

11th December 2009
AI Index: MDE 29/016/2009

Dear Aminatou,

We are members of a coalition of women human rights defenders from across the globe, who are gravely concerned for your health and wellbeing; and aware that your stance is informed by a lifetime's commitment to a human rights cause.

We are aware of the courage and determination you have always shown in your many years of work on behalf of Sahrawi prisoners of conscience and political prisoners. We are also conscious of the many trials you have experienced in the course of your work, and can only imagine what the impact of these must have been on you personally and on your family. Most of all we know you to be an inspiring activist, a fact borne out by the many times your work has been recognised internationally, as well as the testimonies of those who have the good fortune to have worked with you, and continue to do so.

We can only imagine how painful your separation from your family – particularly your children – must be. As mothers, sisters, and daughters ourselves, tonight we will hold our family members that little bit closer, aware of the price you are paying for the cause you advocate.

We continue to urge the Moroccan authorities to permit your return to Laayoune immediately and unconditionally. We consider that you have been targeted because of your human rights work, and because of your public stance in support of self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

With your work and example in mind we need to redouble our efforts to make known the exceptional work of so many human rights defenders across the globe, and through the opportunities we have to express our opinions, to demand that key freedoms of expression, association and assembly be upheld - for Sahrawis - and for everyone.

We won't ask you to stop your hunger strike, for this is a decision that only you can make. What we do know is that you are very much needed here to continue to engage and inspire - to continue your unique contribution to transforming our world for the better of the Sahrawi people, and for us all.

We send you our warmest regards. Please know you are in our thoughts.

Mary Jane Real

Eric Sottas, on behalf of:



Gita Sahgal, on behalf of



Marieme Helie Lucas, on behalf of

حوائظ زبير اش مسام قوائظ
Women Living Under Muslim Laws
النساء في ظل قوائظ المسلمين
Femmes sous lois musulmanes

Sunila Abeysekera, on behalf of IWRAW Asia Pacific

Lydia Alpizar Duran, on behalf of

awid women's
rights

Center for Women's  Global Leadership

Charlotte Bunch, on behalf of

Virada Somswasdi, on behalf of the Foundation for Women, Law and Rural Development

Tara Madden, on behalf of Front Line

Vivian Stomberg, on behalf of MADRE