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MOROCCO: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL TO HOLD HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION WORKSHOP

In the first initiative that the human rights organization has taken in Morocco, Amnesty International is holding a two-day human rights education workshop from 2 to 3 December in Rabat.

The workshop will bring together government officials, educators, human rights experts and Amnesty members to exchange ideas and experiences in the field of human rights education. This initiative comes in the light of "positive steps" which Amnesty International says the authorities have been taking in promoting and respecting human rights in Morocco.

"The positive steps taken by Moroccan authorities should be continued so as to rectify the remaining human rights concerns in the country," Amnesty International said.

The workshop programme features formal lectures, audio-visual materials, discussion groups, role-play and planning sessions, with an aim to promoting commitment to the introduction of human rights education in Morocco, and discussing how human rights issues and values can be brought into the national education curriculum.

It will also serve as an information exchange, and as a forum for discussion about initiatives that have so far been taken in this field and their future development. Workshop participants will debate techniques and methodology for teaching and learning about human rights in general, organizational approaches to human rights education, and concrete plans of action for the future.

The Ministers of Human Rights, Justice and Education and other decision makers have been invited to a formal opening for the workshop. This will be followed by a number of closed working sessions, at which 30 to 35 participants are expected to attend. These participants have been drawn from Amnesty International members in Morocco with teaching and educational experience, representatives from local non-governmental organizations and the Moroccan educational authorities.

A delegation from the International Secretariat in London and three visiting human rights education experts will also participate in the working sessions.

Amnesty International has been working for many years for the improvement of the human rights situation in Morocco. Over the past few years there have been significant improvements, which the organization has welcomed, including the release in 1991 of hundreds of "disappeared" persons after up to 18 years in secret detention, and the commutation of 196 death sentences. Other improvements include the 1994 release of more than 350 prisoners of conscience, the repeal of a 1935 decree under which prisoners of conscience had been imprisoned, and the ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Torture.

Amnesty International continues to be concerned about ongoing human rights violations in Morocco. These concerns include the continued imprisonment of prisoners of conscience, unfair trials of prisoners of conscience, the imposition of death sentences, reports of torture and ill-treatment, and deaths in custody.

The organization is also concerned about the lack of information on hundreds who "disappeared", most of them Sahrawis, after being arrested since 1962. The lack of adequate investigations into past and current cases of human rights violations continue to be a concern for the human rights organization.

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