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News flash

Morocco: Human rights defenders face jail

Thirty-six human rights defenders face the possibility of imminent jail terms, as an appeal court in the capital, Rabat, prepares to re-examine their case on 17 September 2001.

The activists were originally sentenced by a lower court on 16 May 2001 to three months in prison and a fine of 3,000 dirhams (around \$300) each for organizing an “unauthorized demonstration” on 9 December 2000. They have remained free pending an appeal against the verdict.

A delegate representing Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch will be observing Monday’s session.

“Intimidating human rights defenders with jail sentences for exercising their right to freedom of expression is unacceptable,” the two organizations said today.

The defendants had planned to gather outside parliament on 9 December last year to demand justice for victims of human rights violations, such as “disappearances”, torture and arbitrary imprisonment, in previous decades and to call for an end to the impunity which those responsible for these crimes still enjoy.

ENDS.../

- *Amnesty International:*

For more information please call Amnesty International’s press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566 or visit their website at <<http://www.amnesty.org>>, where copies of previous press releases referring to this trial - in particular, Morocco: Human rights defenders sentenced to imprisonment (AI Index: MDE 29/006/2001) of 17 May 2001 - can be found.

- *Human Rights Watch:*

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