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Your Excellency,

On 5 December 2019, police arrested Omar Ben Boudouh, also known as Moul al Hanout (grocery store owner), in Khemisset near Rabat, for posting a live video on his Facebook page where he peacefully expresses critical opinions about the lack of justice and rule of law in Morocco. Ben Boudouh said that he held the King of Morocco responsible for the lack of accountability in Morocco, which is legitimate speech protected by freedom of expression under international law. Amnesty International has reviewed Ben Boudouh's interrogation report and found that all the charges against him were related solely to his peaceful expression of views and his dissemination of the video. The organization also reviewed his video and found no incitement to violence or hatred.

On 7 January 2020, a court convicted Ben Boudouh on charges of "offending" public officials and institutions and "incitement to hatred" and sentenced him to three years in prison. On 7 January 2020, Ben Boudouh went on hunger strike to protest the unfairness of his conviction and demand his immediate release. On 14 February 2020, he was transferred to a hospital after his health significantly deteriorated, and his body weakened, according to members of his family. His lawyers appealed the court decision on 12 February 2020, and a verdict is set to be pronounced on 26 February 2020. Omar Ben Boudouh, is the only breadwinner for a family of five kids, the youngest of which is only two years old.

I therefore ask you to immediately and unconditionally release Omar Ben Boudouh and quash his conviction as he is a prisoner of conscience. Pending his release, I call on you to ensure he has access to qualified health professionals and health care provided in line with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy, and informed consent. Finally, I call on you to stop detaining people for peacefully criticizing the authorities and reform laws that violate the right to freedom of expression.

Yours sincerely,