THE MOROCCAN GOVERNMENT TO:**

- Immediately and unconditionally release Chekib El-Khiari as he is prisoner of conscience detained solely for his legitimate human rights work and for exercising his right to freedom of expression.
- Ensure that no restrictions are imposed on freedom of expression or other activities of human rights defenders and journalists in Morocco beyond those permissible in international law.

**WRITE TO:**

His Majesty King Mohammed VI  
Bureau de Sa Majesté le Roi  
Palais royal  
Rabat  
Morocco

Fax: +212 53 776 8515

Salutation: Your Majesty

Amnesty International is a global movement of 2.2 million people in more than 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights.

Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

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Amnesty International  
International Secretariat  
Peter Benenson House  
1 Easton Street  
London WC1X 0DW  
United Kingdom  
[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

**END REPRESSION OF HUMAN  
RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



# PROSECUTED FOR DENOUNCING CORRUPTION

# CHEKIB EL-KHIARI

**Chekib El-Khiari**, a human rights defender and journalist, is in Oukacha prison in Casablanca because he **criticized Moroccan authorities** and officials. He is a **prisoner of conscience**, jailed solely for raising the issue of the involvement of unnamed high-ranking state officials in drug-trafficking and corruption and for his legitimate human rights work.

On 17 February 2009, Chekib El-Khiari was summoned to report to the police in Casablanca. The following day he was escorted home by police officers, who searched the premises and **confiscated a number of items**, including documents and his computer. They then took him away. Pending his trial, his lawyer's requests that Chekib El-Khiari be released on **bail were refused**.

On 24 June the Casablanca Tribunal of First Instance convicted him of **undermining or insulting a public institution**, and of opening a bank account abroad and transferring money without proper authorization. The latter charges refer to an incident in 2006, when Chekib El-Khiari opened a bank account in Spain in order to cash a cheque for around 250 euros from the Spanish newspaper *El País*, for which he had written an article. He was **sentenced to three years' imprisonment** and a heavy fine.

According to the state-run news agency Maghreb Arab Press, the General Crown Prosecutor at the Court of Appeals in Casablanca ordered the summons because of public statements Chekib El-Khiari had made, including on national television, **alleging that high-ranking state officials** in Rif were **involved in drug-trafficking and corruption**.

According to the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, human rights defenders have **the right to carry out their work**, including collecting and disseminating information and views on human rights issues, without fear of reprisals.

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Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Morocco is a state party, guarantees the **right to freedom of expression**.

Chekib El-Khiari, who is from Rif, a coastal region in northern Morocco, founded the Association of Human Rights in the Rif (Association du Rif des droits de l'homme, ARDH) in 2005. The organization campaigns on a number of issues, including the treatment of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa in Morocco, violence against women, and the drug trade in Morocco's northern coastal region.

Chekib El-Khiari is also an **outspoken advocate of the rights of the Amazigh** (Berber) community in the region.

On 24 November, the Court of Appeal of Casablanca confirmed the conviction of Chekib El-Khiari. He and his family decided not to lodge an appeal with Morocco's highest court, having **lost faith in the independence of the judiciary**. Chekib El-Khiari's brother Amine told Amnesty International:

*"Chekib refused to appeal before the Supreme Court because he does not believe in Moroccan justice... When we appealed, the lawyers referred to several official government statements on the involvement of high-ranking officials in drugs trafficking, but the court did not take those statements into account... We are decided to continue our struggle."*

## CHEKIB REFUSED TO APPEAL BEFORE THE SUPREME COURT BECAUSE HE DOES NOT BELIEVE IN MOROCCAN JUSTICE

**Amine El-Khiari, brother of Chekib El-Khiari**