

Friends of Ali Aarrass

London Support Committee

Lalla Joumala Alaoui
Ambassador of his Majesty the King of Morocco
To the Court of St James
EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO
49 Queen's Gate Gardens
London
SW7 5NE

15 December 2011

Your Excellency,

We are writing to express our deep dismay at the conviction and sentence of Ali Aarrass on 24 November for alleged involvement in terrorist activity, following a flagrantly unfair trial procedure, in which the only evidence was statements alleged to have been obtained by torture.

Grave concerns were expressed before the trial for the integrity of the proceedings, for the following reasons:

- The allegations forming the basis of the indictment were exhaustively investigated for two years by Spanish examining magistrate Baltasar Garzón, who found no case to answer;
- The allegations were founded solely on statements allegedly obtained by torture, including a confession extracted during Mr Aarrass' fourteen-day incommunicado detention following his extradition in December 2010, but the complaints of torture have never been investigated;
- No independent material or forensic evidence implicating him was ever found despite strenuous efforts by the investigating authorities;
- Police notes presented to the judge contained serious and unexplained discrepancies and alterations, giving rise to suspicion of fabrication and cover-up;
- Mr Aarrass allegedly confessed in Arabic, which he does not speak.

Despite these grave concerns, expressed by international human rights bodies and eminent individuals, all preliminary objections were swept aside and the trial took place on 24 November before three judges of the Rabat Court of Appeal sitting in Salé. After hearing the lawyers' submissions, the judges took barely an hour to convict Mr Aarrass. They did not even wait for his lawyers or interpreter to return to court before pronouncing their verdict and sentencing Mr Aarrass, who had to wait for their return to understand what had happened.

Such a cruel travesty of justice does untold harm to the international reputation of Morocco, conveying the message that the interests of justice and the protection of fundamental rights and human dignity are of little or no importance and that the judiciary does the bidding of the police.

We request that, in order to demonstrate its commitment to the rule of law, your government urgently reviews the judicial and police actions in this case and investigates the complaints of

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torture, and releases Mr Aarrass pending the outcome of such review and investigation.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Corbyn MP

on behalf of himself and the following organisations and individuals:

Bar Human Rights Committee

Helen Bamber OBE, Clinical Director, Helen Bamber Foundation

Tony Bunyan, Statewatch

Liz Fekete, Executive Director, Institute of Race Relations

Professor Penny Green, International State Crimes Initiative, Kings College

Asim Qureshi, Executive Director, CagePrisoners

Estella Schmid, Campaign Against Criminalising Communities (CAMPACC)

Ali Naseem Bajwa QC

Sir Geoffrey Bindman QC

Anthony Gifford QC

John Hendy QC

Stephen Knafler QC

Ian Macdonald QC

Michael Mansfield QC

Hugh Southey QC

Navtej Ahluwalia, barrister

Helen Curtis, barrister

Helen Foot, barrister

Michael House, barrister

Anya Lewis, barrister

Piers Mostyn, barrister

Beatrice Prevatt, barrister

Catherine Rayner, barrister

Sadat Sayeed, barrister

Anthony Vaughan, barrister

Pete Weatherby, barrister

Frances Webber, barrister

Amanda Weston, barrister

Jo Wilding, barrister

Marc Willers, barrister