

Advocacy dossier

# Naama Asfari

النعمة أسفاري

**Imprisoned (serving sentence)** **Western Sahara**

Naama Asfari is a Sahrawi human rights defender, held since November 2010 and serving a 30-year sentence in Morocco in the Gdeim Izik case, which UN bodies have found to involve torture and arbitrary detention. He renewed a hunger strike on 23 September 2026 and is now held in Loudaya prison in Marrakesh.

01

# The case at a glance

Naama Asfari is a Sahrawi human rights defender, held since November 2010 and serving a 30-year sentence in Morocco in the Gdeim Izik case, which UN bodies have found to involve torture and arbitrary detention. He renewed a hunger strike on 23 September 2026 and is now held in Loudaya prison in Marrakesh.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Status **Imprisoned (serving sentence)** | Arrested **7 Nov 2010** | Country **Western Sahara** |
| Sentence 30 years in prison | | |
| Charges Criminal conspiracy<br>Involvement in intentional killings | | |

## What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Release Naama Asfari immediately and unconditionally.

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

03 Ensure unrestricted access to legal counsel, family, and adequate medical care while in detention.

# 02

# How the case unfolded

**2009**

Deprivation of liberty

### Imprisoned for four months over a key chain with the Sahrawi flag

Front Line Defenders reports that Naama Asfari was imprisoned for four months in 2009 for holding a key chain depicting the Sahrawi flag.

**7 November 2010**

Arrest

### Arrested in El-Ayoun on the eve of the Gdeim Izik camp dismantling

Police arrested Naama Asfari in El-Ayoun the day before Moroccan security forces dismantled the Gdeim Izik protest camp on 8 November 2010. Front Line Defenders reports that he was then held for five days at an unknown location. He later told the investigating judge that police had tortured him.

**17 February 2013**

Conviction

### Sentenced to 30 years by the Rabat military court

The military court in Rabat convicted the Gdeim Izik defendants and sentenced Naama Asfari to 30 years in prison. The prosecution accused him of organising violent resistance in the camp, not of taking part in the violence directly. Human Rights Watch noted that the court did not investigate his torture complaint.

**October 2016**

Reprisal against relatives

### His wife, Claude Mangin-Asfari, barred from entering Morocco

Moroccan authorities barred his wife, the French activist Claude Mangin-Asfari, from entering Morocco, preventing her from visiting him. She was allowed one visit on 14 and 15 January 2019 and was refused entry again in early July 2019.

**November 2016**

Other act

### UN Committee against Torture finds Morocco in breach of the Convention

The UN Committee against Torture, ruling in case 606/2014 on a complaint filed on his behalf by ACAT-France, found that Morocco had violated articles 1, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 of the Convention against Torture: it had failed to investigate his torture allegations, failed to protect him and his lawyer from reprisals and denied him reparation, and the military court had relied on statements obtained under torture.

**26 December 2016**

Retrial ordered

### Civilian retrial opens in Rabat

After the Court of Cassation set aside the military verdict following a 2015 law ending military trials of civilians, a new civilian trial of the Gdeim Izik defendants opened before the Appeals Chamber of the Rabat Court of Appeals.

**19 July 2017**

Conviction

### Civilian court in Salé sentences him again to 30 years

The Court of Appeals in Salé, near Rabat, sentenced 23 Gdeim Izik defendants to prison terms ranging from two years to life. Naama Asfari received 30 years. His defence team says he was convicted of criminal conspiracy and involvement in intentional killings.

**25 November 2020**

Final judgment

### Court of Cassation makes the 30-year sentence final

The Court of Cassation in Rabat definitively confirmed the verdict in the Gdeim Izik case, including the 30-year sentence against Naama Asfari.

**2023**

Other act

### UN Working Group finds the detention arbitrary

In Opinion No. 23/2023, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded that the detention of the Gdeim Izik group is arbitrary and called for their release.

**May 2026**

Other act

### UN Committee against Torture reaffirms its findings

The UN Committee against Torture reaffirmed its findings on the Gdeim Izik detentions. Its decisions remain unimplemented.

**8 June 2026**

Hunger strike begins

### Begins an open-ended hunger strike in Kénitra prison

After three separate 48-hour hunger strikes in May 2026 that received no response, Naama Asfari began an open-ended hunger strike in Kénitra prison to demand implementation of the UN decisions on his case. By mid-July his family reported that he had lost about nine kilograms.

**24 July 2026**

Hunger strike ends

### Ends hunger strike after 47 days

He ended the hunger strike after 47 days, telling his family by phone that the prison administration had opened a dialogue on his demands. A delegation of the General Delegation for Prison Administration and Reintegration had visited him and reportedly committed to transferring him to a prison closer to his family.

**September 2026**

Transfer between places of detention

### Transferred to Loudaya prison in Marrakesh

During the hunger strike he was transferred to Loudaya prison in Marrakesh, where he told his family on 29 September 2026 that he was continuing the strike. FIDH reported on 12 October 2026 that he was still on hunger strike. Moroccan media later cited the prison administration as saying he had ended it on 30 September; this has not been confirmed by his family or lawyers. He remains imprisoned in Marrakesh.

**23 September 2026**

Hunger strike begins

### Resumes hunger strike with eight other detainees

Naama Asfari and other detained members of the Gdeim Izik group renewed their hunger strike, as the commitments made in July had not been implemented. FIDH and OMCT named the strikers still continuing on 12 October 2026 as Naama Asfari, Ahmed Sbaai, Hassan Dah, El Houssein Ezzaoui, Mohamed Bani, Mohamed Lamine Haddi, Mohamed El Bachir Boutenguiza and Abdallah Abbahah. They demanded implementation of the UN decisions and transfer to prisons in Western Sahara near their families.

# 03
# The full story

**Update, 12 November 2026:** Naama Asfari remains in Loudaya prison in Marrakesh, sixteen years after his arrest, serving a 30-year sentence that UN bodies have linked to torture and arbitrary detention. He renewed a hunger strike on 23 September 2026; whether it is still continuing is disputed between his supporters and the Moroccan authorities.

## Background and Work

Naama Asfari, also written Enaâma or Naâma Asfari, is a Sahrawi human rights defender born in 1970. He is vice-president of the Committee for Liberties and Respect for Human Rights in Western Sahara (CORELSO), which documents violations against Sahrawis. Front Line Defenders reports that in 2009 he was imprisoned for four months for holding a key chain depicting the Sahrawi flag. He is married to the French activist Claude Mangin-Asfari, who has campaigned for his release.

## The Arrest

In late 2010 Sahrawis gathered in Gdeim Izik, a protest camp near El-Ayoun. Police arrested Naama Asfari in El-Ayoun on 7 November 2010, the day before Moroccan security forces dismantled the camp on 8 November; the operation and the clashes that followed left members of the security forces dead. According to Front Line Defenders, he was then held for five days at an unknown location, blindfolded and handcuffed, and he says he signed statements and confessions under torture. He later told the investigating judge that police had tortured him.

## Detention Conditions and Health

He has spent most of his detention far from his family. ISHR reports that while held in Kénitra prison, about 2,000 kilometres from his family, he was allowed two five-minute telephone calls a week, had not seen an ophthalmologist in nine years, and was barred from the sunlit courtyard, the gym and the library. Moroccan authorities barred his wife from entering the country in October 2016; she was allowed a visit on 14 and 15 January 2019 and was refused entry again in July 2019. In 2020 books she sent him were returned without explanation.

In May 2026 he carried out three separate 48-hour hunger strikes that received no response. On 8 June 2026 he began an open-ended hunger strike in Kénitra prison to demand implementation of the UN decisions on his case, and by mid-July his family reported that he had lost about nine kilograms. He suspended the strike on 24 July 2026, after 47 days, following a visit from a delegation of the General Delegation for Prison Administration and Reintegration, which reportedly committed to moving him closer to his family. As that commitment was not implemented, he and other Gdeim Izik prisoners renewed their strike on 23 September 2026. He was transferred to Loudaya prison in Marrakesh and told his family on 29 September that he was continuing. FIDH reported on 12 October that he was still on strike; Moroccan media later cited the prison administration as saying he had ended it on 30 September.

## Legal Proceedings

On 17 February 2013 a military court in Rabat

convicted the Gdeim Izik defendants and sentenced Naama Asfari to 30 years in prison. The prosecution accused him of organising violent resistance in the camp rather than of taking part in violence directly, and Human Rights Watch noted that the court did not investigate his torture complaint. After a 2015 law ended military trials of civilians, the Court of Cassation set aside the military verdict and a civilian retrial opened before the Rabat Court of Appeal on 26 December 2016. On 19 July 2017 the Court of Appeal in Salé sentenced 23 defendants to terms ranging from two years to life, and again gave him 30 years. His defence says he was convicted of criminal conspiracy and involvement in intentional killings. On 25 November 2020 the Court of Cassation definitively confirmed the verdict.

Others convicted in the case and still held include Ahmed Sbaai, Hassan Dah, El Houssein Ezzaoui, Mohamed Bani, Mohamed Lamine Haddi, Mohamed El Bachir Boutenguiza, Abdallah Abbahah and El Bachir Khadda.

## International Response

In November 2016 the UN Committee against Torture, ruling in case 606/2014 on a complaint filed by ACAT-France, found that Morocco had violated six articles of the Convention against Torture, including by relying on statements obtained under torture, failing to investigate his allegations and failing to protect him and his lawyer from reprisals. In July 2021 the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor, criticised the targeting of human rights defenders in Western Sahara. In Opinion No. 23/2023 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found the detention of the Gdeim Izik group arbitrary and called for their release, and in May 2026 the Committee against Torture reaffirmed its findings. ISHR, Front Line Defenders, FIDH and OMCT have called for the decisions to be implemented and for his release.

---

**Latest updates on this case** Scan the code or visit: https://humena.org/defenders/naama-asfari/

HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement is a non-governmental organisation documenting the situation of human rights defenders in the Middle East and North Africa. This file is based on the public record of the case in the defenders archive. To report an error: archive@humena.org