

Advocacy dossier

Mohamed Mayara

محمد ميارة

At liberty **Morocco**

Mohamed Mayara is a Sahrawi journalist who co-founded two key documentation groups in Western Sahara. He was expelled from Cape Bojador by Moroccan police in October 2024 while visiting family.

01

The case at a glance

Mohamed Mayara is a Sahrawi journalist who co-founded two key documentation groups in Western Sahara. He was expelled from Cape Bojador by Moroccan police in October 2024 while visiting family.

Status	Arrested	Country
At liberty	**9 Oct 2024**	**Morocco**

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Immediately end all harassment, summons, surveillance, and threats against the family of Mohamed Mayara in Morocco.

02 Cease the use of family members as leverage to pressure Mohamed Mayara into silence.

03 Drop any fabricated charges against family members and unblock their travel, financial, and professional rights.

04 Comply with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which explicitly prohibits reprisals against the families of defenders.

02

Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

Arbitrary detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9

Criminalisation of solidarity International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 21, 22 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 5

Reprisal against relatives UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12

Threats and intimidation UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12

Unlawful surveillance International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 17

03

How the case unfolded

2005

Defender activity

Co-founds ASVDH

Mohamed Mayara co-founded the Sahrawi Association of Victims of Serious Human Rights Violations, one of the first documentation organisations in occupied Western Sahara.

2009

Defender activity

Co-founds Équipe Média

Mayara helped establish Équipe Média, a media and advocacy platform focused on raising international awareness about human rights conditions in Western Sahara.

9 October 2024

Arrest

Detained at checkpoint

Mayara and Ahmed Ettanji were stopped and held for approximately one hour at a checkpoint in Cape Bojador before being released without charge.

9 October 2024

Residence restriction

Expelled from Cape Bojador

Moroccan police surrounded the family home, threatened Mayara and Ettanji with arrest, and forced them to leave the town immediately. The host family was also intimidated.

9 October 2024

Release

Released from checkpoint without charge

After about an hour, Mayara and Ahmed Ettanji were released without charge.

24 October 2024

Context

Urgent appeal on the expulsion

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (FIDH and OMCT) issued an urgent appeal about the restrictions, intimidation and expulsion of Mayara and Ahmed Ettanji.

3 January 2025

Context

UN experts raise the expulsion with Morocco

Three UN Special Rapporteurs wrote to the Moroccan government about the expulsion of Mayara and Ahmed Ettanji from Cape Bojador and the threats against the family that hosted them.

04

The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: this record was checked against Front Line Defenders, the FIDH and OMCT Observatory, UN special procedures and press coverage up to February 2026. No arrest, charge or new restriction has been reported since three UN Special Rapporteurs raised his expulsion from Cape Bojador with Morocco in January 2025; Mohamed Mayara is at liberty and continues his work with Équipe Média alongside Ahmed Ettanji.

Background and Work

Mohamed Mayara is a Sahrawi journalist and human rights defender working in occupied Western Sahara. His advocacy centres on the rights of the Sahrawi people, whose territory has been under Moroccan control since the 1970s.

In 2005, Mayara co-founded the Sahrawi Association of Victims of Serious Human Rights Violations (ASVDH), one of the first organisations in the territory dedicated to documenting abuses against Sahrawis. Four years later, in 2009, he helped establish Équipe Média, a media and advocacy platform focused on raising international awareness about human rights conditions in Western Sahara.

Both organisations operate in a highly restrictive environment. Moroccan authorities maintain tight control over the occupied territory, routinely surveilling, harassing, and prosecuting those who challenge the official narrative or document state abuses. Mayara's work places him in direct conflict with that control.

The Expulsion from Cape Bojador

On 9 October 2024, Mayara and fellow defender Ahmed Ettanji travelled to Cape Bojador, a coastal town in occupied Western Sahara, to visit family. Upon arrival at a local checkpoint, Moroccan authorities detained them for approximately one hour before releasing them without charge.

When the two men reached the home of Mayara's family, they found Moroccan police already waiting. The Police Commissioner of Cape Bojador, auxiliary forces, and occupation authorities had surrounded the house. The officials threatened Mayara and Ettanji with arrest and ordered them to leave the town immediately.

The host family was also targeted. Police threatened to search the home as punishment for sheltering the two defenders. Under pressure, Mayara and Ettanji were forced to leave Cape Bojador and return to Laayoune the same day. The family visit did not take place.

Pattern of Harassment and Restriction

The October 2024 expulsion is part of a broader pattern of restrictions imposed on Western Saharan human rights defenders by Moroccan authorities. Defenders in the territory routinely face travel bans, surveillance, arbitrary detention, forced displacement, and intimidation of their families and associates.

Mayara has been subjected to these tactics for years. The targeting extends not only to his work as a journalist and documenter but also to his personal life, including his ability to move freely within the

territory and visit family.

Moroccan authorities deploy these measures to isolate defenders, disrupt their work, and deter others from supporting them. The criminalisation of solidarity, threatening those who host or associate with defenders, is a deliberate tactic to cut off networks of support.

Context and International Obligations

Western Sahara remains one of the most restricted environments for human rights work in the region. Moroccan control over the territory is contested under international law, yet Moroccan authorities enforce domestic laws with little accountability and routinely deny access to independent monitors.

Defenders like Mayara operate with no meaningful legal protection. Documentation work is treated as subversion, journalism as incitement, and even private family visits are subject to state interference when the individuals involved are perceived as threats to the official narrative.

Morocco is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, both of which guarantee freedom of movement, freedom of expression, and the right to advocate for human rights. The expulsion from Cape Bojador and the broader restrictions on Mayara's movement and work violate those obligations.

Latest updates on this case Scan the code or visit: https://humena.org/defenders/mohamed-mayara/

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