

PUBLIC STATEMENT
MOROCCO: A MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION

Amnesty International was informed this week by the Moroccan government that the organization's International Council Meeting (ICM)* could not take place in August 1999 in Morocco as scheduled.

The organization regrets the decision of the Moroccan authorities and considers it "a missed opportunity for human rights promotion in Morocco".

The holding of this meeting every two years, which brings together some 400 members of Amnesty International from all over the world, was agreed with and welcomed by the Moroccan authorities more than a year ago.

As recently as April 1999 the Moroccan Human Rights Minister publicly welcomed the holding of the Amnesty International ICM in a presentation to the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

In recent weeks, Amnesty International has received different and sometimes contradictory messages from various Moroccan authorities. To date no clear reason has been provided by the Moroccan government to explain its refusal to allow the council to take place in Morocco.

However, references have been made by various Moroccan authorities to public events planned for the ICM, statements made by Amnesty International which were disrespectful to the Moroccan authorities, and the content or the timing of a forthcoming report on Morocco/Western Sahara.

The organization has undertaken every effort, in recent weeks, to clarify and resolve any misunderstanding and to comprehend the reasons for the sudden refusal. Amnesty International will continue its dialogue with the Moroccan authorities and will continue its work, in partnership with the Moroccan human rights organizations and civil society, in the field of the promotion and protection of human rights.

***Background**

The ICM is an internal, organizational meeting, not open to the press or public. It is the supreme governing body of Amnesty International and decides on the organization's strategy for the forthcoming years. The Council also elects the International Executive Committee (IEC), to act as the decision-making body of the movement between Council meetings.

At the ICM Amnesty International members from all over the world gather to take decisions on the future direction of their movement. Human rights activists from all cultural backgrounds, origins and walks of life come together to discuss important issues which will influence their human rights work on behalf of people worldwide.

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