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Your Excellency,

I am writing to raise concerns about the ongoing detention of whistle-blower and anti-corruption activist **Mohamed Benhlime**, a 33-year-former military official, who's been detained in El-Blida military prison since 28 April 2022. He remains held in solitary confinement, granted 10-minute breaks per day and continuously denied any contact with other prisoners. Officers at El Blida military prison have also banned him from receiving meals, clothes and even books provided by his family.

He was sentenced to death in absentia in 2021, while still an asylum seeker in Spain, on charges of espionage and desertion. On 4 September 2022, an Algiers appeal court upheld the conviction and sentenced him to a total of twelve years in prison in three different cases. He stood charges for "participation in a terrorist group" (Article 87bis 3 of the Penal Code) and "publishing fake news undermining national unity" (Art.196 bis).

On 19 June 2022, he had testified in front of a judge in Kolea court that military security agents in S'hawla intelligence center in Algiers subjected him to torture and other ill-treatment for many days straight after his refoulement to Algeria on 24 March 2022. The allegations include him being stripped naked and freezing water poured on his body. The Algerian authorities did not publicly share proof of a formal investigation into Mohamed Benhlime's claims of torture and other ill-treatment taking place despite his family formally requesting an investigation in a letter they addressed to the Algerian authorities on 25 June 2022. The prison administration also practice discrimination against him and his family as they leave them waiting until the official visit time is almost over and that all other families have finished their visits before allowing them to see him for less than 10 minutes and in the presence of guards. Mohamed Benhlime's family have also reported several acts of intimidation against them. They reported unnecessary questioning by El Blida prison staff following every visit paid to Mohamed Benhlime.

I urge you to ensure the immediate release of Mohamed Benhlime, to quash his death sentence in absentia, and to drop all the charges against him as they are based solely on the exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Pending his release, I urge you to ensure that he is removed from solitary confinement and that he is held in conditions meeting international standards and protected from torture and other ill-treatment. Finally, I urge you to continue to grant him, meanwhile, the right to regularly communicate with his family and lawyers and to refrain from any act of intimidation against them.

Yours sincerely,