ADVOCACY DOSSIER

BABOUZEID MOHAMAD SAID LABBIHI

بابوزيد محمد سعيد لبيهي

Director of CODESA, the Sahrawi human rights network, repeatedly harassed by Moroccan security forces for documenting abuses in Western Sahara. He reported being abducted and tortured in May 2021 and blacklisted from employment. In January 2022 traffic police held him for about three hours and fined him.

HuMENA.

Prepared by HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement · 8 November 2026

Case reference HM-EH-2026-028

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THE CASE AT A GLANCE

Director of CODESA, the Sahrawi human rights network, repeatedly harassed by Moroccan security forces for documenting abuses in Western Sahara. He reported being abducted and tortured in May 2021 and blacklisted from employment. In January 2022 traffic police held him for about three hours and fined him.

COUNTRY	**Western Sahara**
CHARGES	**Traffic fine of 400 dirhams (January 2022), an administrative penalty**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Disclose the current legal situation of Babouzeid Mohamad Said Labbihi, including whether any proceedings or restrictions remain in force.

02 Drop any charges related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights.

03 Guarantee that Babouzeid Mohamad Said Labbihi faces no reprisal for peaceful human rights work.

04 Comply with international human rights obligations, including the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Latest updates on this case
Scan the code or visit:
https://humena.org/defenders/babouzeid-mohamad-said-labbihi/

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DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
Arbitrary detention	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9
Defamation and smear campaign	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 17 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Judicial harassment	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12
Threats and intimidation	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Torture	Convention against Torture, Articles 1, 2 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7

03

HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

2021

ADMINISTRATIVE AND ECONOMIC MEASURES

Blacklisted from employment

In 2021 Babouzeid was blacklisted from formal employment. Security officers reportedly warned employers in Laayoune not to hire him because of his work with CODESA.

10 May 2021

ILL-TREATMENT

Reports abduction and torture by intelligence officers

Babouzeid reported that security intelligence officers abducted him along with two other Sahrawi activists, tortured them, and abandoned them in an unknown field.

5 January 2022

OTHER ACT

Detained at traffic stop for three hours

Traffic officers stopped Babouzeid in Laayoune while his young son was in the car. Officers insulted them, forcibly took his keys, threatened him with assault charges, and held him at the scene for about three hours before fining him 400 dirhams for a traffic violation.

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THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Babouzeid Mohamad Said Labbihi is a Sahrawi human rights defender and the director of the Sahrawi Collective of Human Rights Defenders (CODESA), an organisation that documents abuses committed by Moroccan security forces in Western Sahara and advocates for the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination. Western Sahara remains a disputed territory, claimed by Morocco and by the Polisario Front on behalf of the Sahrawi people. Human rights defenders working in the territory face systematic repression.

CODESA operates in a legal grey zone. It is not formally recognised by Moroccan authorities, and its members work under constant surveillance. Babouzeid's role as director places him at the centre of efforts to monitor forced disappearances, torture, and arbitrary detention in the region. His documentation work feeds into international advocacy and periodic United Nations reporting on the territory's status.

Kidnapping, Torture, and Employment Blacklisting

Babouzeid reported that on 10 May 2021 he was kidnapped by security intelligence officers along with two other Sahrawi activists. They were tortured and later abandoned in an unknown field. The details of the torture have not been fully disclosed, but the incident was part of a broader pattern of abductions targeting CODESA members during that period.

Following the kidnapping, Babouzeid was blacklisted from formal employment. Employers in Laayoune who might have considered hiring him received visits from security officers instructing them not to employ him because of his involvement with CODESA. The blacklisting extends to other members of the organisation and serves as both economic pressure and social isolation.

The January 2022 Traffic Stop

On 5 January 2022, at approximately 1:00 PM, Babouzeid was stopped by traffic officers while driving in Laayoune. His young son was in the car. Although he complied with the officers' instructions, they insulted him and his child. They then forcibly and aggressively confiscated his car keys, causing visible distress to the boy.

When Babouzeid protested their behaviour, the officers threatened to charge him with assaulting public officials. He was held at the roadside for about three hours; officers questioned him for about an hour and demanded his vehicle registration documents. He was eventually charged with a traffic violation and fined 400 Moroccan dirhams, approximately 38 euros. He was released only after friends and family arrived at the scene and applied pressure on the officers.

The incident bears the hallmarks of judicial harassment rather than routine traffic enforcement. The disproportionate detention, the threats of fabricated assault charges, and the targeting of a known human rights defender all point to a calculated act of intimidation.

Escalating Repression Against CODESA

Harassment of CODESA members escalated in 2021 following the organisation's decision to open new branches in the cities of Guelmim, Tantan, and Assa-Zag, expanding its documentation capacity beyond Laayoune. Members of the new branches and their families have been intimidated and threatened with employment blacklisting if they continue their affiliation with the organisation.

Women members of CODESA have reported being sexually assaulted by security forces. These assaults serve a dual purpose: to intimidate the women themselves and to discourage other women from joining or remaining active in human rights work. The use of sexual violence as a tool of repression against women defenders is documented across multiple contexts in the region, but reporting and accountability remain rare.

Current Situation

No information about his situation after January 2022 has been published. At that time he reported that he could not find formal employment and that the harassment continued. The targeting he experiences is emblematic of the broader repression faced by Sahrawi defenders who document abuses and assert the right to self-determination in Western Sahara.

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SAMPLE LETTER

Copy it, adapt it and send it from your own address.

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my deep concern about the situation of Babouzeid Mohamad Said Labbihi, director of the Sahrawi Collective of Human Rights Defenders (CODESA); documents violations against the Sahrawi people and advocates for their right to self-determination in Western Sahara, whose current situation has not been publicly confirmed.

In brief: Director of CODESA, the Sahrawi human rights network, repeatedly harassed by Moroccan security forces for documenting abuses in Western Sahara. He reported being abducted and tortured in May 2021 and blacklisted from employment. In January 2022 traffic police held him for about three hours and fined him.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Disclose the current legal situation of Babouzeid Mohamad Said Labbihi, including whether any proceedings or restrictions remain in force;
2. Drop any charges related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights;
3. Guarantee that Babouzeid Mohamad Said Labbihi faces no reprisal for peaceful human rights work;
4. Comply with international human rights obligations, including the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

I will follow this case closely until Babouzeid Mohamad Said Labbihi's situation is clear and no reprisal remains.

Respectfully,

[Your name]
[Your city, country]
8 November 2026