



Australia Western
Sahara Association

Working for justice for the Saharawi people

PO Box 849 Rozelle, NSW 2039, Australia email: info@awsa.org.au web: <https://awsa.org.au>

PRESS RELEASE

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AWSA URGES UN SECRETARY-GENERAL TO ACT IMMEDIATELY TO SAVE SAHRAWI POLITICAL PRISONER NAÂMA ASFARI

The Australia Western Sahara Association (AWSA) today addressed an urgent letter to United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, calling on him to intervene for the immediate release of Sahrawi human rights defender Naâma Asfari and his fellow Gdeim Izik political prisoners held in Moroccan prisons.

The letter warns that Mr Asfari's life is in grave danger after he began an open-ended hunger strike at Kenitra Central Prison on 8 June 2026.

Mr Asfari has been imprisoned for more than fifteen years. His health has reportedly deteriorated rapidly, and he has been transferred to the prison infirmary.

AWSA called on the Secretary-General to urge Morocco to release Mr Asfari and the other Sahrawi political prisoners arrested following the Moroccan authorities' forcible dismantling of the Gdeim Izik peaceful protest camp in occupied Western Sahara on 8 November 2010.

The Gdeim Izik camp was established by thousands of Sahrawis protesting peacefully against discrimination, poverty, unemployment and the denial of their fundamental political, social and economic rights. Moroccan security forces forcibly dismantled the camp in November 2010, after which numerous Sahrawis were arrested and allegations of torture and serious mistreatment were documented.

Mr Asfari was sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment.

AWSA Secretary Lesley Osborne said the continued imprisonment of the Gdeim Izik prisoners represented a serious challenge to the authority and credibility of the United Nations human rights system.

“United Nations human rights bodies have already determined that Mr Asfari was tortured and that the detention of the Gdeim Izik prisoners is arbitrary. Morocco cannot be permitted to disregard these findings indefinitely.” Ms Osborne said

“Mr Asfari is now risking his life through a peaceful hunger strike because every other avenue for justice has been ignored. The United Nations must act before it is too late.”

In its letter, AWSA stressed that Mr Asfari’s demands are reasonable and consistent with international law. They include implementation of the relevant United Nations decisions, an end to medical neglect, transfer to a prison closer to Western Sahara so that his family can visit him, and meaningful dialogue concerning the treatment of Sahrawi detainees.

“The continued detention and mistreatment of Sahrawi human rights defenders cannot be separated from Morocco’s ongoing occupation of Western Sahara and the denial of the Sahrawi people’s inalienable right to self-determination,” Ms Osborne said.

“Every day that passes increases the risk that Naâma Asfari’s peaceful protest will end not in justice, but in irreversible injury or death. His life must not be sacrificed because Morocco refuses to respect the decisions of the United Nations.”

AWSA called on the international community, governments and human rights organisations to make urgent representations to Morocco and to demand the immediate and unconditional release of Mr Asfari and all the Gdeim Izik political prisoners.

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Media contact:

Lesley Osborne

Secretary

Australia Western Sahara Association

+61 439 363 010

osbornelesley@gmail.com