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Re: Why Morocco should not be elected President of the UN Human Rights Council!

One is mistaken to assume that Moroccan regime has broken up with its dark past regarding human rights violations in Morocco and Western Sahara. The regime shifted from using other methods covered by legal texts and administrative decisions, to hinder the path of those who confront it, preoccupy them with themselves, and limit their political and human rights activity. The Moroccan regime has begun dragging its violators to justice and is quick to interrogate anyone who makes a statement accusing it or showing that they are being subjected to a violation. The regime quickly comes up with a bunch of press releases and pre-made informational press releases as a counterattack to anyone who dares question the regime's credibility.

The country's human rights scene remained unchanged without any change and was characterized by frequent violations and successive attacks on various rights and freedoms. Ironically, after the fourth session of the Universal Periodic Review, Morocco informed the Human Rights Council of its decision to accept 232 of the 306 recommendations it received. Morocco accepted most of the recommendations related to the prohibition of torture, the independence of the judiciary, and freedom of expression, assembly, and association. However, most of these recommendations have not been implemented, and Morocco's record on these issues remains very worrying.

For example, The Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders declared that “human rights defenders working on human rights issues in Morocco and Western Sahara continue to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and torture.”

In North Morocco, most recently on 23 June 2022, at least 23 African men were killed on the Spanish-Morocco border in Melilla, due to excessive use of force by Moroccan security forces, including beatings. The incident occurred when about 2,000 people tried to enter Spain by climbing over the chain-linked fence surrounding the Spanish enclave.

On another occasion, in 2021, Morocco extradited Osama Al-Hassani to Saudi Arabia where he is currently imprisoned, despite a request by the UN Committee against Torture to suspend the extradition. Likewise, in February 2023, Morocco effectively extradited Hassan Al Rabie, a member of the Saudi Shiite minority, to Saudi Arabia putting him at risk of serious human rights violations.

“Morocco did not witness any positive human rights developments during the year 2022,” this is the central conclusion that the Moroccan Association for Human Rights, the largest human rights organization in the country, came out with as it issued its annual report.



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Moroccan law continues to punish crimes of peaceful expression. Although the Press and Publications Law does not stipulate prison sentences as penalties for speech crimes, the Penal Code stipulates prison sentences for a range of crimes that are considered “red lines,” such as insulting the king or members of his family, and harming the monarchy, Islam, or Morocco’s territorial integrity.

The judiciary remains under significant influence from the executive branch. This is mainly because the king is the sole head of the Supreme Judicial Council. Moreover, courts often fail to issue fair and balanced rulings. In addition, opponents who appear before Moroccan courts are often tried, with complete disregard for fair trial guarantees.

In recent years, Morocco has witnessed a pattern of arrests, judicial harassment, and imprisonment of independent journalists, activists, and politicians for their critical writings and work, on trumped-up charges including “sexual assault,” “serving a foreign agenda,” or “money laundering.”

The trials of opinion, expression, and protest activists, including human rights activists, journalists, bloggers, social media users, and professors “who were forced to contract,” demonstrated that the state continues to harness the judiciary to punish and suppress every critical voice or protest expression, by blessing the various violations and transgressions that accompany arrests and detentions. Investigations and investigations are distorted, and the means of proof and evidence are affected by giving sanctity to the judicial police reports. They seriously affect the presumption of innocence and nullify all defenses and appeals presented by the defense by including them in the substance, despite their decisive role in the extent of the legitimacy and integrity of the prosecution or its failure to institute.

The poor situation of human rights in Morocco is not linked to a passing circumstance, but rather the result of a political choice based on the exaggeration of the security and authoritarian obsession, which attempts to deny the protective role of institutions and organizations working in the field of human rights, which the regime no longer has room for them and their work.

It is imperative to stress upon the fact that electing Morocco for the presidency of the UN Human Rights Council will be a huge mistake and an unforgiveable act. Morocco is still continuing to occupy the Territory of Western Sahara and is denying the people of Western Sahara their basic rights, including their self-determination right, and is plundering their natural resources. Morocco committed genocides against the Sahrawis and has been ignoring all calls to organize a referendum in Western Sahara to determine the future of the territory. Morocco still confiscates all rights of the Saharawis and continues to abuse of all their rights and still go unpunished for all the atrocities it has been committing against the people of Western Sahara since 1975 in defiance to the international law and all UN resolutions.

Therefore, we deem that Morocco is unfit for such a candidacy and cannot be a protector of human rights.

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