

URGENT ACTION

VIOLENT CRACKDOWN ON PROTESTS IN MOROCCO

In the last week, scores of protesters in Morocco have been physically assaulted by security forces. Nabil Talha, a student who was beaten and arrested on 22 May 2011, has been conditionally released. Another 21 protesters are still detained in Tangiers and face criminal charges.

Following protests on 22 May 2011, at least 21 protesters are believed to still be detained at the judicial police station in Tangiers. Nabil Talha, a 21-year-old student, arrested by security forces at Hassan II University hospital while he was being treated for injuries he sustained, was released on bail on 24 May 2011. All of them are facing criminal charges including participating in unauthorized assembly and using violence against public servants.

On 25 May 2011, about 8,000 doctors gathered in a sit-in in Rabat in front of the Ministry of Health and wanted to march to the parliament. The security forces reportedly physically assaulted them with truncheons and kicked them. At least 40 sustained different injuries. A 43-year-old doctor underwent surgery for a broken pelvis.

On 28 and 29 May 2011, protests continued in several cities in Morocco, including Kenitra, Safi, Fes, Tangiers, Casablanca and Salé, to demand political and social reform and an end to corruption. Those taking part included political activists, members of human rights organizations and members of the "20 February Movement", which calls for reform in Morocco, inspired by similar movements for change in the region. The protests were mainly peaceful. However, Amnesty International has received numerous testimonies about scores of protesters who were physically assaulted by security forces wearing uniforms as well as civilian clothes. They were beaten with truncheons and sticks and kicked. Several victims, including women and children, sustained head and facial injuries.

In Safi, 10 men were reportedly arrested by the security forces, taken to cars, physically assaulted and taken to remote areas where they were abandoned. Many of them returned back home on foot with serious injuries.

Amnesty International received reports that the security forces have been visiting families of activists from the "20 February Movement", intimidating and threatening them. Amnesty International also continues to receive information that some protesters treated in government-run hospitals have been denied copies of medical reports detailing their injuries, potentially obstructing their efforts to obtain justice and reparation.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic, French, or your own language:

- Urging the Moroccan authorities to ensure that a full, independent and impartial investigation into the allegations of physical assaults is conducted and that any officials responsible are held accountable;
- Urging the authorities to release immediately and unconditionally all detainees who are held solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- Urging the authorities to uphold the right of protestors to express their views and organize protests in a peaceful manner and to instruct security forces not to resort to unjustified or unnecessary force to disperse demonstrations.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 JULY 2011 TO:

Minister of Justice

Mohamed Naciri

Place Mamounia

Rabat, Morocco

Fax: +212 537 734 725/ 537 730

772

Salutation: Your Excellency

National Human Rights Council

Driss Elyazami

President

Place Ach-Chouhada, BP 1341

10 001 Rabat, Morocco

Fax : +212 537 726 856

Salutation: Dear Sir

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 152/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE29/005/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 15 May 2011, planned rallies and demonstrations in Rabat, Fes, Tangiers and Témara were forcibly dispersed by Moroccan security forces, who used truncheons to break up the protests, as well as kicking and beating the demonstrators. Attempts by protesters to gather in Témara were also blocked by security forces. As a result, scores of people sustained injuries to their heads and other parts of their bodies. Dozens were apprehended by the security forces, detained for few hours and then released. At least two people, brothers Ahmed and al-Mofadhal Shahboun are facing trials in Tangiers on unclear charges.

On 12 March 2011 scores were injured and at least 120 were briefly detained when security forces used unjustified force to break up a protest in central Casablanca.

The Moroccan authorities have been under pressure to respond to demands for political and human rights reform, following continuing demonstrations since 20 February inspired by the events in the region. On 3 March 2011 the authorities announced a new National Human Rights Council. On 9 March 2011, King Mohamed announced a plan of constitutional reform, and the devolving of some his political power. The breaking up of demonstrations is a serious blow to the ostensible promise of reform.

The demonstrations had been organized by the 20 February Movement, which calls for reform in Morocco, inspired by similar movements for change elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa.

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