

## Morocco

Over the course of more than a decade, Morocco has maintained a relatively positive human rights record in comparison to other Arab countries. The monarchy has long attempted to maintain power and quell popular dissent through deft political initiatives, including limited acquiescence to the demands of rights organizations and pro-democracy forces. As such, Morocco has often been perceived as the country in the region most likely to offer an Arab example for political and democratic top-down reform. Before King Hassan II left the throne, he had adopted a “democratic approach” which included the alternation of power by allowing the winning party in elections for the legislature to form a government. In fact, the King commissioned Abdel Rahman al-Yussefi, the most prominent leader of the opposition, to form the government, due to his position as head of the Socialist Union Party, which held a plurality of seats in the Parliament at the time. This openness on the part of the Moroccan monarchy also allowed significant space for the work of human rights organizations and civil society associations, which experienced a period of relative thriving.

After King Mohamed VI assumed power, he responded further to the demands of rights organizations by supporting an initiative to reveal the truth about grave abuses committed under King Hassan II through a transitional justice initiative. An independent Equity and Reconciliation Commission was established in 2003 which was authorized to uncover the truth about the

abuses of the past, to offer compensation to those found to be victims, and to submit recommendations for making a clean break with the type of grave violations that were committed in the past.

With the first signs of the so-called Arab Spring in 2011, the monarchy sought to contain domestic repercussions of this movement by forming a committee to draft a new constitution for the country which would contain more modern provisions, affirm the pluralistic nature of Moroccan society religiously, linguistically, and culturally, and include multiple references to human rights and the international conventions that guarantee them. However, the new constitution failed to address the imbalance of power in the country, retaining the monarchy's supremacy and ensuring that the king remains immune to criticism due to his position as the "prince of the believers."

Following the adoption of the new constitution, early parliamentary elections were held. The King then appointed the Islamist Justice and Development Party, which won a plurality of the votes, to form a government, as is stipulated by the new amendments to the constitution.

Unfortunately, ten years after the beginning of the transitional justice initiative, the most important recommendations of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission to put an end to grave abuses have not been implemented, including those related to guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary and security reform. Rather, security violations increased alongside increasing terrorist attacks since the 2003 bombings in Casablanca. The increase in acts of social protest in the most marginalized areas of the country, due to their high rates of poverty and unemployment, has been accompanied by intensified police repression and the subjection of peaceful protestors to unfair trials. Acts of political protest have been similarly repressed.

Morocco continues to criminalize free expression and media freedoms by refusing to abolish prison sentences for crimes related to expression of opinion. The authorities do not allow any criticism of the monarchy; they have similarly cracked down on speech which may be considered harmful to Islam and punished those who breach certain red lines by discussing issues of corruption and misuse of power.

The controversy over Western Sahara has become a primary cause of human rights violations in Morocco. The authorities consider calls for self-determination for the Sahrawi people a breach of Moroccan sovereignty and a threat to Moroccan territorial integrity which must not be allowed. Therefore, any demonstrations held within the Sahrawi territory – even peaceful gatherings – are dealt with through the use of excessive force, and

harsh restrictions are imposed on the activities of Sahrawi rights organizations, most of which do not enjoy legal recognition. Political activists and rights advocates in the territory are continually subjected to physical attacks, arbitrary arrest, torture, and unfair trials.

Throughout the year 2012, human rights in Morocco continued to be affected by the same types of violations which pervaded the country in recent years, including the spread of excessive force to suppress acts of political and social protest, the use of collective punishment against residents of regions which witness frequent social protests, unfair trials of detainees, and the failure to investigate claims of defendants regarding being tortured and forced to make incriminating confessions, which may be the only evidence brought against them. Journalists, bloggers, artists, and political activists have also been prosecuted.

The territory of the Western Sahara also continued to witness widespread violations which severely restricted the civil and political rights of the Sahrawi people, including the right to self-determination. These abuses were accompanied by increased suppression of gatherings, further security attacks on activists – including through the practice of torture – and continued use of courts which lack basic standards for fair trials.

### **The Right to Peaceful Assembly**

The authorities showed a measure of tolerance for political protest, while at the same time dealing with social protest movements through repression. On several occasions, the security apparatus intervened violently to disperse marches and sit-ins, leading in most cases to widespread injuries and arrests.

Violent security measures were used throughout the year to confront peaceful protests held by unemployed citizens, and in most cases dozens of protestors were detained or injured due to the use of force to disperse them or the physical attacks which occurred at the time of arrest.<sup>1</sup>

Several violations were recorded in relation to what became known in the media as “Black Wednesday” (February 29, 2012), when police used violence to disperse a peaceful protest of unemployed persons who had gathered in front of the Ministry of Public Sector Modernization. This police

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<sup>1</sup> Moroccan Association of Human Rights, “Bayan fara’ ar-rabat howl al-i’atiqalat wa al-isabat fe sufuf majmu’at at-tanseq al-midani al-utur al-‘olya al-mu’atala,” Feb. 16, 2012, <<http://www.amdh.org.ma/ar/communiques-ar/com-amdh-rabat-arrestations>>; Moroccan Association for Human Rights, “Fara’ al-jama’ayya bir-rabat yudin qama’ wa i’atiqal al-mu’atilin,” Feb. 24, 2012, <<http://www.amdh.org.ma/ar/communiques-ar/amdh-rabat-codamne-repression>>.

response resulted in several injuries.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, police intervened violently to disperse a peaceful march organized by the National Federation of Workers and Officials of Local Collectives, which belongs to the Moroccan Labor Union. 30 people were injured, including Abdel Salam Belfahel, president of the Rabat branch of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights, and dozens of those who had participated in the march were brought for prosecution, among them 24 members of the National Association of Unemployed Graduates. The attacks also targeted the offices of the Moroccan Labor Union and the protestors who were inside.<sup>3</sup> The police further forcibly confronted a peaceful protest organized by the “al-‘Ayalat Jayat” movement out of solidarity with political prisoners who were holding a hunger strike. Two women were arrested from among the members of the movement, namely Safaa Essam and Fatima al-Kam.<sup>4</sup>

On March 8, the police began a campaign to terrorize residents of the city Beni Bouayach at night. They broke into homes and terrorized those inside, cursing them and arresting some. It is important to note that Beni Bouayach is located in rural northern Morocco, where frequent demonstrations are held to protest the economic and social marginalization of the region. Police also broke down doors of some shops and used clubs, stones, water hoses, and tear gas to confront the protestors.<sup>5</sup> Six of those detained have received sentences of between 4 and 6 years in prison.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, the city of Taza in eastern Morocco was also targeted by police attacks after demonstrations broke out on a nearly daily basis throughout January and February in protest of the increased cost of living and high unemployment rates among young people. The police surrounded the city and used violence to disperse and chase down protestors, resulting in the injury of 150 people and dozens of arrests.<sup>7</sup> The families of those detained organized demonstrations and blocked roads when the detainees were

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<sup>2</sup>Moroccan Association of Human Rights, “Fara’ al-jama’ayya bir-rabat yudin al-qama’ al-khatir l-al-ihtijajat as-silmeyya yom al-arba’<sup>29 february</sup>,” Feb. 29, 2012, <<http://www.amdh.org.ma/ar/communiques-ar/amdh-rabat-condamne-repression>>.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Moroccan Association of Human Rights, “Bayan al-jama’ayya howl ahdath bani bou ‘ayash,” Mar. 11, 2012, <<http://www.amdh.org.ma/ar/communiques-ar/com-bc-evenements-beni-bouayache>>.

<sup>6</sup> Moroccan Association of Human Rights, “Fara’ al-hasima l-al-jama’ayya al-maghribeyya li-haquq al-insan yudin al-ahkam al-qaseyya fe haq majmua’ a min mu’ataqaley ahdath bani bou ‘ayash,” Apr. 17, 2012, <[http://www.amdh-imzouren.blogspot.com/2012/04/blog-post\\_28.html](http://www.amdh-imzouren.blogspot.com/2012/04/blog-post_28.html)>.

<sup>7</sup>Moroccan Association of Human Rights, “Taqrir al-lajna al-jihaweyya li-taqassi al-haqa’iq howl ahdath taza fe yom 01 february 2012,” Feb. 7, 2012, <<http://www.amdh.org.ma/ar/communiques-ar/rapport-evenement-taza>>.

brought before court, which led to violent clashes with the police, who stormed a number of homes after breaking down their doors, attacking residents and threatening the women with rape after calling them prostitutes.<sup>8</sup> Six of those arrested during these events were sentenced to ten months in prison; seven others were issued a suspended sentence of five months in prison.<sup>9</sup>

On June 5, police removed the tents of protestors who were holding a sit-in in the city of Khouribga in central Morocco. During the incident, several injuries of varying severity were sustained and dozens of protestors were arrested, some of whom were referred to trial.<sup>10</sup> Anti-corruption union protests held in May and June were met with similar violence by security personnel in the city of Ouarzazate in southeastern Morocco.<sup>11</sup>

On June 10, police forcibly dispersed a peaceful march which had been called for by the February 20<sup>th</sup> movement in the city of Imzouren in northern Morocco. A number of protestors were detained, and some were injured.<sup>12</sup> Following the conclusion of a peaceful protest in Casablanca on July 22, police arrested a number of members of the February 20<sup>th</sup> movement and referred them to trial on charges of organizing an unauthorized gathering, insulting the police establishment, and attacking policemen. The court did not take into consideration that the only evidence presented was the confessions of the activists themselves, who affirmed that they had been subjected to torture and some to sexual assault in order to force them to sign confessions condemning them of the charges brought against them. The court refused to investigate the officers who claimed to have been assaulted or to hear the testimonies of witnesses. Five of the movement's members

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<sup>8</sup>Moroccan Association of Human Rights, “At-taqrir al-naha’I li-lajnat at-taqassi fe ahdaath taza,” Mar. 28, 2012,  
<<http://www.amdh.org.ma/upload/Rapports/rapport%20comit%20d%27enquete%20evenement%20TAZA.pdf>>.

<sup>9</sup>Moroccan League for the Defense of Human Rights, “Taqrir lajnat at-tahqiq fe ahdaath taza,” Mar. 28, 2012, <<http://www.lmddh.com/ar/images/pdf/rapport.pdf>>.

<sup>10</sup>Moroccan Association of Human Rights, “Al-jama’ayya al-maghribeyya li-haqq al-insan bi-kharibak nutalib b-itlaq sirah al-mu’ataqalin wa bi-fatah tahqiq,” June 6, 2012,  
<<http://www.amdh.org.ma/ar/communiques-ar/amdh-khouribgua-7juin12>>.

<sup>11</sup>Moroccan Association of Human Rights, “Fara’ al-jama’ayya bi-wurzizat yestankir al-hujum ‘ala al-hurriyat,” June 8, 2012, <<http://www.amdh.org.ma/ar/communiques-ar/com-amdh-ouarzazate>>.

<sup>12</sup>Moroccan Association of Human Rights, “Fara’ al-jama’ayya bi-aymzorn yudin al-qama’ al-mumanhaj li-haraket 20 febrayer,” June 11, 2012,  
<<http://www.amdh.org.ma/ar/communiques-ar/amdh-imzourn-13juin>>; Febrayer, “Al-ann yufqid refeyat wa’yihin fe maseerat amzorn,” June 10, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/aIYJ28>>.

were sentenced to up to 10 months in prison, and another member was issued a suspended prison sentence.<sup>13</sup>

Other demonstrations called for by the February 20<sup>th</sup> movement on August 22 in the capital and other cities were also subjected to violent police interventions, including beatings with clubs and sticks, kicking, punching, and insulting protestors and chasing them through the streets.<sup>14</sup>

On December 28, the police prevented a march called for by residents of Sidi Yusef ben Ali in Marrakesh to protest increasing prices. The police closed all roads leading to the city council, surrounded the old quarter of Sidi Yusef ben Ali, and used tear gas, water hoses, and armored vehicles. 32 people, including security officers, were injured, and 70 people were arrested, most of whom were under the age of 18 and were later released. The protestors had resorted to setting fire to garbage containers and throwing rocks in an attempt to confront the security forces. On December 31, the ten adults who had been detained appeared before the public prosecutor and were referred to court on the same day; their families were barred from entering the court.<sup>15</sup>

## **Violations to Freedom of Expression and Opinion**

On February 13, Abdel Samad al-Haidur, an activist with the February 20<sup>th</sup> movement, was sentenced to three years in prison and a fine of 15,000 Moroccan dirham for having criticized the King in a video that he had posted on YouTube. Similarly, Walid Bahoman, a student, was sentenced to 18 months in prison on charges of “attacking the sacred values of the nation” for having published material on Facebook that ridiculed the King.<sup>16</sup> On May 11, rap singer Maaz Balghawat was sentenced to one year in prison on charges of “insulting the police” in one of his songs, which had criticized corruption among the police.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Human Rights Watch, “Morocco: Contested Confessions Used to Imprison Protesters,” Sep. 17, 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/09/17/morocco-contested-confessions-used-imprison-protesters>>.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Moroccan Association of Human Rights, “Taqrir howl ahadt sidi yosef ben ali bi-marrakesh,” <<http://www.amdh.org.ma/ar/news-ar/rapport-menara-evenements-marrakech-28-dec>>.

<sup>16</sup>International Freedom of Expression Exchange, “Rapper Jailed for Video Insulting Police,” May 16, 2012, <[http://ifex.org/morocco/2012/05/16/belghouat\\_jailed/](http://ifex.org/morocco/2012/05/16/belghouat_jailed/)>.

<sup>17</sup>Human Rights Watch, “Morocco: Prison for Rapper Who Criticized Police,” May 12, 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/05/12/morocco-prison-rapper-who-criticized-police>>.

On May 18, the poet Yunis Belkhadim of the February 20<sup>th</sup> movement was sentenced to two years in prison and a fine of 5,000 dirham on charges of attacking members of the security forces at the Dar al-Hamra police station following the arrest of rap singer Maaz Balghawat. Some sources indicated that the severe punishment of Belkhadim may have been due to his having ripped off a picture of the King while participating in a march in Casablanca.<sup>18</sup>

On June 1, activist and blogger Mohamed Socrates was arrested on charges of drug trafficking. The Marrakesh Court of First Instance sentenced him to two years in prison and a fine of 5,000 dirham. Sources close to Socrates affirmed that he was forced to sign a record stating that he had had one half of a kilogram of hashish in his possession under threat that if he did not, the same charge would be brought against his handicapped brother or his elderly father. Socrates is well-known as a supporter of secularism and for his writings which sardonically criticize the government.<sup>19</sup>

On August 22, Omar Broksy, a correspondent with the Agence France Press, was attacked by police while covering a peaceful protest called for by the February 20<sup>th</sup> movement,<sup>20</sup> and on October 4 the authorities issued an order stripping him of his credentials as a reporter.<sup>21</sup>

The Minister of Communications ordered a ban on the February 2 issue of the French weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur* when the journal published a cartoon picture of God taken from the French-Iranian film “Persepolis” (a

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<sup>18</sup>Moroccan Organization for Human Rights, “Bayan bi-khusus al-hokm as-sadir fe haq as-seid yunis bilkhadim,” June 25, 2012, <[http://omdh-casa.blogspot.com/2012/06/blog-post\\_25.html](http://omdh-casa.blogspot.com/2012/06/blog-post_25.html)>; Febrayer, “Asbab tashdid al-hokm ‘ala sha’ir haraket 20 febrayer wa idanitoh bi-senateyn hibsan nafizhan,” May 18, 2012, <<http://bit.ly/RAXmxk>>.

<sup>19</sup>Reporters Without Borders, “Blogger Gets Two-Year Jail Sentence on Trumped-Up Drug Charges,” June 15, 2012, <<http://en.rsf.org/morocco-blogger-gets-two-year-jail-15-06-2012,42803.html>>.

<sup>20</sup>Reporters Without Borders, “AFP Correspondent Attacked by Police While Covering Protest,” Aug. 23, 2012, <<http://en.rsf.org/maroc-afp-correspondent-attacked-by-23-08-2012,43263.html>>; Hespress, “‘Onf al-qowat al-‘amomeyya yushatit febrayereyyen wa yudmy sahafeyyan amam al-barlamana,” Aug. 22, 2012, <<http://hespress.com/politique/60985.html>>.

<sup>21</sup>Reporters Without Borders, “Withdrawal of AFP Reporter’s Accreditation Seen as Political,” Oct. 5, 2012, <<http://en.rsf.org/morocco-withdrawal-of-afp-reporter-s-05-10-2012,43491.html>>; Moroccan League for the Defense of Human Rights, “Idanet al-qarar al-hukumi bi-sahb i’atimad as-sahafy ‘omar bruksi, wa ad-da’wa ‘ila fatah tahqiq fe ahadtal talja wa sidi ifni,” Oct. 6, 2012, <[bitly.com/VxKlr](http://bitly.com/VxKlr)>, Human Rights Watch, “Morocco: Restore AFP Reporter’s Accreditation,” Oct. 22, 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/10/22/morocco-restore-afp-reporter-s-accreditation>>.

girl from Persia).<sup>22</sup> A particular issue of the French newspaper *l'Oberlin* was also banned from distribution, because it included an insulting picture of the prophet Mohamed.<sup>23</sup> The Spanish newspaper “El País” was also banned because of its publication of excerpts from a book by Catherine Graciet and Eric Laurent titled “The Predator King”, which discusses the wealth of King Mohamed VI.<sup>24</sup>

Islamic preacher Abdullah al-Nahari issued a fatwa calling for “spilling the blood” of al-Mukhtar al-Ghazyawi, editor-in-chief of the newspaper “al-Ahdath al-Maghribeyya,” and affirming the “acceptability of killing him,” because he had defended personal freedoms and sexual relations between two consenting adults during a televised interview on an Arab satellite channel.<sup>25</sup>

## Torture and Enforced Disappearance

The deterioration of prison conditions and the spread of practices of torture and physical and psychological assault of detainees and prisoners continued to be reported. Such practices routinely affected Sahrawi activists as well as those involved in various political and social movements. The National Council for Human Rights affirms the continuation of practices of torture and ill-treatment in prisons, including beatings with sticks and plastic tubes, suspension by handcuffs in the doorways of prison cells for extended periods of time, use of wooden rods and hot irons, pricking with needles, stripping of

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<sup>22</sup>Human Rights Watch, “Morocco: Weeklies Censored for Depicting God, the Prophet Muhammad,” Feb. 10, 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/02/10/morocco-weeklies-censored-depicting-god-muhammad>>; Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, “Morocco: French Magazine Censored for Publishing Images from ‘Persepolis’,” Feb. 9, 2012, <<http://www.anhri.net/en/?p=6637>>; France 24, “Ar-rabat tumna’ tawzea’ isbuwa’eyyet ‘nofel obserfator’ fe al-maghreb,” Feb. 4, 2012, <<http://f24.my/wHps3O>>.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Assabah, “Hadeeth assabah: Hurriyet at-ta’beer...wa mana’ al-qara’a wa al-ma’rifa,” Mar. 5, 2012, <[http://www.assabah.press.ma/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=23410:201\\_2-03-05-16-57-01&catid=37:cat-laune&Itemid=782](http://www.assabah.press.ma/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=23410:201_2-03-05-16-57-01&catid=37:cat-laune&Itemid=782)>.

<sup>25</sup>National Syndicate of Moroccan Press, “An-naqaba tudin wa tustankir bi-shidda ad-da’wa ‘ila tahdid as-salama al-wataneyya l-az-zamil ‘laghziwi’,” June 30, 2012, <[http://www.snpm.org/article.php?id=416&fid\\_cat=20&fid\\_rubrique#.UJfNX2\\_MgoE](http://www.snpm.org/article.php?id=416&fid_cat=20&fid_rubrique#.UJfNX2_MgoE)>; Moroccan Association of Human Rights, “Al-jama’ayya al-maghribeyya li-haquq al-insan tudin tasrehat al-mada’u ‘abd allah an-nahari,” July 2, 2012, <<http://www.amdh.org.ma/ar/communiques-ar/denonciation-declaration-nhari>>; Moroccan Organization for Human Rights, “Risala tadhamun ma’ as-seid al-mukhtar laghziwi,” June 29, 2012, <[http://omdh-casa.blogspot.com/2012/06/blog-post\\_29.html](http://omdh-casa.blogspot.com/2012/06/blog-post_29.html)>; Liberation, “Ad-da’eyya ‘abd allah nahari yesef laghziwi bi-‘ad-deyuth’ wa yuhdir damoh,” June 30, 2012, <[http://www.ailmaroc.net/def.asp?codelangue=29&date\\_ar=2010-01-01&id\\_info=152689](http://www.ailmaroc.net/def.asp?codelangue=29&date_ar=2010-01-01&id_info=152689)>.

clothes, and insults and curses. The report of the National Council for Human Rights pointed to the existence of rooms specifically used for torture inside a number of prisons and penal institutions and indicated that mechanisms for supervision and inspection of prisons are not enforced. The report stressed the importance of creating a work plan to combat torture in cooperation with the government, the parliament, the judiciary, and civil society.<sup>26</sup>

On January 20, Sahrawi political prisoner Bila Sheikhato Ali Salem was subjected to physical attacks and insults by three employees in the local prison of Lakhel in Laayoune in southern Morocco, during a visit by his family and after he had received a paper with phone numbers that he had wanted to call via the telephone in the prison. He sustained injuries to his nose and mouth, and the visit was arbitrarily ended.<sup>27</sup>

On February 2, another Sahrawi political prisoner, Mohamed Dihani, was subjected to torture and insults by the administration of the prison in Salé. His hands were bound behind his back and he was suspended in painful positions and cursed and insulted.<sup>28</sup>

On May 6, Sufian al-Azzami was abducted while he was traveling from Fez to Casablanca to look for work. That same day, he had called his mother to inform her that he had arrived in Casablanca and would return soon to Fez. When she did not receive any news from him for several days, his family began to search for him and informed the police of his disappearance. His father learned that the numbers from which al-Azzami had called were telephone numbers of one of the general intelligence offices in Casablanca, at which point the authorities denied any connection to his disappearance or having arrested him.<sup>29</sup> On May 21, the family learned that he was in Razi Psychiatric Hospital in Salé. Al-Azzami stated that he had been subjected to

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<sup>26</sup>National Council for Human Rights, “Azmet as-sugun: masu’leyya mushtarak,” Oct. 30, 2012, <[http://www.ccdh.org.ma/IMG/pdf/exe\\_Re sume A4 exe cutif prison- Va 30 oct. - .pdf](http://www.ccdh.org.ma/IMG/pdf/exe_Re sume A4 exe cutif prison- Va 30 oct. - .pdf)>.

<sup>27</sup>Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders, “I’atada’ ‘ala al-mu’ataqal as-seyassi as-sahrawi ‘bala shekhato ‘ali salem’ b-as-sign al-mahali (lakhel) b-al-‘ayoun,” Jan. 21, 2012, <[http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=761:-----q-----&catid=44:2010-04-02-17-27-51&Itemid=6](http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=761:-----q-----&catid=44:2010-04-02-17-27-51&Itemid=6)>.

<sup>28</sup>Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State, “Bayan li-a’lat al-mu’ataqal as-siyassi muhamad dihani,” Feb. 3, 2012, <<http://asvdh.net/6284>>.

<sup>29</sup>Alkarama, “Al-maghreb: Safyan al-‘azami daheyyet ikhtifa’ qasry,” May 16, 2012, <[http://ar.alkarama.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=4447:2012-05-22-13-54-18&catid=134:-&Itemid=75](http://ar.alkarama.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4447:2012-05-22-13-54-18&catid=134:-&Itemid=75)>.

beatings and torture, yet he could not identify the responsible party or the place where he had been attacked.<sup>30</sup>

On May 17, Ahmed Ben Miloud, an Algerian prisoner held in the Salé prison, died following an extended hunger strike which he had begun 70 days before. Ben Miloud had been charged with targeting the Algerian consulate in Oujda after he had been found with a handgun in his possession while attempting to enter the consulate last year. He was sentenced to thirty years in prison, and it was reported that he was subjected to torture in his prison cell as well as to severe beatings and rape with rods. The Moroccan Coalition for Human Rights, which includes 18 rights organizations, stated that the death of Ben Miloud reflects the deteriorating status of those held in Moroccan prisons and the disregard of the authorities for their legitimate demands.<sup>31</sup>

On May 28, Mohamed Hajib, a detainee in the Salé prison, was subjected to torture and ill-treatment, including severe beatings, suspension in painful positions for extended periods of time, and threatened rape, which caused him to attempt suicide.<sup>32</sup>

## **Minority and Migrant Rights**

Despite some positive steps taken to address the problems of discrimination and marginalization of the Amazigh (Berber) minority, particularly the launching of Channel 8 in the Amazigh language, the inclusion of Amazigh as an official language of Morocco in the constitution, and the continuation of a program to teach Amazighi, the rights report issued by the “Amazigh Network for Citizenship” indicated that some of the educational programs used in Morocco continue to include texts and data which encourage discrimination and marginalization and instill the idea that Amazighi history, civilization, and culture are inferior. The report criticizes the fact that the Amazighi language is not available universally in public administration and

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<sup>30</sup>Alkarama, “Al-maghreb: tam al-‘athour ‘ala safyan al-‘azami,” May 23, 2012, <[http://ar.alkarama.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=4456:2012-06-05-15-23-05&catid=134:-&Itemid=75](http://ar.alkarama.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4456:2012-06-05-15-23-05&catid=134:-&Itemid=75)>.

<sup>31</sup>Al-Jazeera, “Da’wa li-najdet mu’ataqalen mudhiben b-al-maghreb,” June 6, 2012, <<http://www.aljazeera.net/humanrights/pages/89870f8e-a973-47cc-81ac-9e03cc5eb062>>; Febrayer, “Jotha jiza’iri fe beit hafizh binhashem ilazhin tuwajjih ‘ileih asabi’ al-itihad,” May 18, 2012, <<http://bit.ly/UJSEfR>>.

<sup>32</sup>Alkarama, “Al-maghreb: mohamad hajib daheyyet i’atiqal ta’sufi wa tazhib wa sou’ al-mu’amila fe as-sijn,” July 15, 2012, <[http://ar.alkarama.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=4480:2012-06-18-13-33-00&catid=134:-&Itemid=75](http://ar.alkarama.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4480:2012-06-18-13-33-00&catid=134:-&Itemid=75)>.

state institutions, such as hospitals, police stations, and regional administrative centers.<sup>33</sup>

It was also reported that migrants from Africa were subjected to various forms of violence, which contravenes Morocco's obligations under the International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families. On June 5, the Moroccan authorities set out to arrest a group of Africans after they met with members of the National Council for Human Rights in the city of Taourirt. The police had set an ambush for them near the headquarters of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights and were able to detain Mohamed Sonje from Cameroon.<sup>34</sup>

## **The Sahrawi Conflict and Its Effect on Human Rights**

The controversy over the Western Sahara's relationship to Morocco remained a major cause of human rights violations in the country and within the territory of the Western Sahara. Political activists and human rights defenders face harassment, while peaceful protests are repressed and human rights organizations in the territory are refused legal recognition. Arrests, torture, and unfair trials are also frequently witnessed.

On January 6, police arrested rights activist Hassana al-Waly in the city of Dakhla following violent protests in the city during the last week of September, 2011.<sup>35</sup> On April 18, the Laayoune Court sentenced him to three years in prison<sup>36</sup> on charges of attacking workers, inciting and sharing in blocking public roadways, and participating in protests.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Amazigh Network for Citizenship, "Taqrir a-shabaka al-amazigheyya min 'ajl al-mowattana howl al-huquq al-loghaweyya wa a-thaqafeyya al-amazigheyya b-al-maghreb," May 21, 2012, <[http://www.reseauamazigh.org/IMG/pdf/\\_2008-2011.pdf](http://www.reseauamazigh.org/IMG/pdf/_2008-2011.pdf)>.

<sup>34</sup> Moroccan Association of Human Rights, "T'atiqal muhajireen mubasharatan ba'd muqabilathom li-a'adha' min al-majlas al-watani li-huquq al-insan," June 5, 2012, <<http://www.amdh.org.ma/ar/communiques-ar/arrestation-migrants>>.

<sup>35</sup> Frontline Defenders, "Western Sahara: Arrest, Detention, and Fear of Torture and Ill-Treatment of Human Rights Defender Mr Hasna Al Wali," Jan. 9, 2012, <<http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/node/17014>>.

\*The city of al-Dakhla in Western Sahara had witnessed acts of violence between Moroccans and Western Saharans during the last week of September, 2011, during which seven individuals were killed. The Saharans accused those whom they called 'the Moroccan colonizers' of spreading terror and damaging the property of Saharans. The acts of violence began after a soccer match was held between the local team and the team from Casablanca. For further details, see: <<http://hespress.com/faits-divers/38499.html>>; <<http://asvdh.net/5659>>.

<sup>36</sup> Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State, "Asdaret al-ghorfa al-'owla bi-mahkamet al-iste'naf bi-madenet al-'ayoun /

On April 14, Sahrawi rights activist Mamai Hanon was physically and verbally assaulted in the city of Dakhla while being interrogated regarding his reasons for meeting with advisors from the American and British embassies and with international observers from Spain. When Hanon refused to give any information about his rights activities, the police accused him of “attacking an employee who was performing his professional duties.”<sup>38</sup>

On April 4, 19 Sahrawi political and rights activists who were being held in the local prison of Lakhal in Laayoune were subjected to harassment by the prison administration following their return from the first hearing of their trial. The activists had held up signs calling for the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination; as punishment, the prison administration denied them breaks outside of their cells as well as contact with their families, their lawyers, and even other detainees in the prison.<sup>39</sup>

On January 7, the authorities arrested 16-year-old Gowhar Bougarfa following his participation in a peaceful protest calling for the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination. The Laayoune Court sentenced him in a closed hearing to one month in prison.<sup>40</sup>

On February 23, 34 Sahrawi women were injured when police intervened to break up a demonstration called for by the coordinating committee of Akdim Izik to express solidarity with 23 Sahrawi political detainees who were undertaking a hunger strike in Sale prison.<sup>41</sup> On April 26, security forces

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as-sahara’ al-gharbeyya ahkaman qaseyya bi-haq nushata’ wa mu’ataqalin siyassiyin sahrawiyyin,” Apr. 19, 2012,

<<http://www.alqaheraalyoum.net/videos/playvideo.php?vid=a7694eecd>>.

<sup>37</sup> Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State, “Taqrir akhbari: ahkam qaseyya fe haq nushata’ haquqiyin wa siyassiyin sahrawiyyin,” Sep. 26, 2012, <<http://asvdh.net/6920>>.

<sup>38</sup> Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders, “Al-mudafa’ as-sahrawi ‘an huquq al-insan ‘mamey hanun’ yetar’ed l-i’atada’ wa al-i’atiqal bi-ad-dakhla / as-sahara’ al-gharbeyya,” Apr. 15, 2012,

<[http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=841:-----q-----&catid=44:2010-04-02-17-27-51&Itemid=6](http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=841:-----q-----&catid=44:2010-04-02-17-27-51&Itemid=6)>.

<sup>39</sup> Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders, “‘Idaret as-sijn tudayyeq al-mu’ataqalin as-siyassiyin as-sahrawiyyin ba’d tardidhom sha’arat munasira li-jibhat al-bolisario bi-qā’at al-mahkama b-al-‘ayoun,” Apr. 8, 2012,

<[http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=834:2012-04-12-23-53-24&catid=44:2010-04-02-17-27-51&Itemid=6](http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=834:2012-04-12-23-53-24&catid=44:2010-04-02-17-27-51&Itemid=6)>.

<sup>40</sup> Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders, “Al-hokm bi-shahr sijnan nafizhan fe haq at-tifl as-sahrawi ‘jawhur bougrifa’ bi-al-‘ayoun,” Jan. 12, 2012,

<[http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=744:-----q-----&catid=44:2010-04-02-17-27-51&Itemid=6](http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=744:-----q-----&catid=44:2010-04-02-17-27-51&Itemid=6)>.

<sup>41</sup> Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State, “‘Onf dhidan ‘ala at-tadhamun ma’ al-mu’ataqalin as-siyassiyin as-sahrawiyyin bi-sijn sila2,” Feb. 24, 2012, <<http://asvdh.net/6289>>.

dispersed a peaceful demonstration in Laayoune which had been called for by the Akdim Izik coordinating committee to demand the release of Sahrawi political prisoners and to denounce the plundering of natural resources. The police arrested activists al-Mahgoub Ayyach and Mustafa Lama' and injured 11 participants in the protest.<sup>42</sup>

On May 8, the city of Guelmim in southern Morocco was blockaded by police to prevent peaceful demonstrations in front of the regional hospital which had been called for by activists to protest the spread of bribery and corruption and the absence of health services. Despite the police blockade, a number of citizens were able to reach the hospital, and efforts to disperse them led to dozens of injuries.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, security forces broke up a number of demonstrations in Laayoune and arrested numerous protestors.<sup>44</sup>

On July 23, nine people were injured following their attempt to break the security blockade which had been imposed on the house of union activist Ahmed al-Diyah and the street leading to it.<sup>45</sup> On May 11, the authorities transferred Mostafa al-Budani and Mohamed Bizi to the Lakhel prison in Laayoune for their participation in a protest condemning repressive practices and expressing solidarity with Sahrawi political prisoners.<sup>46</sup>

On March 5, the First Instance Court in Guelmim in southern Morocco sentenced a number of Sahrawi youth to two months in prison following their participation in a peaceful protest.<sup>47</sup> On March 28, the Court of Appeals in Laayoune sentenced Saleh al-Saghir to eight months in prison on charges of having participated in protests in the city of Dakhla in 2011,

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<sup>42</sup> Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State, “Bayan a’ajil: as-sulutat al-maghribeyya taqma’ tathahira silmeyya wa tu’ataqil nashitan wa tusib ahad ‘ashar musharikan,” Apr. 28, 2012, <<http://asvdh.net/6583>>.

<sup>43</sup> Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, “Mana’ waqfa ihtijajeyya salmeyya wa tadakhul ‘aneef dhid mutazhahireen talibu bi-tahseen al-khadimat as-siheyya b-al-mustashfa al-iqlimeyya,” May 10, 2012, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=52996>>.

<sup>44</sup> Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State, “Bayan a’ajil: al-maghreb as-sulutat al-maghrebeyya tu’ataqil nashitan wa tusib thalath ‘ashar musharikan ista’malo haqhom fe hurriyet ar-ra’y wa at-ta’beer,” May 28, 2012, <<http://asvdh.net/6630>>.

<sup>45</sup> Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State, “As-sulutat al-maghribeyya tamna’ tajamu’an silmeyyan wa tustakhdim al-qowa li-mana’ hudur a’alat al-mu’ataqalin ‘ileih,” July 28, 2012, <<http://asvdh.net/6690>>.

<sup>46</sup> Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State, “I’ataqilat wa idanat jadida, wa ta’zhib al-mutizhahireen as-salmiyyin,” May 14, 2012, <<http://asvdh.net/6600>>.

<sup>47</sup> Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders, “Al-hokm ‘ala 05 mu’ataqalin sahrawiyyin bi-shahreyn sijnan nafizhan wa ‘ala majmua’ a’okhra bi-shahreyn mowqofa at-tanfizh,” Mar. 7, 2012, <[http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=802:-05-&catid=44:2010-04-02-17-27-51&Itemid=6](http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=802:-05-&catid=44:2010-04-02-17-27-51&Itemid=6)>.

despite the fact that al-Saghir had proven that he had been in a place 287 kilometers from Dakhla at the time of the protests.<sup>48</sup>

On April 11, the Appeals Court in Laayoune sentenced Sahrawi political prisoner Ghali Bouhla to one and a half years in prison on charges of forming a criminal gang, attempting premeditated murder, and carrying knives as weapons. Bouhla stated that his arrest was meant to punish him for his political positions; his family was assaulted in their home after they denounced his arrest and called for his release.<sup>49</sup> On April 18, the Appeals Court in Laayoune issued harsh sentences against six human rights defenders, ranging from 1-3 years in prison. These sentences came in the wake of the events that occurred in Dakhla in 2011. The court refused to investigate claims of the defendants that they had been tortured to force them to confess to the charges brought against them.<sup>50</sup>

On July 11, the Appeals Court in Laayoune sentenced Sahrawi citizens Mostafa al-Budani and Mohamed Nadour to eight months in prison following their participation in a protest held in the district of Lahachicha on the 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Polisario front.<sup>51</sup>

As a continuation of the restrictions imposed on the work of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights in the Western Sahara, the authorities banned the Association's branch in Laayoune from organizing a peaceful march on February 19 which had been set to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the February 20<sup>th</sup> movement. Security forces surrounded the offices of the

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<sup>48</sup>Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders, “Al-hokm bi-08 ashhur sijnan nafizhan ‘ala al-mu’ataqal as-sahrawi ‘saleh as-saghir’ mahkamet al-iste’naf / as-sahara’ al-gharbeyya,” Mar. 28, 2012,

<[http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=824--08-----q---q-----&catid=44:2010-04-02-17-27-51&Itemid=6](http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=824--08-----q---q-----&catid=44:2010-04-02-17-27-51&Itemid=6)>.

<sup>49</sup>Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders, “Al-hokm bi-senna wa nost ‘ala al-mu’ataqal as-siyassi as-sahrawi ‘ghali bouhala’ bi-mahkamet al-iste’naf b-al-‘ayoun / as-sahara’ al-gharbeyya,” Apr. 11, 2012,

<[http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=835%3A-----q---q-----&catid=52%3A2010-09-18-15-37-20&Itemid=2](http://www.codesaso.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=835%3A-----q---q-----&catid=52%3A2010-09-18-15-37-20&Itemid=2)>.

<sup>50</sup>Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State, “Asdaret al-ghorfa al-‘owla bi-mahkamet al-iste’naf bi-madenet al-‘ayoun / as-sahara’ al-gharbeyya ahkaman qaseyyan bi-haq nushata’ wa mu’ataqalin siyassiyin sahrawiyyin,” Apr. 19, 2012, <<http://asvdh.net/6509>>.

<sup>51</sup>Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State, “Mahkama maghribeyya tusdir hokman bi-thaman ashhur sijnan nafizha bi-haq mowqufin sahrawiyyin,” July 14, 2012, <<http://asvdh.net/6654>>.

Association and blocked the streets leading to the building where they are located to prevent the march from occurring.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Frontline Defenders, “Morocco: Attack against Yousuf Abu Hilala Member of the Association Marocaine des Droits Humains (AMDH) and Banning of a Peaceful AMDH Rally,” Feb. 22, 2012, <<http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/node/17496>>.

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