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## **Morocco/Western Sahara: Drop absurd charges against teenagers arrested for kissing**

Authorities in Morocco must immediately and unconditionally drop charges against three teenagers arrested for kissing and posting a photo on Facebook, said Amnesty International ahead of a court hearing on Friday.

“It is simply absurd that these teenagers could face a prison term just for kissing and posting a photo on Facebook,” said Philip Luther, Middle East and North Africa Director at Amnesty International.

“These young people should never have been detained in the first place - there is no imaginable reason why expression of this type ought to result in prosecution. Launching a judicial investigation into a complaint about an act as benign as teenagers kissing is ridiculous. It should be dismissed out of hand.”

Two 15-year-old boys and one 14-year-old girl were arrested on 4 October in the city of Nador. They were detained for three days and released on bail on 7 October, ahead of a court hearing this Friday.

All three were charged with “public indecency” under Article 483 of Morocco's Penal Code. If found guilty, they could face up to two years imprisonment and a fine.

Furthermore, one of the boys was accused of “indecent assault” on a minor under Article 484 of the Penal Code for allegedly kissing the 14-year-old girl, an offence which carries prison sentences between two and five years.

The arrests took place following a complaint claiming the kiss, which took place outside a high school with photos posted on social media, had a negative effect on Moroccan society.

The arrests and detention sparked a broad wave of solidarity in Morocco and abroad. A solidarity kiss-in was organised on 6 October outside the Moroccan embassy in Paris, while similar protests are planned this week in Morocco.