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Agenda Item 6

Amnesty International

Oral statement on the outcome on Morocco under the UPR

9 June 2008
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Mr. President,

Amnesty International welcomes the recommendations made by several states to the Moroccan authorities, including to continue to implement the recommendations of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (Instance Equité et Réconciliation, IER), to ensure respect for the rights of migrants, to harmonize domestic law with international standards, and to fully subscribe to international human rights treaties. These recommendations, however, need to be further detailed in order to form part of a concrete plan of action to build on the human rights transition initiated some years ago in Morocco.

Amnesty International regrets, however, that certain significant human rights issues in the country were not raised during the review.

One key human rights concern is the apparent lack of accountability of the security forces for their alleged abuses, including torture and excessive use of force. Such allegations have been made, for instance, in cases of arrests and detentions of persons suspected of terrorist offences, of Sahrawi persons advocating or demonstrating
against Moroccan rule in Western Sahara, of persons deemed to have touched on
sensitive issues, including the monarchy, and in the killings or arrests and detentions
of migrants attempting to reach European shores. In some cases, investigations were
opened, but their outcome is still pending. In other cases, mostly those that are
politically sensitive, no investigation seems to have taken place.

Although concerns about freedom of the press and judicial prosecutions against
journalists were expressed by several states, the wider restrictions on freedoms of
expression, association and assembly that affect civil society at large were not. For
instance, Sahrawi human rights activists continue to be arrested, often on trumped-up
charges of violence, for their human rights activities and advocacy of the right to self-
determination for the people of Western Sahara. Two Sahrawi human rights groups
are unable to obtain official registration due to politically-motivated administrative
obstacles. Activists who have expressed their opinions peacefully have been
sentenced to prison terms for “undermining the monarchy”, an offence under the
Penal Code as well as the Press Code.

Mr. President,

The lack of investigations into abuses by the security forces and the restrictions in
place regarding “taboo” issues contribute to persons being tried in unfair trials. In this
regard, the recommendations of the Instance Equité et Réconciliation (IER) for
reforms of the state security organs, of the justice system and of legislation to
strengthen human rights protection must be urgently implemented. The fact that the
death penalty has not yet been abolished, and the Rome Statute of the International
Criminal Court not been ratified, as recommended by the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER), puts in question the political will of the Moroccan authorities to implement these human rights reforms. Amnesty International urges the authorities to take swift action to address these issues.

Thank you Mr. President.

[491 words]