Moroccan judicial reforms: time for conclusions and effective implementation

Description:


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The judicial reforms launched by the Moroccan authorities in 2011 are essential but cannot alone effectively protect human rights in the country, declared FIDH today in Marrakech during the launch of a report (available in French and Arabic) on its June 2014 fact-finding mission to Morocco.

FIDH is concerned about the violent repression of persons who publicly and peacefully protest against the Moroccan policies. Besides the use of excessive force against the demonstrators and restrictions to freedom of association that have been recorded during the last few months, (most recently, demonstrations and meetings organised by the Moroccan Association for Human Rights, Amnesty International, the Moroccan League for the Defence of Human Rights were prohibited), FIDH denounces the application of unfair judicial procedures against activists and persons accused of jeopardising national security.

"The Moroccan authorities are cracking down on peaceful opponents, the same ones who contributed to the dynamics of the reform process, in a context characterised by alarming impunity," said Karim Lahidji, President of FIDH who led the FIDH mission to Morocco.

During the mission, FIDH also highlighted the lack of effective criminal judicial proceedings against persons responsible for cases of torture and ill treatment observed during the last two years, in particular during the arrest and police custody of suspects, many of whom were detained for having expressed dissenting opinions. The absence of lawyers during the critical period of police custody and interrogations often leads to human rights violations.

Conditions of detention are also a cause of great concern. During its visit to four prisons (Okasha in Casablanca, Salé 1, Salé, 2 and Laayoune) FIDH noted the horrendous detention conditions, conditions that are representative of the penal facilities in Morocco in general: overcrowding, extended pre-trial detention, etc. According to the information obtained by the mission, over 50% of the Moroccan prison population is being held in pre-trial detention, often for periods of time beyond the legal one-year period.

There is neither schedule nor priority listing for the judicial reforms that should improve some of these conditions. The reform process, which should enable Morocco to fulfil its international obligations in the field of human rights protection, is being delayed by a parliamentary backlog that is slowing down the process. Furthermore, the reforms can only have a positive effect if they are backed by political commitments and decisions to protect public freedoms and punish the perpetrators of human rights violations.

Whilst Morocco this week is hosting the Second World Forum for Human Rights, FIDH calls upon the Moroccan authorities to implement without delay the provisions of the constitution and its international commitments to human rights. "This event should serve as an opportunity for the Moroccan authorities to turn its words into actions," said Karim Lahidji.

For more information on human rights in Morocco, read our position paper untitled Ongoing violations: Morocco should get back on track.

Download last FIDH report on Morocco in French and in Arabic.