

Morocco

Unlike several other Arab countries, the regime in Morocco managed to contain the winds of change that swept over the Arab region, defusing the demands for change forwarded by the February 20 movement which saw demonstrations advocating far-reaching political reforms. The Moroccan authorities headed off the protests through political engagement, following the same tactic used by the regime since the end of the King Hassan II's rule: adopting limited top-down reforms to constrain the escalation of demands for change. Within two weeks of the beginning of demonstrations, a royal initiative was released calling for a new constitution including more modern articles. However, this initiative failed to transform the country into a parliamentary constitutional monarchy in which the king remains the sovereign but does not govern. As such, the new constitution preserves the lopsided balance of powers while introducing no separation of these powers, as the king retains broad governing prerogatives. As the commander of the faithful, he also remains impervious to criticism, as religion continues to be exploited as the source of his legitimacy and authority.¹

The royal initiative also called for early parliamentary elections to be held in November 2011, in which the Islamist Justice and Development Party won a majority of votes. Under the provisions of the new constitution, the party's secretary-general was tasked with forming a new government.

¹ Marina Ottaway and Marwan Muasher, "Arab Monarchies: Chance for Reform, Yet Unmet," Carnegie Paper, December 2011, <<http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2011/12/16/arab-monarchies-chance-for-reform-yet-unmet/8e7t>>.

In addition, the Moroccan monarch announced the formation of the National Human Rights Council to replace the Advisory Council on Human Rights. Observers believe this step will allow the new national foundation to overcome the limits of the advisory role played by the former institution since its establishment 20 years ago, as the new council has the authority to demand that the judiciary open investigations into human rights abuses.²

However, the official response to the demands for change did not stop at political measures but also involved the use of repressive security tactics. Several were killed and injured as a result, and arbitrary prosecutions and arrests of those involved in the February 20 movement continued throughout the year. Some reports accused the Moroccan authorities of resorting to policies of “repression by proxy,” in attacks on persons—which included in one case the assassination of those involved in the movement—as well as civic and advocacy institutions that support the movement.³

From another aspect, poor conditions in prisons and detention facilities remained unchanged, and complaints of torture and degrading treatment continued to be heard, especially against activists from the Western Sahara and those convicted or detained in connection with terrorism cases. Pressures on freedom of expression and the press continued, and civil society institutions all over the country continued to be deprived of legal status.

Limits of constitutional reform:

The royal initiative quashed the idea of a new constitution drafted by an elected constituent assembly, instead setting up a committee composed of experts and headed by a royal counselor. Although the king ordered the formation of “a follow-up mechanism” to act as a link between the constitution drafters and political parties, trade unions, and human rights organizations, those acting in this capacity were not permitted to view the draft of the constitution until one day prior to its release to the Moroccan public.⁴

The new constitution was more progressive than the old document, particularly in its recognition of Moroccan society’s religious, linguistic, and

² Maghress, “Insha’ al-majlis al-watani li-huquq al-insan fi-l-Maghrib,” Mar. 4, 2011, <<http://www.maghress.com/ksarsouk/4002>>.

³ Polisario, “al-Jam’iya al-Maghribiya li-huquq al-insan tuhadhdhir min siyasat al-qam’ bi-l-wikala al-lati yantahijuha al-nizam al-Maghribi didd harakat 20 Fabrayir,” Nov. 1, 2011, <http://www.polisario.es/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2502:-----q-q---20-&catid=40:arabe&Itemid=33>.

⁴ Marina Ottaway and Marwan Muasher.

cultural diversity; it even adopted Amazigh as an official language, along with Arabic. Although the constitution defined Morocco as an Islamic state with Islam as its official religion, it contains clear references to the diverse origins of Moroccan culture, from Andalusian and Mediterranean cultures to that of the Sahrawi people, as well as Christian and Jewish cultures. The constitution also upholds freedom of worship for all religions.⁵

Furthermore, the new constitution⁶ expands references to human rights. However, although it recognizes the supremacy of international human rights conventions ratified by Morocco over national legislation, the formulation used is convoluted, linking the issue with the scope of constitutional provisions, other laws, and national identity.

The constitution grants Moroccans residing abroad full citizenship rights, including the right to vote and run for office, and it makes specific reference to the constitutional rights of the political opposition, assigning the chairmanship of the parliamentary legislative committee to the opposition.

Nevertheless, the constitution preserves the imbalance of political powers, reinforcing the dominance of the royal branch. It grants the king legislative authorities as part of his religious prerogatives as commander of the faithful and makes the king the chair of the Supreme Council of Learning, where he possesses the exclusive right to issue religious opinions on matters put before it. The king appoints ministers pursuant to proposals from the prime minister and may object to ministerial candidates; he may also dismiss ministers by simply consulting with the prime minister. Moreover, the king presides over cabinet meetings dealing with what the constitution terms “strategic orientations of state policy,” a broad formulation that permits the king to intervene widely in the operations of the executive.⁷

The king has the authority to dissolve both houses of parliament. He also serves as the chair of the Supreme Security Council and of the Supreme Judiciary Council and appoints half the members of the latter body. He also appoints the chief justice of the Constitutional Court and half of its members. These prerogatives are particularly serious as the constitution immunizes the royal branch from review, accountability, and criticism. The person of the king remains protected and may not be infringed upon. Indeed, parliamentary immunity for MPs does not prevent arrest or trial if an MP’s statements in the parliament do not show the necessary respect for the king.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ A copy of the 2011 constitution can be read here (in Arabic): <http://badri.elaphblog.com/posts.aspx?U=4798&A=87191>.

⁷ Marina Ottaway and Marwan Muasher.

Suppression of peaceful protests and assemblies:

On several occasions, the authorities used excessive force to disperse peaceful demonstrations advocating political and constitutional change. This was particularly seen in the violent crackdown on demonstrations in several Moroccan cities which had been organized in response to the appeal from the February 20 movement for reform and the prosecution of corrupt officials. Although the demonstrations began peacefully, they were accompanied by violence and vandalism in some cities.

Five people were killed in the city of al-Hasima, and a sixth died of wounds sustained in Sefrou. More than 200 demonstrators were arrested on February 20 and 21, 2011.⁸

On February 23, 2011, police dispersed a demonstration in the capital, using batons to beat participants. On March 13, a few days after the king announced his initiative for a new constitution, hundreds assembled to demand genuine reforms in a protest in Casablanca. When the demonstrators were forcibly dispersed, dozens sustained injuries or broken bones, and more than 100 people were arrested (they were released later the same day).⁹

On May 15, peaceful demonstrators were again attacked when the February 20 movement called for an assembly in the al-Salam market area in preparation for a march that would head to the Tamara secret detention facility run by Moroccan intelligence in the Tamara area. This demonstration was to demand the closure of the secret detention facility, where torture is believed to be rampant, as well as to call for the prosecution of officials for torture and human rights violations. Security forces intercepted probable participants of this march and detained others who reached the assigned meeting point, beating and insulting them before taking them to the police station for questioning.¹⁰

On May 20, in response to an appeal from the February 20 movement, dozens of Sahrawi citizens in Guelmim, located in southern Morocco, organized a mass migration, dubbed by the press “the Friday of migration,” and set up a camp outside the city to protest their poor living conditions. After confiscating their belongings, security forces pursued them through the

⁸ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, “Taqrir huquqi awali hawl al-harakat al-ihitijajiya al-murtabita bi-20 Fabrayir,” Feb. 24, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=25238>>.

⁹ Human Rights Watch, “Morocco: Thousands Demonstrate Peacefully,” Mar. 21, 2011, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/03/21/morocco-thousands-demonstrate-peacefully>>.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, “Morocco: Police Violence a Test for Revised Constitution,” July 11, 2011, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/07/11/morocco-police-violence-test-revised-constitution>>.

desert, violently assaulting them before detaining and questioning them in a police station.¹¹

On May 22, security forces dispersed several demonstrations in a number of Moroccan cities (Fez, Tangiers, Rabat, Casablanca, and Tetouan) that gathered in response to calls from the February 20 movement demanding an end to corruption and that social justice be carried out. Security forces prevented protestors from reaching the squares where the demonstrations were scheduled to be held and chased them while beating them with batons, injuring some protestors severely and arresting nearly 100.¹²

On May 25, dozens of doctors were injured after being beaten and kicked by security forces following a sit-in by some 8,000 doctors and their attempt to organize a march to parliament.¹³

On May 28 and 29, security forces arrested dozens of demonstrators in the city of Safi. They were taken to cars in which they were brutally beaten before being left in remote areas.¹⁴ One person, Kamal Emari, later died of wounds sustained due to the violence.¹⁵

On October 10, security forces intervened to prevent an oratory festival organized by activists involved with the February 20 movement, injuring several people in the process.¹⁶

On October 27, Kamal al-Hassani, a leading member of the Association for the Unemployed in Beni Bouayach, located in the al-Hasima province, and a member of the February 20 movement, was killed after being stabbed from behind in the neck and stomach while taking part in a February 20 movement meeting. The Moroccan Association for Human Rights said the assassination took place in broad daylight and was committed by a thug known for his ongoing harassment of February 20 movements and for

¹¹ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "Quwat al-darak al-malaki wa-l-quwat al-musa'ida tatadakhkhal bi-'unf li-man' bina' mukhayyam li-l-nazihin al-sahrawiyin," May 22, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=31940>>.

¹² Amnesty International, "Protestors Assaulted and Detained in Morocco," May 23, 2011, <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE29/005/2011/en/5f278948-8bb7-47a8-964e-326a89916fb0/mde290052011en.html>>.

¹³ Amnesty International, "Morocco Urged to End Violent Crackdown on Protests," June 2, 2011, <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/morocco-urged-end-violent-crackdown-protests-2011-06-02>>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "I' mal al-muqtadayat wa-l-ijra'at al-qanuniya al-muqarrara bi-khusus al-musa'ala al-jina'iya," June 6, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=33040>>.

¹⁶ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "Isti'mal al-'unf didd al-muzaharat al-silmiya," Oct. 11, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=41234>>.

threatening them before witnesses. The association warned officials against protecting criminal elements that harass and terrorize February 20 movement activists and forces and public figures supportive of the movement and called for a response to what it termed the policy of “repression by proxy.”¹⁷

Freedom of opinion and expression:

Pressures on freedom of expression continued, and journalists and bloggers remained targets for security harassment and prosecution; some were even physically attacked.

On April 27, prominent journalist Rachid Nini, the publisher of *al-Massae*, was arrested and questioned about a series of critical articles he wrote about dysfunctions in public institutions, including the intelligence agency, as well as about his demands for the abolition of the counterterrorism law and his allegations that some officials fabricated security files. He was charged with “infringing on the security and safety of the nation and citizens, publishing articles criticizing the security establishment, insulting public servants, and accusing government officials of breaking the law without presenting evidence.” Nini was convicted by a primary court, which denied him bail during the trial, and sentenced to one year in prison and fined 1,000 dirhams. On October 24, the appellate court upheld the verdict against Nini, who is imprisoned at the Casablanca District Prison, where the prison administration is denying him access to paper and writing materials.¹⁸

The publisher of *al-Michaal*, Driss Chahtane, and editor-in-chief Abdelaziz Koukas were subjected to judicial investigations in July 2011 in

¹⁷ Assif, “al-Maktab al-markazi li-l-jam’iya al-Maghribiya li-huquq al-insan yudin ighthiyal al-munadil Kamal al-Hassani,” Nov. 2, 2011, <<http://www.assif.info/news/read/10507/>>.

¹⁸ Aljazeera, “I’tiqal mudir jaridat al-masa’ al-Maghribiya,” Apr. 29, 2011, <<http://aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/17E13222-FF45-41A9-AA5B-8092C88DD89E.htm>>; Elaph, “al-Maghrib: i’tiqal mudir jaridat al-masa’ Rashid al-Nini,” Apr. 29, 2011, <<http://www.elaph.com/Web/news/2011/4/650757.html>>; Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, “al-Istimrar fi ihtijaz Rashid Nini,” May 5, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=30597>>; Alkarama, “Morocco: Arrest and Arbitrary Detention of Rachid Niny, Editor in Chief of the Daily Al Massae,” May 18, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/aWt0Z>>; Reporters Without Borders, “Casablanca Court Sentences Newspaper Editor to a Year in Prison and a Fine of 88 Euros,” June 9, 2011, <<http://en.rsf.org/morocco-casablanca-court-sentences-09-06-2011,40433.html>>; Human Rights Watch, “Morocco: Free Popular Columnist,” Dec. 6, 2011, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/12/06/morocco-free-popular-columnist>>.

connection with the publication of an article containing a list of public servants accused of interfering in elections.¹⁹

On September 5, Moroccan blogger and anti-corruption activist Mohamed Dawas was arrested. Some sources reported that he was beaten and forced to sign a statement against his will at the police station, after which he was referred to trial on allegations of drug trafficking. It is presumed that his arrest and trial are closely related to his writings against corruption.²⁰ He was sentenced to 19 months in prison. His defense counsel announced it was withdrawing from the trial to protest the lack of a fair trial and due process, particularly the court's refusal to grant a continuance to enable them to challenge the veracity of the seizure report.²¹

Abdelilah Sakhir, a journalist with the weekly *el-Hayat el-Jedida*, was assaulted by unknown persons near his home in Casablanca on January 29, 2011. Sakhir said that his assailants wanted to kill him, using tear gas and beating him on the head and face. Rights organizations linked the attack with Sakhir's news reports on the storming of the Akdim Izik camp in the Western Sahara in October 2010.²²

On August 12, police attacked Mohamed Ayache Buihi, a journalist with *al-Massae* and the administrator of the Sahara Now website, and Hamid Bouffous, a correspondent for the Haspress and Sahara Press sites, while the two were covering a demonstration in the city of Laayoune. Buihi was beaten with a club on his back and legs, while Bouffous suffered a similar assault, although he was wearing a vest clearly labeled "press."²³

On May 24, the Moroccan authorities suspended the cultural program "Masharif," broadcast on Moroccan television, after it prepared weekly episodes on the political ferment in Morocco and the February 20

¹⁹ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "al-Tadamun ma' usbu'iyā al-Mash'al wa istinkar tawzif al-qada' fi tasfiyat al-hisabat," July 31, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=36699>>.

²⁰ Reporters Without Borders, "Crackdowns on Pro-Democracy Protests Continue to Affect Journalists, Morocco and Tunisia Still Try to Gag Information," Sep. 15, 2011, <http://en.rsf.org/bahrain-crackdowns-on-pro-democracy-15-09-2011_40988.html>.

²¹ Jil Press, "al-Hukm bi-l-sajn 'ala-l-mudawwin al-Maghribi Muhammad al-Dawas 'ala-l-raghm min al-insihab al-jama'i li-l-hay'at al-difa'," <<http://www.jilpress.com/2011-04-08-17-35-44/1119-2011-09-23-19-10-55.html>>.

²² Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders, "I'tida' bashi' 'ala-l-sahafi al-Maghribi 'Abd al-Ilah Sakhir bi-l-Dar al-Bayda'," Feb. 1, 2011, <http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=442:-----q--q----&catid=1:latest-news>.

²³ Reporters Without Borders, "Violence, Blocked Websites and Prosecutions—Anti-Media Offensive Continues," Aug. 20, 2011, <http://en.rsf.org/bahrain-violence-blocked-websites-and-20-08-2011_40811.html>.

movement. The decision was preceded by a series of restrictions on the broadcast of some of the program's episodes, including one featuring Egyptian Islamic thinker Gamal al-Banna.²⁴

Status of civil society and human rights defenders:

Pressure and harassment of human rights defenders in the Western Sahara did not cease, and many rights organizations in the province continued to be denied legal status, including the Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders and the Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Violations of Human Rights Committed by the Moroccan State. Civil society associations in other areas were also denied legal status, among them the National Association of Unemployed Graduates, the Group Against Racism and for the Assistance and Defense of Foreigners and Migrants, the Ennassir Association for the Support of Islamist Prisoners, and the Amazigh Network for Citizenship.²⁵

Security attacks on peaceful protests also affected many human rights defenders who support the popular movement unleashed by the February 20 movement, such as Khadija Ryadi, the chair of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights, as well as several members of the organization who took part in a peaceful demonstration in the Bab al-Had Square of Rabat on February 21, 2011. Ryadi was taken to the hospital unconscious after she was beaten by police on the neck, legs, and stomach.²⁶ During the same demonstration, Mohammed al-Ouni, the coordinator for the Moroccan Democratic Network for Support of the People, was also attacked.²⁷

²⁴ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "al-Maghrib: ilgha' barnamij 'masharif' al-thaqafi khatwa li-l-wara' wa darba li-hurriyat al-i'lam," May 24, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=32130>>.

²⁵ International Federation for Human Rights, Steadfast in Protest, 2011 annual report from the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Nov. 23, 2011, <www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/obs_2011_uk-mmo.pdf>.

²⁶ Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders, "Quwat al-qam' al-Maghribi ta'tadi 'ala Khadija al-Riyadi ra'isat al-jam'iya al-Maghribiya li-huquq al-insan," Feb. 22, 2011, <http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=473:-----q---q-----&catid=1:latest-news>; Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "al-Munazzama tudin al-i'tida' 'ala ra'isat al-jam'iya al-Maghribiya wa zumala'iha min nashiti huquq al-insan," Feb. 23, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=24865>>; Amnesty International, "Moroccan Authorities Must Uphold Freedom of Assembly," Feb. 24, 2011, <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE29/001/2011/en/81d9d4c5-52f9-485f-85a4-725801200348/mde290012011en.html>>.

²⁷ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "Fi bayan li-l-maktab al-markazi li-l-'asaba istinkar wa shajab qawi li-l-i'tida' al-ladhi tal nushata' huquqiyin fi-l-Rabat," Feb. 24, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=24988>>.

On February 26, 2011, police attacked Buthaina Elmakoudi, the director of the Anti-AIDS Association, while she was taking part in a peaceful demonstration in Agadir.²⁸

On November 21, Sara Soujar, the chair of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights office in Burnous and an active member of the February 20 movement, was attacked by a thug while distributing flyers advocating a boycott of parliamentary elections. She was stabbed in the stomach while the police did nothing to prevent the attack or arrest the perpetrator. Many observers believed the assault was politically motivated to intimidate opponents, and they did not rule out involvement by state security agencies.²⁹

Regarding another matter, royal amnesties were issued for 190 prisoners, including Chekib el-Khayari, the president of the Association for Human Rights in the Rif, on April 14. Al-Khayari had been convicted in June 2009 on charges of insulting official government bodies and sentenced to three years in prison.³⁰ The amnesty also covered three human rights defenders from the Western Sahara: Ibrahim Dahan, Ali Salem al-Tabek, and al-Naseri Ahmed. For Sahrawis, however, the amnesty meant being released on parole, unlike the cases of other Moroccan detainees released under the amnesty.

Elections and democratic representation:

As part of the well-established royal tactic of introducing limited reforms from above to contain popular pressures for comprehensive reform, Morocco saw early parliamentary elections held on November 25. Pursuant to the outcome of the elections and provisions of the new constitution, the king tasked the secretary-general of the Islamist Justice and Development Party to form a government after he was named prime minister due to the party winning 107 of the parliament's 395 seats.³¹

²⁸ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "al-Maghrib: i'tida' jasadi 'ala al-mudafi'a 'an huquq al-insan al-sayyida Buthayna al-Makudi," Mar. 5, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=25668>>.

²⁹ Nidalat's Blog, "al-Shurta al-Maghribiya tunaffidh jarima bashi'a didd al-munadila Sara Sujar," <<http://goo.gl/1kKLd>>; and Moroccan Association for Human Rights, "Ihtijaj 'ala-l-i'tada' al-ladhi ta'arradat lahu Sara Sujar," Feb. 23, 2011, <<http://www.amdh.org.ma/ar/reports/soujar>>.

³⁰ Maghress, "al-Ifraj 'an al-nashit al-huquqi al-rifi Shakib al-Khayari," Apr. 14, 2011, <<http://www.maghress.com/andaluspress/2705>>.

³¹ Marina Ottaway and Marwan Muasher.

Although the elections did not see major challenges to the integrity of the declared results, in the run-up to the poll, the Moroccan authorities launched a broad arrest campaign in several cities targeting activists advocating an election boycott, adopted by the February 20 movement as well as several leftist parties and the Islamist Justice and Charity Group.³² The call for a boycott cited the limited nature of the constitutional reforms and the fact that the elections were overseen by the Interior Ministry, which has a long history in rigging polls and gerrymandering electoral districts in accordance with political considerations.³³

The constitutional reforms did not bring about radical changes to the electoral system, which observers believe gives an advantage to local politicians who are able to buy votes and who control the “administrative parties” that have historically enjoyed the patronage of the state and the royal palace. Observers noted that the Interior Ministry defined the rules and conditions for electoral campaigns in the official media, despite the High Authority Commission for Audiovisual Communication, which became an independent constitutional institution under the provisions of the new constitution. Under these rules, parties that boycotted the elections, such as the United Socialist Party and the Democratic Socialist Vanguard Party, as well as the February 20 movement, were prohibited from using the official media to promote the boycott.³⁴

According to the National Human Rights Council in Morocco, the violations and irregularities observed during the election did not undermine the integrity and credibility of the outcome. Most prominent among these violations was the mobilization of public institutions, the distribution of gifts to influence voters, cases of physical and verbal violence, the tearing down

³² Bladinews, “I’tiqalat fi sufuf 20 Fabrayir qabl muzaharat al-ahad 20 Nufimbir,” Nov. 19, 2011, <<http://www.bladinews.net/?p=24473>>; Mamafakinch, “I’tiqalat bi-l-jumla bayn sufuf harakat 20 Fabrayir wa muqati’i al-intikhabat,” Nov. 16, 2011, <<http://24.mamfakinch.com/20-15451>>; al-Jazeera, “I’tiqalat bi-harakat 20 Fabrayir fi-l-Maghrib,” Nov. 19, 2011, <<http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/EXERES/4560CCF6-5939-449C-97A9-D68B73D06085.htm>>; Assabeel, “al-‘Adl wa-l-ihsan al-Maghribiya tatahaddath ‘an i’tiqalat fi sufuf harakat 20 Fabrayir,” Nov. 19, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/rjGbS>>; Lakome, “I’tiqalat bi-l-jumla fi sufuf nashiti 20 Fabrayir bi-mudun mutafarriqa,” <<http://lakome.com/%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AA/69-%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AA/10048-2011-11-18.html>>; and Goud, “Istimrar hamlat al-i’tiqalat fi sufuf harakat 20 Fabrayir al-lati tuwasil da’ wataha ila muqata’at al-intikhabat,” Nov. 19, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/CSqQL>>.

³³ Segangan, “Bayan harakat 20 Fabrayir li-muqata’at al-intikhabat,” Nov. 16, 2011, <<http://www.segangan.net/modules/news/print.php?storyid=2911>>.

³⁴ Maati Monjib, “Will Morocco’s Elections Subdue Popular Protests?” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Nov. 22, 2011, <<http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2011/11/22/will-morocco-s-elections-subdue-popular-protests/7ny9>>.

of campaign ads, and the distribution of campaign materials on the day of the vote.³⁵

Continued violations in the Western Sahara:

Political activists and rights advocates in the Western Sahara remained targets for arbitrary prosecutions and detention and unfair trials, and security forces on several occasions suppressed various forms of peaceful protest in the province.

After participating in peaceful demonstrations called by the February 20 movement, 23 citizens in the Western Sahara were given prison sentences on March 4 ranging from one to three years; most of them were students.³⁶ Similar sentences of 1 year to 18 months imprisonment were given to two Sahrawi youths who took part in a peaceful demonstration demanding Sahrawis' right to self-determination and showing solidarity with Sahrawi detainees.³⁷

On May 25, authorities suppressed a peaceful march of Sahrawi demonstrators in the city of Boujdour who were protesting poor socioeconomic conditions, causing various degrees of injuries. Some demonstrators were arrested,³⁸ and activist Ahmed al-Najim was given a six-month suspended prison sentence.³⁹

On March 7, security forces surrounded a demonstration organized by workers and pensioners with the Phosboucraa Company and families of

³⁵ National Human Rights Council, "CNDH Affirms: Parliamentary Elections Were Free, Fair and Transparent and Irregularities Reported Didn't Affect Their Credibility," Nov. 29, 2011, <<http://www.ccdh.org.ma/spip.php?article6515>>.

³⁶ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "Sana wa nisf sajan nafidhan fi haqq 23 mu'taqalan 'ala khalfiyat muzaharat 20 Fabrayir 2011 bi-Kalmim janub al-Maghrib," Mar. 5, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=25625>>.

³⁷ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "Ahkam qasiya wa ja'ira fi haqq shabbayn Sahrawiyayn bi-l-mahkama al-ibtida'iya bi-Kalmim janub al-Maghrib," Mar. 8, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=26022>>.

³⁸ Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders, "Tadakhkhul 'anif didd mutazahirin Sahrawiyin bi-madinat Bujadur," May 27, 2011, <http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=598%3A2011-05-28-02-14-40&catid=1%3Alatest-news&Itemid=56>.

³⁹ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "al-Hukm bi-6 ashhur mawqufat al-tanfidih 'ala-l-mu'taqal al-Sahrawi Ahmad al-Najim," June 7, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=33061>>.

Sahrawi detainees and disappeared persons, and dispersing it with force.⁴⁰ When the workers again attempted to demonstrate on August 1, they found an unprecedented security presence of a rapid-response unit, an army force, and a third force in civilian clothing carrying stones and clubs. Following the security intervention, several demonstrators were arrested and dozens sustained serious injuries.⁴¹

As part of the commemoration of the first anniversary of the victims of the Akdim Izik camp, which was stormed and dismantled by security forces in October 2010, Sahrawi citizens, most of them women, attempted to stage a demonstration, but Moroccan police, some in civilian clothing, disbursed the demonstration with force, injuring some demonstrators. Two protestors were taken to the hospital due to the seriousness of their condition, one of whom was the Sahrawi human rights defender Sultana Khaya.⁴² A total of 21 Sahrawis remain detained provisionally after the storming of the camp in 2010, among them political activists and human rights defenders, as well as members of the dialogue committee appointed by Sahrawi refugees in the camp.⁴³

In the first week of October, 25 Sahrawi citizens were detained, among them human rights defenders al-Mahjoub Oulad Cheikh, Kamal Trayeh, and Mohamed Manolo. They were placed in provisional detention at the Lakhel Prison in Laayoune. The nature of the charges against them is unknown.⁴⁴

On October 31, Sahrawi detainee Salem Akmath was sentenced to six months in prison. He was arrested on October 28 after he protested the confiscation of his social security card and was tried without the benefit of defense counsel.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "Man' waqfa ihtijajiya silmiya wa dukhul akthar min 100 mu'taqal siyasi Sahrawi fi idrab indhari 'an al-ta'am," Mar. 7, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=25916>>.

⁴¹ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "Fi tahaddin safir li-hurriyat al-ta'bir wa-l-haqq fi-l-tajamhur al-sultat al-Maghribiya tartakib majzara fi haqq madaniyin Sahrawiyin min 'umm al-sharikat Fusbukra' wa mi'at ukhra Sahrawiya muhammasha bi-l-'Uyun," Aug. 13, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=37449>>.

⁴² Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders, "Hisar 'askari wa bulisi mushaddad wa qam' mutazahirin Sahrawiyin bi-l-quwa bi-l-'Uyun," Oct. 10, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/3hbLq>>.

⁴³ Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders, "Ihalat al-mudafi' al-Sahrawi 'an huquq al-insan Ibrahim al-Isma'ili 'ala-l-sijn al-mahali bi-Sala," May 18, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/Hb8rI>>.

⁴⁴ Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders, "Mutaba'at mu'taqalin Sahrawiyin fi milaffat jina'iya 'ala dhimmat al-tahqiq," Oct. 10, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/zO41a>>.

⁴⁵ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "al-Hukm bi-6 ashhur nafidhan didd muwatin Sahrawi," Nov. 2, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=42837>>.

As part of the media blackout on human rights abuses in the Western Sahara, three nationals from Spain and Argentina who came to observe human rights practices in the province in January 2011 were detained by police and were not permitted to leave their hotel for four days before finally being forced to leave the city of Laayoune. The three observers had arranged meetings with victims from the Akdim Izik camp and human rights defenders.⁴⁶ A Norwegian observer and one of his companions were also prevented from meeting with victims' families, former detainees, and detainees' relatives in connection with the same case.⁴⁷

On February 4, police stopped Hamid Bouffous, a correspondent with Sahara Press, on the street in Laayoune and attempted to confiscate his motorcycle to prevent him from continuing his work and contacting victims of violations.⁴⁸

On October 14, the authorities prohibited two Spanish attorneys with the Observatory for Human Rights in Badjos, Spain, from visiting Sahrawi political detainee Sidi Ahmed Lamjid in the local prison 2 in Salé.⁴⁹

On October 30, the authorities prohibited two Spanish observers, Willy Meyer, an MEP, and Jose Perez Ventura, a member of the International Association of Jurists for Western Sahara, from leaving the plane they took to Laayoune in the Western Sahara. The former was physically and verbally assaulted by Moroccan intelligence.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "Tard 3 muraqibat min Isbaniya wa-l-Arjantin min madinat al-'Uyun," Jan. 5, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=21759>>.

⁴⁷ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "Tard muraqibayn Nurwijiyayn min madinat al-'Uyun," Jan. 11, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=22155>>.

⁴⁸ Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders, "Mu'taqal Sahrawi yata'arrad li-su' al-mu'amala wa sahafī yatimm tawqifuhu fi muhawala li-musadarat darrajatahu al-nariya bi-l-'Uyun," Feb. 1, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/UcBX8>>.

⁴⁹ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "Man' muhamiyayn Isban min ziyarat al-mu'taqalin al-siyasiyin al-Sahrawiyyin wa muthul mu'taqal siyasi amam qadi al-tahqiq," Oct. 5, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=41585>>.

⁵⁰ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "Man' na'ib fi-l-barlaman al-Urubi wa muhami 'udw fi-l-yasar al-muwahhad min ziyarat al-'Uyun," Oct. 31, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=42692>>.

