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Persecution and upcoming trial of 25 Gdem Izik protest camp activists

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you on behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation, representing 181 million workers in 162 countries, to strongly condemn the ongoing detentions and convictions of activists who participated in the 2010 Gdeim Izik protest camp.

On 8 November 2010, the Moroccan police invaded and dismantled the camp of Gdeim Izik with brutal force, including by burning jaimas, using physical violence, tear gas, hot water cannons and rubber bullets, leaving hundreds wounded and several dead. On 17 November 2010, the United Nations Security Council condemned the violence during the dismantlement of the camp.

Rather than holding those responsible for the violence to account, the Kingdom of Morocco arbitrarily detained 25 Sahrawis for their participation in the mass protest action which drew support from 30,000 Sahrawis denouncing social and economic marginalization, including through mass dismissals and arbitrary detentions.

On 17 February 2012, the activists were condemned to extremely long prison sentences: nine of them to life imprisonment, four to 30 years in prison, seven to 25 years, three to 20 years and two to 2 years in prison. Despite the annulment of the sentences, the activists continue to be arbitrarily detained. We have now been informed by the trade union UGT SARIO that they will face yet another trial on 26 December, this time by a civil court.

Participation in peaceful protests is not a crime. Moreover, charging and sentencing activists for organizing and participating in public protests constitute blatant violations of the right to freedom of association. We strongly urge you to immediately withdraw all civil and criminal charges that are related to the organization of and participation in the 2010 Gdeim Izik protest camp as a matter of priority.

Yours sincerely,



General Secretary