

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Amnesty International deplores the Moroccan authorities' decision to ban youth camp

Amnesty International regrets the Moroccan authorities' decision to ban the 16th Amnesty International Youth Camp scheduled to be held this week in the *Complexe Moulay Rachid de la Jeunesse et de l'enfance* (Moulay Rachide Youth and Children's Complex) in Bouznika. This decision represents a step backward for freedom of association and assembly when the authorities claim to be committed to human rights and the rule of law.

It was through the press yesterday, in a news release issued by the official agency Maghreb Arabe Presse (MAP), that the organization learned of the banning of the 16th youth camp, organized by the Moroccan Section of Amnesty International, on the grounds that the necessary procedures had not been followed, an allegation which Amnesty International firmly rejects.

Amnesty International complied with all the procedures set out in Moroccan law when preparing this event, in particular article 3 of the royal decree concerning public gatherings which states that the local authorities should be notified of all public meetings, but that prior authorization is not required.

A fax was therefore sent to the Minister of Youth and Sport on 3 July 2014 informing the authorities of the camp and the nationalities of the 40 participants, and asking for permission to use the complex. Then, on 28 August 2014, a fax was sent to the local authorities in Bouznika notifying them of the holding of the camp. The organization has receipts confirming that these two documents were sent.

The decision to ban the youth camp being organized by Amnesty International Morocco breaches both Moroccan legislation and the country's international human rights commitments. The Moroccan Constitution specifically guarantees freedom of assembly (article 29) while the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantees freedom of association and peaceful assembly (articles 21 and 22).

Amnesty International has conveyed its concerns to the relevant authorities.

Further information

Since 1998, Amnesty International has been organizing youth camps during which young activists exchange and share their experiences of working to prevent human rights violations, a decision that is rooted in the idea of investing in young people and the belief that educating them is the best way of achieving a society that guarantees the rights of all without distinction.

These meetings have acquired an international character with the participation of young activists from the Middle East, North Africa and European Union.

This year, the camp was intending to discuss ways of stamping out torture and ill-treatment, an issue that is part of a global Amnesty International campaign, as well as restrictions on freedom of expression and the capacity of human rights defenders to undertake their peaceful and legitimate activities.

To combat censorship, the young participants are launching an "open virtual youth camp" to coordinate mobilization for dealing with the challenges thrown up by the human rights violations being committed in the region and throughout the world.