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Driebergen,

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express concern over the detention of human rights lawyer Mohamed Ziane. He remains detained in Arjate 1 prison in Salé, in prolonged solitary confinement since 21 November 2022, following an unfair trial. An appeals court sentenced Ziane in absentia to three years in prison on charges related solely to his human rights work. On the 17th of May 2023, the Rabat’s Court of Cassation rejected his case. Ziane’s lawyers argued that the previous ruling against him violates the law in at least 19 ways. The charge of “adultery” under Article 491 of the Moroccan Penal Code, is unfounded in this case as Moroccan law requires a complaint made by the spouse of one or both parties. In this case, neither parties’ spouse made a complain. This charge, as well as that of “setting a bad example for children” under Article 482, is an example of outdated laws which breach international law.

I urge you to ensure that the bogus conviction and sentence of Mohamed Ziane are quashed and that he is granted a fair trial, in line with international standards, in relation to the sexual assault charge against him. Finally, I urge you to amend or repeal all laws which prohibit freedom of expression, as well as Article 491, which criminalizes consensual sexual relations between adults.

Yours sincerely,

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The Netherlands