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Review of Morocco under the Universal Periodic Review: Amnesty International's reflections on the outcome

Amnesty International welcomes the recommendations made by several states to the Moroccan authorities, including to continue to implement the recommendations of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (*Instance Équité et Réconciliation*, IER), to ensure respect for the rights of migrants, to harmonize domestic law with international standards, and to ratify international human rights treaties. These recommendations, however, need to be further detailed in order to form part of a concrete plan of action to build on the human rights transition initiated some years ago in Morocco.

Amnesty International regrets, however, that other significant human rights issues in the country were not raised during the review.

One key human rights concern is the apparent lack of accountability of the security forces for their alleged abuses, including torture and excessive use of force. Such allegations have been made, for instance, in relation to cases of arrests and detentions of persons suspected of terrorist offences, of Sahrawi persons advocating or demonstrating against Moroccan rule in Western Sahara, of persons deemed to have touched on sensitive issues, including the monarchy, and to cases of killings or arrests and detentions of migrants attempting to reach European shores. In some cases, investigations were opened, but their outcome is still pending. In other cases, no investigation seems to have taken place.

Although concerns about freedom of the press and prosecutions against journalists were expressed by several states, the wider restrictions on freedoms of expression, association and assembly that affect civil society at large were not. For instance, Sahrawi human rights activists continue to be arrested, often on trumped-up charges of violence, for their human rights advocacy of the right to self-determination for the people of Western Sahara. Two Sahrawi human rights groups are unable to obtain official registration due to what appears to be politically-motivated administrative obstacles. Other activists who have expressed their opinions peacefully have been sentenced to prison terms for "undermining the monarchy", which is an offence under the Penal Code as well as the Press Code.

The lack of investigations into abuses by the security forces contribute to persons being tried in unfair trials. In this regard, the recommendations of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission for reforms of the state security organs, of the justice system and of legislation to strengthen human rights protection must be urgently implemented. The fact that the death penalty has not yet been abolished and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court not yet ratified, as recommended by the Equity and Reconciliation Commission, puts into question the political will of the Moroccan authorities to implement these human rights reforms. Amnesty International urges the authorities to take swift action to address these issues.