

Media Statement – For immediate use

## Morocco: Allow Human Rights Activist Aminatou Haidar to Return to Western Sahara

Brussels, 19 November 2009

**Last Friday Aminatou Haidar, human rights activist and 2007 SOLIDAR Silver Rose Award winner<sup>1</sup>, was arrested upon returning to Morocco from New York and deported to the Spanish island of Lanzarote. Her passport was confiscated and she is now on a hunger strike in front of Lanzarote airport. SOLIDAR, a network of social justice NGOs, calls upon the Moroccan Government to give Aminatou Haidar back her passport and allow her to return home to her family in the Western Sahara.**

“The Moroccan government should immediately return Aminatou’s passport to her and allow her to get on the next plane home. SOLIDAR is also very concerned by the role that Spain is playing in allowing the Moroccan authorities to illegally keep Aminatou in Lanzarote against her will”, said Conny Reuter, SOLIDAR Secretary General.

“Aminatou Haidar was awarded a SOLIDAR Silver Rose Award in 2007 for her brave work defending human rights as well as being an activist for the cause of her country, the Western Sahara<sup>2</sup>, an often neglected conflict. She has played a leading role in a number of campaigns organised for the release of Saharawi<sup>3</sup> prisoners of conscience and political prisoners since becoming involved in the political struggle in the 1980s. She has worked continuously towards her goal of achieving self-determination for the Saharawi using non-violent means, despite the danger in which this places her and her two children”, he concluded.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> SOLIDAR’s Silver Rose Awards were launched in 2000 to help raise the profile of individuals and organisations whose struggles contribute greatly to social justice and equality throughout the world. SOLIDAR will celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of these Awards on the 12 January 2010: [www.solidar.org](http://www.solidar.org).

<sup>2</sup> The Western Sahara has been classified by the UN as a non-self-governing region since 1963. Since a UN-sponsored ceasefire agreement in 1991, most of the territory has been controlled by Morocco, and the remainder by the Polisario Front independence movement, with its Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) government, backed by Algeria.

<sup>3</sup> People from the Western Sahara.



ENDS

Contact: Abigail Goundry, SOLIDAR Communications Officer

00 32 472 607 449 or [abigail.goundry@solidar.org](mailto:abigail.goundry@solidar.org)

*SOLIDAR is a European network of 53 NGOs active in over 90 countries working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR lobbies the EU and international institutions in three primary areas: social affairs (more social Europe), international cooperation (development cooperation) and education (lifelong learning for all). For more info [www.solidar.org](http://www.solidar.org)*