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Morocco

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The Constitution provides for a monarchy with a Parliament and an independent judiciary; however, ultimate authority rests with the King, who presides over the Council of Ministers, appoints all members of the Government, and may, at his discretion, terminate the tenure of any minister, dissolve the Parliament, call for new elections, and rule by decree. The late King Hassan II, who ruled for 38 years, was succeeded by his son, King Mohammed VI, in July 1999. Since the constitutional reform of 1996, the bicameral legislature consists of a lower house, the Chamber of Representatives, which is elected through universal suffrage, and an upper house, the Chamber of Counselors, whose members are elected by various regional, local, and professional councils. The councils' members themselves are elected directly. The lower house of Parliament also may dissolve the Government through a vote of no confidence. In March 1998, King Hassan named a coalition government headed by opposition socialist leader Abderrahmane Youssoufi and composed largely of ministers drawn from opposition parties. Prime Minister Youssoufi's Government is the first government drawn primarily from opposition parties in decades, and also represents the first opportunity for a coalition of socialist, left-of-center, and nationalist parties to be included in the Government. The November 1997 parliamentary elections were held amid widespread, credible reports of vote buying by political parties and the Government, and excessive government interference. The fraud and government pressure tactics led most independent observers to conclude that the results of the election were heavily influenced, if not predetermined, by the Government. After a long appeals process, some of the results were overturned by the Constitutional Council during the year and new by-elections were held. In September the Government reported that various political parties had engaged in vote-buying and fraud during indirect elections to replace one-third of the 270 seats in the Chamber of Counselors, Parliament's upper house. The Government criticized the electoral corruption, indicating that it would investigate and prosecute those concerned; however, few of the cases involving electoral fraud had been presented before the courts or prosecuted by year's end. The judiciary historically has been subject to bribery and government influence; however, the Youssoufi Government continued to implement a reform program to develop greater independence and impartiality.

The security apparatus includes several overlapping police and paramilitary organizations. The Border Police and the National Security Police are departments of the Ministry of Interior, the Judicial Police falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice, and the Royal Gendarmerie reports to the Palace. Some members of the security forces continued to commit serious human rights abuses.

The economy is based on large phosphate reserves, a diverse agricultural sector, fisheries, a sizable and growing tourist industry, a growing manufacturing sector (especially textiles), and a dynamic, deregulated telecommunications sector. There are considerable remittances from citizens working abroad. The illegal production and export of cannabis also is a significant economic activity, particularly in the north. Economic growth is highly dependent on agricultural output, which has been affected adversely by 2 consecutive years of worsening drought. According to the Government's statistics, the real gross domestic product (GDP) shrank by 0.7 percent in 1999. A similar outcome is estimated for 2000.

The Government generally respected the rights of its citizens in most areas; however, the Government's record was generally poor in a few areas, and there were some notable setbacks. Citizens do not have the full right to change their government. While then-King Hassan II's appointment of a first-ever opposition coalition government in 1998 marked a significant step toward democratization, officially recognized corruption and vote-buying in the September Chamber of Counselors elections constituted a notable setback. There were reports of several suspicious deaths in police custody. Some members of the security forces occasionally tortured or otherwise abused detainees, and beat protesters on numerous occasions. Despite some progress by the Government, human rights groups continue to call for full disclosure of all available information concerning citizens abducted by the Government from the 1960's through the 1980's. Despite significant efforts by the Government, prison conditions remain harsh. Authorities sometimes arbitrarily arrest and detain persons. The judiciary historically has been subject to corruption and Interior Ministry influence; however, the Government continued to implement judicial reforms in order to increase the level of the judiciary's independence and impartiality. Nonetheless, human rights organizations and activists alleged a lack of due process in several high-profile court trials, including 2 controversial military court trials involving an air force captain who, after criticizing corruption in the military to a foreign news publication, ultimately was sentenced to 21/2 years in prison for violating the Military Code; five Sahrawi youths who, after being arrested in Laayoune for throwing stones at police, were sentenced to 5 to 10 years' imprisonment for forming a criminal association; and unemployed graduates who were detained during protests in Rabat in June. At times authorities infringed on citizens' privacy rights. The Government's record on press freedom was inconsistent during the year. While the Government permitted extensive coverage of formerly taboo topics it systematically restricted press freedom on several specific topics that it considers sensitive, and on which journalists continue to practice self-censorship, including criticism of the Monarchy, Morocco's claim to the Western Sahara, and the sanctity of

Islam. It appeared that the Government also increased restrictions on both domestic and international media to prevent reporting on some topics with the potential to reflect negatively on the country's international image. The Government censored and banned at least 12 domestic and foreign publications during the year. On December 2, Prime Minister Youssoufi used the highly controversial and long-criticized Article 77 of the Press Code to ban three investigative weekly newspapers. The Government limited freedom of assembly and association. In numerous incidents during the year, police beat and violently dispersed demonstrators. The Government limited freedom of religion. Although non-Muslim foreigners may practice their religions freely, missionaries who proselytize face expulsion, and converts from Islam to other religions continue to experience social ostracism. The Government monitors the activities of mosques. During the summer, the Government prevented members of an Islamist group, whose leader has questioned the legitimacy of the Monarchy, from gaining access to campgrounds and beaches for group prayer sessions, and arrested and jailed some of the group's members. The Government at times restricts freedom of movement and withholds the granting of passports for foreign travel. Domestic violence and discrimination against women are common. Teenage prostitution is a problem in urban centers. Berbers face cultural marginalization, and continue to press the Government to preserve their language and culture. Unions are subject to government interference, child labor also is a problem, and the Government has not acted to end the plight of young girls who are subjected to exploitative and abusive domestic servitude.

However, there was further progress on some important human rights issues during the year. In February and August, the courts sentenced to prison terms five members of the security forces who were convicted for their involvement in the beating deaths of prisoners. In order to implement reforms enacted into law in 1999, the National Prison Administration initiated a series of activities to improve living conditions inside prisons, including the construction of family visitation centers, manual skills training facilities, and visits by various entertainers. In July the Royal Arbitration Commission that the King established in 1999 to indemnify former political prisoners and their families, released an initial grant of compensation totaling approximately \$14 million (140 million dirhams), which benefited 68 victims or their families; some of the grant money went to Sahrawis from the Western Sahara who were in need of urgent provisional financial and medical aid. The July compensation also supplemented an initial Government allotment to the commission of roughly \$4 million (40 million dirhams) in April that went to meet the urgent medical needs of 39 former prisoners and their survivors. The Government continued to clear a backlog of unenforced legal judgments from previous years. In May the Government allowed Islamist dissident Sheik Abdessalam Yassine to leave his home after 11 years of house arrest for refusing to acknowledge the religious authority of then-King Hassan II. The Constitutional Council overturned a number of election results considered fraudulent from the 1997 legislative elections, as well as results from a by-election held in June. The King appointed the Monarchy's first female royal counselor in March and confirmed the appointment of the first female minister in September. In May the Government accorded "public utility" status, which confers organizations with financial benefits as recognition of their serving the public interest, to two of the country's leading human rights organizations, the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH) and the Moroccan Organization for Human Rights (OMDH). In October the Government permitted an organization of former political detainees, as well as hundreds of human rights activists, to travel to and hold a remembrance ceremony at the notorious former secret detention center of Tazmamart, whose existence the authorities formerly denied. Throughout the year, the Human Rights Ministry held numerous human-rights-awareness training sessions with teachers and some police personnel, and the Government increased its efforts to introduce human rights as a core subject of the national school curriculum. In September the Government hosted a human rights training seminar for representatives of Arab governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) in the Arab world. During her visit in April to attend an international conference on national human rights institutions and open a U.N.-sponsored human rights information center, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson said that while there were still problems to resolve, the country had achieved "significant progress" in human rights over the past 2 years. In January the Human Rights Ministry announced an agreement with the Moroccan Barristers Association to open a network of legal support centers for victims of domestic violence.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Political and Other Extrajudicial Killing

There were no reports of political killings. According to a report in the February newsletter of the AMDH, Ali Akzkane died on January 4 under suspicious circumstances, while in police custody in the southern town of Tiznit, after being apprehended during an attempted robbery. In response to a January 13 newspaper article that called attention to the AMDH's report and its request for a government investigation, the Inspector General of the National Security Police in early March denied accusations of police malfeasance in the death. According to the Inspector General, Akzkane committed suicide in his jail cell 2 hours after being incarcerated, and authorities immediately notified the public prosecutor and regional doctor. An investigation ensued and, according to the Inspector General, discussions with Akzkane's family revealed that he had been suffering from depression. Results of the autopsy reportedly attributed Akzkane's death to suicide. According to the AMDH, it was contacted by the Government regarding the affair in September and told that the authorities were reviewing the case. There were no results in the investigation by year's end (see Section 1.c.).

The AMDH's bureau in Taounate (outside of Fez) reported suspicious circumstances in the death of Mustapha Najiaji, after a Royal Armed Forces patrol took him and another citizen into custody at 2 a.m. on July 12; the press reported that security forces detained the two for public drunkenness and possession of illegal narcotics. According to the second citizen, the patrol took him and Najiaji to a "bechouia" (an administrative center under the jurisdiction of the Interior Ministry that contains holding cells) and beat them until 3 a.m. The security forces subsequently freed the second citizen after Najiaji fell down, lost consciousness, and stopped breathing. According to the AMDH report, at 4 a.m. the security forces at the bechouia notified the public prosecutor that they had found Najiaji dead in his cell from a suicide by hanging. The second citizen reportedly alleged in his testimony to the public prosecutor that Najiaji died from beatings at the hands of the security forces. According

to the AMDH, the prosecutor general of Fez orally transmitted the autopsy results to Najiaji's family, and the family's lawyer reportedly had access to the results; the results reportedly made reference to Najiaji having been the victim of violence before his death. The AMDH expressed concern over the slow handling of the case, which reportedly was pending with the general prosecutor at the military court in Rabat at year's end. The Royal Armed Forces patrol members involved in the case were not yet charged by year's end (see Section 1.c.).

On November 27, security forces reportedly used violent means to break up a 5-day sit-in strike at a canning factory in the southern city of Agadir. The attack reportedly resulted in the death of one worker and injuries to eight others. Conflicting reports attributed the death to either police abuse or "natural causes" (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., 2.b., and 6.a.).

In their annual human rights report for 1999, which was released in late January, the AMDH called on the Government "to resolve definitively and urgently the issue of deaths inside and outside police stations and posts of the Gendarmerie."

A police officer and two members of the Interior Ministry's auxiliary forces were arrested in connection with the beating death of Farah Mohammed near Oujda in August 1999. The public prosecutor at Oudja's court of appeal subsequently ordered an investigation. Farah Mohammed was stopped by police authorities for questioning in connection with contraband trafficking of fuel across the Moroccan border with Algeria. Eyewitnesses said that the police beat and kicked him into unconsciousness at the time he was detained. He died in police custody. Farah Mohammed's parents lodged an immediate complaint with gendarmerie authorities as soon as they learned of their son's death, which led to the immediate arrest of the police and military auxiliary officers allegedly involved in the beating. The trial in the case still reportedly was pending at year's end.

In August an appeals court in Settat (south of Casablanca) convicted an auxiliary member of the security forces to 12 years' imprisonment and a fine of approximately \$6,000 (60,000 dirhams) for the beating death of mint vendor Abdelaziz Warret in June 1999. Two other auxiliary members of the security forces involved in the beating death were sentenced to 4 months in prison. According to press reports in June 1999, police in Berrechid arrested Warret, confiscated his merchandise, and beat him until he fainted. He died later at a hospital. When his family went to claim the body and to obtain a death certificate, doctors refused to issue one. No explanation was given for his arrest. An autopsy subsequently performed during the investigation into Warret's death revealed that he died from internal hemorrhaging caused by the beating.

In February a court in Tangiers convicted two police officers of manslaughter in the 1996 beating death of a citizen returning from Holland. According to reports of witnesses, port police stopped Mohamed El-Feddaoui in Tangiers as he disembarked from a car ferry in his automobile. The witnesses claim that El-Feddaoui subsequently was taken to the police station and tortured to death by two police officers. The two officers reportedly had been instructed by the port's police commissioner to detain and torture Feddaoui. Both of the police officers received 10 years' imprisonment for violence resulting in manslaughter. The court sentenced the port police commissioner to 8 years' imprisonment for abusive detention and denial of his complicity in the crime. The court also ordered all three to pay approximately \$35,000 (350,000 dirhams) each to Feddaoui's estate. According to press reports, the AMDH principally was responsible for furnishing testimony in the case (see Section 1.c.).

In September the court of appeal in Safi (south of Casablanca) resumed a long-delayed case and summoned three police officers charged with manslaughter in the 1996 death of Hassan Memissi. According to Memissi's family, he was killed by the three police officers while in incommunicado ("garde-a-vue") detention in Safi's central police station. Police reportedly had stopped Memissi for drunkenness. According to a lawyer representing Memissi's family, witnesses present in the police station at the time alleged that Memissi was beaten to death while in detention. The police officers maintained that the allegedly drunk Memissi knocked his head against the bars of his cell until he died. The autopsy indicated that Memissi bled to death. Before the case was heard by court of appeal in Safi in early 1999, it remained in the pretrial investigation stage for over 2 years. In consideration of the Ramadan holiday, in December the trial was postponed again until March 2001.

Human rights groups allege that poor medical care in prisons results in unnecessary deaths; however, the Justice Ministry in 1999 assigned more doctors to prisons in an effort to improve prison health facilities. However, resource constraints continue to contribute to harsh conditions, including extreme overcrowding, malnutrition, and lack of hygiene. Throughout the year, the National Prison Administration continued to allow numerous site visits by members of Parliament, the press, human rights groups, and foreign diplomats (see Section 1.c.).

b. Disappearance

There were no new cases of confirmed disappearance for the fifth consecutive year; however, the AMDH claimed during the year that the continued practice of incommunicado detention without informing the family members of those detained (see Section 1.d.) was evidence of the continued practice of forced disappearance. While the forced disappearance of individuals who opposed the Government and its policies occurred over several decades, the Youssoufi Government, upon taking office, pledged that such policies would not recur, and that it would disclose as much information as possible on past cases. Many of those who disappeared were members of the military who were implicated in attempts to overthrow the Government in 1971 and 1972. Others were Sahrawis or Moroccans who challenged the Government's claim to the Western Sahara or other government policies. Many of those who disappeared were held in secret detention camps. While the Government in recent years quietly released several hundred persons who had disappeared, including a release of about 300 such detainees in June 1991, and although in October 1998 it issued an announcement

on those who disappeared, to this day hundreds of Saharan and Moroccan families do not have any information about their missing relatives, many of whom disappeared over 20 years ago. No explanation for their incarceration has ever been provided. Local human rights monitors have concluded that many others died while at the notorious Tazmamart prison, which the Government since has closed. The Government has acknowledged 34 of these deaths and has provided death certificates to the families of all but 1 of the 34 who died.

In October 1998, in response to a directive issued by then-King Hassan II that all human rights cases be resolved "within 6 months," the Royal Consultative Council on Human Rights (CCDH) announced the release of information on 112 cases of disappearances. According to the Council, 56 of the 112 who disappeared were deceased; family members of 33 of the deceased received death certificates from the Government. The Council added that eight persons believed to have disappeared were alive and living abroad, and that four were alive and in Morocco. Of the remaining 44, the Council stated that it had no further information. Human rights groups and families pointed out discrepancies between their lists and those of the Government, asked the Government for more data regarding these cases, and demanded full explanations of the causes and circumstances of these deaths and disclosure of the identities of those responsible. Some family groups claim that the Government is not divulging details on at least 50 more cases. In November 1998, the Council began meetings in various provinces with groups representing families or persons who had disappeared in order to collect data on their grievances and to conduct further research into the fate of those who remain missing. In April 1999, the Council announced that it would indemnify the 112 victims of politically motivated disappearances. Human rights NGO's disputed the Council's findings, claiming that they had compiled a list of over 600 potential cases of such disappearances from the 1960's through the 1980's. The NGO's called for the immediate release of all remaining political prisoners, disclosure of the fate of those whose cases the Council did not examine, delivery of the remains of the deceased to their families, compensation for victims and their families, and punishment for those responsible. On July 17, the Paris-based International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH) published a communique in which it estimated the number of persons who had disappeared in Morocco alone to be "between nearly 600 and several thousand." The FIDH claimed that disappearances of Sahrawis in the Western Sahara could number up to 1,500, although conditions in the territory prevented full confirmation of this figure. In October the Government for the first time permitted an organization of former political detainees, as well as hundreds of human rights activists, to travel to and hold a remembrance ceremony at the notorious former secret detention center at Tazmamart, whose existence the authorities formerly denied (see Section 2.a.).

In August 1999, in one of his first official acts, King Mohammed VI established a new royal commission responsible for increasing the Government's efforts to resolve the issue of those who had disappeared and to reach an accommodation with former political prisoners and members of their families. The new commission met with some family members and local human rights organizations and began to draw up guidelines for the resolution of issues involving individuals who had disappeared.

Following up on the CCDH's December 1999 announcement to distribute advance partial compensation to the neediest victims of forced disappearance and arbitrary detention, Prime Minister Youssoufi declared before Parliament in January that his government would compensate financially the most urgent cases first. Youssoufi's announcement came after the passing of the Government's January 1 deadline for receipt of compensation claims from former detainees and their survivors by the Royal Arbitration Commission working under the auspices of the CCDH. The number of claims filed totaled approximately 5,900. Human rights organizations contested the nature of the compensation process, particularly the composition of the Arbitration Commission, which they claimed lacked independence; the lack of transparency in the commission's decision-making processes; and the condition imposed by the commission that those filing claims must accept the commission's findings as final, without appeal. In April the CCDH announced the Government's allocation of a provisional compensation fund totaling approximately \$4 million (40 million dirhams), as well as initial provisional compensation for 31 of the neediest former prisoners who had been held in the notorious Tazmamart prison, and 8 of the prisoners' surviving family members. Each prisoner or surviving family member received up to approximately \$14,500 (145,000 dirhams), a sum designed to cover urgent medical and financial expenses caused by extended imprisonment. In July the Royal Arbitration Commission announced final compensation settlements for 68 cases (benefiting 354 persons, including some of those provisionally compensated in April) that totaled approximately \$14 million (140 million dirhams). Former prisoners or their survivors were designated to receive between \$25,000 and \$350,000 (250,000 and 3,500,000 dirhams). In July the Arbitration Commission began distributing preliminary compensation payments to some of the Sahrawis from the Western Sahara who had disappeared or been detained, and their family members. As with the April allotment, the Government stated that it intended these initial payments as provisional compensation to cover urgent medical and financial expenses for needy Sahrawis or their surviving family members who appealed for compensation from the Commission by December 31, 1999. The Government announced that additional compensation in the form of final settlements could be distributed pending the review by the Commission of petitions submitted by Sahrawi claimants. Critics of the arbitration process continued to criticize the Commission, claiming that its composition lacked independence and that the Commission's stipulation that all of its decisions were final was unfair. Numerous former prisoners and their survivors refused to file a claim. Others criticized the small number of cases settled, citing that over 5,800 cases remained. In the absence of disclosure by the Government explaining its role in past disappearances, the Moroccan Forum for Truth and Justice (FMVE)—created by victims of forced disappearance and their surviving family members) continued to argue that the compensation process alone was inadequate to redress past government actions; it requested the Government to go beyond compensation to facilitate conciliation between citizens and the Government through publicized investigations into disappearances and arbitrary detentions. After the July compensation settlement was announced, the OMDH issued a communique calling for more transparency during the arbitration process. According to the OMDH, "the fact of not communicating these measures at the opportune time, even though the measures were limited, helped sow ambiguity and misinformation, which the issue could have done without." In speeches given in July and December, King Mohammed VI addressed criticisms of the compensation process by announcing imminent reform of the CCDH. According to the King, the CCDH's composition, responsibilities, and work structure would be changed. None of the King's proposed changes had been implemented by year's end.

There were no developments in the disappearance of Abdullah Sherrouq, a student who reportedly was detained by security services on June 22, 1981. After 19 years, his family has been unable to learn anything of his whereabouts or his fate, despite appeals by Amnesty International (AI). In 1998 the CCDH listed Sherrouq as 1 of the 112 cases of disappearance acknowledged by the Government; according to the council, Sherrouq disappeared in undetermined circumstances; he was 1 of the 44 for whom the Government said it possessed no further information.

Associations that seek information on those who have disappeared, including the FMVE, an executive coordinating committee of former Sahrawi political prisoners, and a group specifically representing Tazmamart prison survivors, operate openly, and call upon the Government for full disclosure of events surrounding cases that date back to the 1960's. Several front-page articles in newspapers affiliated with parties in the governing coalition called at various times during the year for full disclosure on all outstanding cases of disappearance. The associations also call for compensation to families of those who have disappeared, death certificates and the return of the remains of those who died, and prosecution of responsible officials. The Government has indicated that it would be more open about providing information on these past cases, and met with the FMVE on a number of occasions during the year to discuss its concerns. Throughout the year, FMVE leaders also met with the CCDH and leaders of national political parties. However, according to press reports in August, the FMVE's leadership claimed that political parties were hesitant to help them address the problem of past disappearances. Associations in the Western Sahara that seek information on disappearances do not operate free from government interference; there were reports that some members of these associations were harassed and intimidated while seeking information on missing Sahrawis. Some also continue to be denied passports (see Section 2.d.).

Until July the Government paid a monthly stipend of \$500 (5,000 dirhams) to 28 former prisoners who survived 18 to 20 years in solitary confinement under harsh conditions at Tazmamart prison in connection with the coup attempts in 1971 and 1972. After their release, the Government prohibited them from speaking out publicly about their detention. In exchange the Government gave the former prisoners assurances that it would help them find jobs and reintegrate them into society; however, none of them has obtained government assistance in this regard, and some complain of being denied voter cards and passports. After the final compensation settlement package from the Royal Arbitration Commission to the 31 former Tazmamart prisoners in July, the authorities ceased distributing the monthly stipends to the 28 who had been kept in solitary confinement.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits torture, and the Government claims that the use of torture has been discontinued; however, some members of the security forces still torture or otherwise abuse detainees. The Penal Code requires capital punishment for perpetrators who commit acts of torture or "acts of barbarity," provided that such acts occur during the commission of a crime. The Penal Code also stipulates sentences up to life imprisonment for public servants who "use or oblige the use of violence" against others in the exercise of their functions. By law, pretrial investigating judges must, if asked to do so or if they themselves notice physical marks that so warrant, refer the detained person to an expert doctor. However, according to legal experts, this obligation often is ignored in practice.

In February the AMDH reported the death under suspicious circumstances of Ali Akzkane while he was in police custody in Tiznit on January 4 after being apprehended during an attempted robbery. In response to the AMDH's request for a government investigation, the National Security Police denied accusations of malfeasance in Akzkane's death, and attributed his death to suicide likely brought on by depression. Results of an autopsy reportedly attributed Akzkane's death to suicide. According to the AMDH, which was contacted by the Government regarding the affair in September, the authorities were reviewing the case at year's end (see Section 1.a).

In April a Moroccan court in the Western Sahara city of Laayoune sentenced five Sahrawi youths to prison terms of between 5 and 10 years for the "formation of a criminal association" after their alleged participation in a March 4 stone-throwing in the same city. One of the lawyers representing the five Sahrawis alleged that the judicial police who investigated the affair committed several illegal acts, including torturing the youths during their detention (see Sections 1.d., 1.e., and 1.f.).

After his release from prison on May 4 after a royal pardon, Sadok El-Kihal, a trucker and regional bureau member of the Istiqlal party's General Union of Moroccan Workers (UGTM), contacted the AMDH with accusations that he had been arrested arbitrarily, jailed, tortured, and falsely convicted by authorities in June 1999 following his participation in a national truckers strike. El-Kihal alleged that security forces in the Gendarmerie of Taouriat (Oujda province) tortured him for almost 24 hours, suspending him by his arms for extended periods while beating his fingers and feet. El-Kihal also alleged to AMDH that members of the Gendarmerie tied his hands behind his back, bent him backward on his knees, and applied pressure to his stomach while somebody forced their fingers down his throat. El-Kihal alleged that two adjutants in the Gendarmerie participated in his torture. El-Kihal said that his jailers wrote a false police report, which they forced him to endorse with his thumbprint without first allowing him to read it. El-Kihal alleged that it was this police report that formed the basis of his conviction at the Oujda court of appeals, which sentenced him to 2 years' imprisonment. The Istiqlal party's Arabic-language daily, Al-Alam, published a UGTM communique on September 30, 1999, regarding El-Kihal's treatment. El-Kihal subsequently benefited from a royal pardon and was freed on May 4 (see Sections 1.d., 1.e., and 6.a.).

In June a foreign diplomat met with a Sahrawi student, who claimed to have been tortured by the authorities for suspected participation in May 17 to 18 demonstrations near the Marrakech University campus. There were conflicting accounts regarding the origins of the large-scale demonstrations, during which mostly Sahrawi students clashed with dozens of Marrakech police in violent exchanges that involved the throwing of a Molotov

cocktail by one student and the clubbing of students by security forces. During the detention, police allegedly attempted to force the student to inform on other Sahrawi students who had participated in the demonstrations. During the meeting, the student showed the foreign diplomat fresh burn marks that the police allegedly inflicted with cigarettes (see Sections 1.d. and 1.e.).

On May 17 in Rabat, police arrested 14 students at Mohammed V University and charged them with arson, violence against the police, erecting barricades, and impeding free movement. The students, 12 of whom were Sahrawis, participated earlier in the day in a solidarity protest with fellow Sahrawi students who were arrested the same morning in Marrakech. According to a lawyer representing 13 of the accused students, one of his clients claimed that police took him to an unidentified location after his arrest, beat him severely, and interrogated him regarding his activities and links with other Sahrawis and human rights activists. Indicating his client's difficulty in speaking in court, as well as his swollen face and eyes, the lawyer requested the pretrial investigating judge to conduct a medical examination of his client, which the judge refused. After a series of hearings and delays, on November 17, the Rabat court of appeals acquitted and freed all 14 students who were detained in mid-May. According to a lawyer for the defense, all of the detained students denied before the court any involvement in the demonstration. The prosecution reportedly failed to produce any witnesses who could confirm the students' participation in the May 17 incident (see Section 1.e.).

The AMDH's bureau in Taounate (outside of Fez) reported suspicious circumstances in the death of Mustapha Najiaji after a Royal Armed Forces patrol reportedly took him and another citizen into custody on July 12; press reports stated that security forces detained the two for public drunkenness and possession of illicit narcotics. According to the AMDH report, the second citizen claimed that the patrol beat Najiaji to death while the security forces claim that they found Najiaji dead in his cell from suicide by hanging. The AMDH reported that the prosecutor general of Fez orally transmitted the autopsy results to Najiaji's family and that the family's lawyer had access to the results; the results reportedly made reference to Najiaji having been the victim of violence before his death. The AMDH expressed concern over the slow handling of the case; it reportedly was pending with the general prosecutor at the military court in Rabat at year's end, and the Royal Armed Forces patrol members have yet to be charged (see Section 1.a.).

In August the media reported a case of alleged torture by police in a Casablanca police station. Abderrahmane Jamali alleged that police officers in the Ain Sebaa-Hay Al-Hassani station tortured him for 3 days while he was detained in early August, once in the presence of a citizen who had filed a complaint against him. Press reports alleged that the incident began in late July when the plaintiff twice filed a complaint against Jamali for abuse of confidence and theft. After the prosecutor dismissed the first complaint for lack of proof, the plaintiff requested a reopening and more thorough investigation of the case. Press reports alleged that Jamali subsequently was detained, tortured for 3 days, and then convicted and sentenced by a Casablanca court to 5 months' imprisonment several days later. Jamali reportedly fainted during the sentencing hearing. Jamali became ill within days of his incarceration and, after his family sent a letter to the prison director requesting the director's intervention, was sent to various medical facilities. At Averroes hospital, doctors on August 11 detected an infection allegedly transmitted by parasites found on rodents. According to the Party of Progress and Socialism's French-language daily newspaper Al-Bayane, doctors also found signs of "physical cruelty" on Jamali's body. The marks reportedly included contusions and bruises on his neck and knees, as well as a lesion on one of his lungs. A doctor at Averroes wrote a letter to Al-Bayane claiming that the infection Jamali contracted "does not explain all of the signs that we observed during (his) clinical examination." Afterwards, Jamali filed complaints against three agents of the judicial police for torture; the Casablanca police department issued a communique on August 18 stating that it had opened an investigation into the charges of torture. Some newspapers called for an investigation into the court of first instance's handling of the case because the judge and prosecutor allegedly failed to inquire into the detainee's fragile state of health, as required by law.

In September the media reported on two cases of alleged torture by a deputy officer from the Royal Gendarmerie brigade in Zaio, in the northeastern part of the country. According to the reports, the officer tortured two persons in order to extort money from their family and friends. In one of the cases, a cafe owner alleged that in September the officer slapped him in front of his customers, used force to remove him from his establishment, and subjected him to various forms of torture at brigade headquarters. In the second case, an elderly woman brought suit against the same officer for torturing her son and extorting approximately \$500 (5,000 dirhams) from her to stop the torture. After he was informed of the cases, Zaio's municipal president (who also is a Member of Parliament) reportedly referred the cases immediately to the national authorities. An investigation into the alleged torture was ongoing at year's end.

At the October 27 trial of 10 students at the University of Hassan I in Settlat, each of the students reportedly declared before the Settlat court of first instance that they were forced under duress and torture to sign (by thumb prints) their police statements. According to a communique from the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS) political party, two of its members who were involved in the incident "were victims of grave physical cruelty" during their transfer to the police station and during their detention (see Sections 1.e. and 2.b.).

The OMDH filed a complaint on behalf of some of those who were detained and abused by the police at the end of September 1999, following several days of protests over a variety of social grievances in Laayoune in the Western Sahara (see Sections 1.d., 1.e., 1.f., and 2.b.). There was photographic and other evidence to substantiate claims that the police systematically had beaten some of the persons they had detained in connection with the protests. An investigation was opened into the charges; however, after almost 15 months no police officials have been charged in connection with the force used to break up the protests, nor for the beatings inflicted on some of those detained by the police. (Some police officials allegedly responsible subsequently were transferred in 1999 and the chief of police in Laayoune was relieved of his duties there.)

In its 2000 annual international human rights report released in June, Amnesty International acknowledged that security forces involved in several cases of torture had been arrested and prosecuted. However, the organization noted that "in the majority of cases, investigations were either not opened into complaints and

allegations of torture ... or were opened but dismissed without adequate investigation."

Frustrated by what it perceived to be the Interior Ministry's slow implementation of measures to ensure a more humane Government with greater transparency, which were urged by King Mohammed VI in 1999, the OMDH in February publicized a memorandum it sent to Interior Minister Ahmed Midaoui in January calling for a dialog between Midaoui's ministry and human rights organizations. The OMDH appealed to the Interior Minister to implement a series of proposed measures, including measures reinforcing individual protections against torture through the full implementation of the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, destroying police files on former political prisoners or exiles, and ending illegal punitive detention measures by local authorities.

In 1999 the OMDH published a special newspaper in which it called on the Government to implement legislation that would criminalize the use of torture and would control the conditions under which detainees are kept in garde-a-vue detention and in prisons. The OMDH claimed that most cases of torture submitted to the justice system involved incidents that occurred in front of witnesses or in public areas. According to the OMDH, torture in detention largely continues to escape the notice of the judiciary. The OMDH noted that the implementation of judges' instructions on eliminating the use of torture has been "exceedingly slow." While the OMDH admitted that the use of torture has diminished over the years, it claimed that it has not disappeared. The OMDH alleged in its report that those who commit such abuses "do so with impunity in almost all cases." The NGO called on the Government to harmonize domestic law with its responsibilities under the U.N. Convention Against Torture, to ensure full independence for the judiciary, and to punish those who resort to torture.

In February Human Rights Minister Mohammed Aujjar announced plans by the newly formed NGO Association for the Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ARVT) to open a rehabilitation center in Casablanca designed to assist former torture victims in overcoming torture-related trauma. At an inaugural event, Prime Minister Youssoufi said that the center constituted a new milestone in the consolidation of the rule of law.

Also in February, Mohammed Kholti, a retired secret police officer who tortured political dissidents during the 1970's and 1980's publicly asked for forgiveness in a letter sent to two national newspapers, which published his plea. Kholti's act marked the first time that a former member of the security forces had admitted to past use of torture.

In April Reuter's news services reported the lifting of a 13-year ban on a book that described harsh conditions in a high security prison. According to author Abdelkader Chaoui, his book, "The Unachieved Past," had been banned since its publication in 1987. The book describes the harsh conditions in the Kenitra prison, in which the author was held for 15 years. Chaoui was jailed in 1974 because of his leftist political opinions and leadership role in a Marxist-Leninist organization. In November in Marrakesh, King Mohammed awarded Chaoui a literary prize for his most recent novel (see Section 2.a.).

In May the Government permitted the local publication and sale of a comic book called "They Even Starve Rats." Written and illustrated by Abdelaziz Mouride, a leftist student whom the authorities arbitrarily detained in 1974, sentenced to 22 years in prison, and then freed in 1984, the comic book recounts in vivid detail the torture, injustice, and humiliation that the author and other political dissidents suffered at the hands of the authorities. Using the third person to narrate his experience, Mouride depicts the manner in which the authorities kidnaped dissidents, tortured them in secret detention centers, staged sham trials, and then incarcerated them in remote prisons, where some lost their sanity or died. Mouride secretly was able to send out drawings of his ordeals with visiting friends and relatives. Mouride said that human rights organizations played the principal role in securing his freedom in 1984 (see Section 2.a.).

Also in May, a delegation from the International Center for the Rehabilitation of Torture Victims visited the country to discuss the Government's compliance with the U.N. Convention Against Torture. The delegation told Human Rights Minister Aujjar that it sought to hold its next world congress in Morocco.

In an October 23 "Open Letter to the Minister of Justice" that it distributed to domestic as well as international media, the AMDH for the first time published a list containing 14 names of alleged former torturers and officials involved in disappearances and arbitrary detention. The first domestic newspaper to republish the list was Le Journal. Some of the listed names were high-ranking officials currently holding office, including the head of the Royal Gendarmerie and secret services. Former Interior Minister Driss Basri's name also was included in the list. In the letter, the AMDH called for "the truth and pursuit of those responsible for disappearances." The AMDH also criticized the Justice Ministry for its alleged nonintervention in past cases of torture and disappearance (see Section 2.a.).

In 1998 the Ministry of Justice and the prison administration implemented a law that makes autopsies routine for any death that occurs in detention, in order to allow allegations of torture to be evaluated. The autopsies take place at the request of the family, human rights NGO's, or the state prosecutor, and at the order of a judge. Autopsies were used to prove allegations of abuse in at least two cases during the year.

In incidents throughout the year, police continued to use force to disperse several demonstrations by unemployed university graduates associated with the National Association of Unemployed Graduates (known by its French acronym, ANDC), an organization not recognized by the Government, and "Group 314" (a separate organization of unemployed state doctoral graduates of medicine and engineering), and other groups to a lesser extent. In numerous incidents throughout the country during the year, police beat demonstrators with batons in order to disperse them (see Sections 1.d., 1.e., and 2.b.). On February 2, in the village of Tarmilet, security forces used force, including rubber bullets, tear gas, and water cannons, to remove striking workers who had blockaded a water-bottling factory to protest lay-offs (see Sections 1.d., 1.f., 2.b., 2.d., and 6.a.). On June 18 in Rabat, security forces again resorted to force, using batons and tear gas to disperse ANDC demonstrators and to remove Group 314 hunger strikers from the local headquarters of an independent

national union (see Sections 1.d., 1.e., and 2.b.). On July 26 and again on September 12, police violently dispersed disabled, unemployed university graduates who were protesting the denial of their right to employment (see Sections 2.a., 2.b., and 5). On October 8 in Casablanca, police dispersed with tear gas 2,000 to 3,000 Islamists who were protesting the Israeli Government's actions against Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza in the fall (see Section 2.b.). On October 23, security forces used violent means to break up a demonstration by students who were preparing to begin a march to protest transportation problems at Hassan I University in Settat (see Sections 1.e. and 2.b.). There were reports in the fall of violent clashes at university campuses around the country between security forces and JCO students engaged in student elections (see Sections 1.e. and 2.b.). On November 27, security forces reportedly used violent means to break up a 5-day sit-in strike at a canning factory in the southern city of Agadir. The attack reportedly resulted in the death of one worker and injuries to eight others (see Sections 1.a., 1.d., 2.b., and 6.a.). During the weekend of December 9 to 11, security forces throughout the country used violent means to disperse human rights activists, members of the JCO, and unemployed graduates who separately gathered in Rabat and other large cities to demonstrate for different reasons (see Sections 1.d., 1.e., 2.a., 2.b., and 4).

In February a Tangiers court convicted two police officers of manslaughter in the 1996 beating death of Mohamed El-Feddaoui at the port of Tangiers, when the El-Feddaoui was returning from Holland. Both police officers received 10-year jail terms for violence resulting in manslaughter. The port police commissioner was sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment for abusive detention and denial of complicity in the crime (see Section 1.a.).

Prison conditions remain harsh; however, they have improved in recent years, due in part to reforms undertaken at the suggestion of the CCDH and the Minister of Justice, and to more transparency in the functioning of the National Prison Administration. In August 1999, the Government enacted new legislation designed to reform the prison system. The new legislation replaced a royal decree that had governed the prison system since 1915. Among the reforms in the legislation were provisions mandating compensation for work performed by prisoners. Prisoners with "good conduct" records also were accorded the right to a furlough to visit family members during important holiday periods. The new legislation outlawed the use of handcuffs, manacles, or other devices used for physical restraint, except as required to restrain violent prisoners and then only after consultation with prison medical authorities. Procedures were established to allow the prisons to be inspected by the press and human rights organizations, and members of both the press and human rights organizations visited prisons after the procedures were established. Visitors must receive authorization from the Director of the Prison Administration to conduct prison visits. Special provisions also accorded women the right to keep their children with them in prison until the children reach the age of 2 or longer with special permission from the Ministry of Justice. The new law contained provisions that extended the function of the prison system beyond that of punishment and incarceration to include rehabilitation and preparation for a return to society.

Nonetheless, credible reports indicate that harsh treatment and conditions continue, often as a result of chronic overcrowding. Despite being designed to hold 4,000 inmates, Oukacha Central Prison in Casablanca currently holds more than 7,000 prisoners. Human rights groups allege that poor medical care in prisons results in unnecessary deaths. To address this problem, the Government provided special funds in the 1998-99 budget for the renovation of prison facilities, and added doctors and health facilities to prisons. In addition to extreme overcrowding, malnutrition and lack of hygiene continue to aggravate the poor health conditions inside prisons (see Section 1.a.).

Press reports during the year called attention to the extremely harsh conditions inside the detention center of Ain Atiq outside of Rabat. While Ain Atiq's status as a detention or social center is not defined clearly, it often receives homeless, vagrant, and mentally disabled persons, in addition to juvenile delinquents. Negligence at Ain Atiq reportedly has led to serious problems, such as hygienic and nutritional deficiencies, and harsh general living conditions. The center also is reportedly underequipped and understaffed to provide adequate medical care. The AMDH reportedly is planning a study of the center in the hopes of encouraging improvements. During the year, the authorities used Ain Atiq to detain various demonstrators picked up during protests. In June, July, and September security forces forcibly dispersed unemployed, disabled protesters in downtown Rabat and reportedly took them to Ain Atiq, where some allegedly remained for over a month (see Sections 2.b. and 5). In the past, human rights organizations have called for Ain Atiq's closure, as well as of other similar centers.

Some press reports during the year also raised the problem of drug trafficking and sexual abuse in prisons among inmates. The presence of cannabis is widely recognized as a problem, as is sexual abuse of inmates. In May prisoners in the Touchka prison at Errachidia allegedly rioted to protest against, among other problems, sexual abuse among inmates. Press reports during the year also raised the issue of some prisoners being allowed to pay for the right to occupy their own cells.

In the first visit of its kind, Members of Parliament visited Sale prison in February 1999 to investigate prison conditions and allegations of overcrowding. Their visit followed that of the 2M television station, which broadcast an exclusive report on prisons in January 1999.

Although the Government generally did not permit prison visits by human rights monitors in the past, since the tenure of the Yousseoufi Government began there has been close collaboration between the Justice Ministry, the National Prison Administration, and human rights groups on prison visits, which now are authorized explicitly by law. Throughout the year, the National Prison Administration continued to allow numerous site visits by Parliament, the press, human rights groups, and foreign diplomats. The National Observatory of Moroccan Prisons (ONPM) made over 15 visits during the year, taking extensive notes of the numerous problems facing the prison system and recounting these in the press. In addition to noting the harsh conditions caused by chronic overcrowding (some estimates place the current inmate population at as high as 52,000), the ONPM recommended that some of the existing deteriorated penitentiaries dating from the 1920's be replaced or

renovated. According to Mohamed Lididi, the Administrator of the National Prison Administration, 20 smaller prisons currently are being built to supplement and replace some of the existing 43.

In addition to permitting an increasing number of visits, the National Prison Administration initiated a series of activities to improve living conditions inside prisons, including the construction of family visitation centers, manual-skills training facilities, and prison visits by various entertainers. Early in the year, the civilian prison in El-Jadida (near Casablanca) was expanded, with the addition of a professional training center and a family meeting area. The training center provides courses and vocational studies to inmates interested in preparing themselves for post-prison employment. The family area allows inmates to meet directly with their family members, and is equipped with chairs, tables, and a small cafe. Telephone booths also were installed for use by inmates. The improvements at El-Jadida were duplicated inside other prisons, with the Prison Administration devoting more resources to improving living conditions and inmate rehabilitation. The ONPM received permission to organize an evening music and dance program for female inmates in Oukacha prison in Casablanca. In Sale prison near Rabat, the British Embassy and the Prison Administration sponsored a musical performance by African students. Several similar performances and cultural seminars occurred at other prisons.

In November at Al-Akhawayn University in Ifrane, the Justice Ministry hosted, in coordination with the Rabat-based organization British Council and the London-based Penal Reform International, an international seminar on reforming the prison system. The seminar was attended by eminent international jurists and focused on identifying constructive alternatives to incarceration. The director of the penitentiary system participated in the seminar, speaking on the evolution of the country's penal system. The new NGO the Moroccan Prison Observatory participated as well.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention or Exile

Police continued to use arbitrary arrest and detention. Although legal provisions for due process have been revised extensively in recent years, reports indicate that authorities sometimes ignore them. Although police usually make arrests in public and during the day, they do not always identify themselves and do not always obtain warrants. Garde-a-vue detention is limited to 48 hours, with one 24-hour extension allowed at the prosecutor's discretion. In state security cases, the garde-a-vue period is 96 hours; this also may be extended by the prosecutor. It is during this initial period, when defendants are denied access to counsel, that the accused is interrogated and abuse or torture is most likely to occur. Some members of the security forces, long accustomed to indefinite precharge access to detainees, continue to resist the new rules.

Under 1991 changes to the law, the police are obliged to notify a person's next of kin of an arrest as soon as possible. However, lawyers are not always informed promptly of the date of arrest, and thus are not always able to monitor compliance with the garde-a-vue detention limits. While the law provides for a limited system of bail, it rarely is granted. However, defendants sometimes are released on their own recognizance. The law does not provide for habeas corpus or its equivalent. Under a separate code of military justice, military authorities may detain members of the military without warrants or public trial.

Although accused persons generally are brought to trial within an initial period of 2 months, prosecutors may request up to five additional 2-month extensions of pretrial detention. Thus, an accused person may be kept in detention for up to 1 year.

During their February 2 operation to halt a strike at a water-bottling factory in the village of Tarnilet (48 miles from the capital), security forces reportedly arrested more than a dozen factory workers, as well as random passersby. According to sources in the Government, the workers and passersby later were released without charges. The Democratic Confederation of Workers trade union, which is aligned politically with the ruling USFP party, reported that security forces also detained two of its regional delegates 2 weeks following the February 2 incident. According to government sources, the two officials were freed by royal pardon on May 1 (Moroccan Labor Day) while an investigation into the incident was still underway (see Sections 1.c., 1.f., 2.b., 2.d., and 6.a.).

In April a Moroccan court in the Western Sahara city of Laayoune sentenced five Sahrawi youths to prison terms of between 5 and 10 years for the "formation of a criminal association" after their alleged participation in a March 4 stone-throwing incident in the city. One of the lawyers who represented the five Sahrawis alleged that the judicial police who investigated the affair committed several illegal acts, including unlawfully entering the homes of the youths and detaining them, torturing them during their detention, and forcing the youths to sign under duress police reports, which they were not allowed to read and which they claimed contained falsehoods. The decision was appealed to the court of appeals in Laayoune and was reportedly before the Supreme Court in Rabat at year's end (see Sections 1.c., 1.e., and 1.f.).

On May 3, members of the ANDC and other unemployed persons in Meknes staged a sit-in before a local police station to protest the situation of the unemployed and alleged favoritism in local government hiring practices. According to press reports, city officials called in security forces, who used force to disperse the protesters. Twenty-eight protesters were arrested and sent before the court of first instance on May 4. The court, without explanation, adjourned a morning hearing and sent the 28 back to the police station; the protesters were summoned to the court again in the afternoon, then released without charge (see Sections 1.c. and 2.b.). In a May 17 communique, the OMDH criticized the Government's use of violence against unemployed graduates in various cities throughout the country, including at the Meknes sit-in.

On May 26, the court of first instance in Marrakech sentenced 13 students to 3 years in prison for their alleged participation in demonstrations on May 17-18 near the Marrakech University campus. The 13, 8 of whom were Sahrawis, were convicted on charges of armed gathering, assault with weapons, contempt of public servants

exercising their duties, destruction of public goods, and impeding free movement. Two others were sentenced to 2 months in prison, and in June one more student was sentenced to 5 years in prison for setting fire to a public vehicle, damaging municipal property, and contempt of a civil servant exercising his duty. Thirty to 40 students reportedly were detained initially by police.

Conflicting stories exist as to the origins of the large-scale demonstrations, in which large numbers of Marrakech police resorted to force to disperse dozens of mostly Sahrawi students, one of whom threw a Molotov cocktail that destroyed a police car. One of the detained students claimed to have been tortured by the authorities for suspected participation in the demonstrations, and displayed fresh cigarette burns to a foreign diplomat to support the allegations (see Sections 1.c., 1.e., and 2.b.).

On June 13, police arrested two regional leaders of the independent Moroccan Workers' Union (UMT) outside the UMT's Rabat headquarters. Police arrested the leaders on the UMT's premises following a demonstration downtown by thousands of unemployed graduates associated with the ANDC (a group unaffiliated with the UMT, although some of its members also belong to the UMT). After security forces violently dispersed the ANDC demonstration and arrested 28 of the protesters, many ANDC members returned to the UMT's headquarters to regroup. Security forces then arrived, encircled the building, and restricted access to it. When the two UMT leaders left their union's building to observe the situation, they were taken away by police and reportedly held overnight. Both of the leaders later were released without charge. All 28 ANDC protesters who were arrested downtown earlier in the day later were released without charge.

On June 18 in Rabat, security forces resorted to force, using truncheons and tear gas to disperse ANDC demonstrators and Group 314 hunger strikers from the UMT's Rabat headquarters. Security forces reportedly arrested up to 100 protesters. Dozens of protesters were reported injured, some seriously. Twenty-two of those arrested were charged with "using violence against agents of authority;" 19 received suspended sentences and 3 received 2 months' imprisonment. Prime Minister Youssoufi convened an interministerial meeting on June 19 to address the violence and condition of the unemployed population. Justice Minister Azziman then met with some members of the ANDC, which still is unrecognized by the Government. On July 5, the Group 314 hunger strikers ended their 28-day strike after a meeting with the Government, in which both sides pledged to engage in a substantive dialog (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., and 2.b.).

In early October, over the period of several days, the Government accused of espionage, detained, and held under house arrest three French television journalists from France's FR3 television station, who were reporting on a human rights demonstration at the notorious former secret detention center of Tazmamart (see Section 2.a.).

There were confirmed reports that police arrested 21 strikers involved in a 5-day sit-in strike at a canning factory in Agadir on November 27. All but one of the strikers later was released. Security forces reportedly used violent means to break up the strike, which reportedly resulted in the death of one worker and injuries to eight others (see Sections 1.a., 1.c., 2.b., and 6.e.).

From December 9 to 11, security forces violently attacked human rights activists, JCO members, and unemployed graduates, who had been demonstrating in Rabat and other large cities for different reasons, and detained hundreds of persons. Most demonstrators were released shortly thereafter (see Sections 1.c., 1.e., 2.a., 2.b., and 4).

Sadok El-Kihal, a trucker and regional bureau member of the Istiqlal party's union, the UGTM, contacted the AMDH during the year with accusations that he had been arrested arbitrarily, jailed, tortured, and falsely convicted by authorities in June 1999, following his participation in a national truckers strike (see Sections 1.c., 1.e., and 6.a.).

In December 1999, Moroccan security forces who reportedly were sent from Rabat, detained one Sahrawi in the Western Sahara city of Laayoune and two Sahrawis in the southern Moroccan cities of Tan-Tan and Agadir. Alleged to be spies for the Polisario, the three reportedly were held 8 days before their appearance in an Agadir court and before their families were informed of their detention. Family members and the AMDH criticized the nature of the arrests, claiming them to be a violation of human rights and due process, and proof that forced disappearances still occur in the country. In a public trial abruptly convened on May 30 after a lengthy and largely unpublicized police investigation, the three were convicted of threatening the internal security of the State and sentenced to 3 to 4 years in prison. In an appeals hearing on July 5, all three were sentenced to 4 years in prison (see Section 1.e.). On September 27, security forces in civilian dress detained a fourth Sahrawi at the Laayoune airport as he was about to board a flight. In August the Sahrawi was charged before the court of first instance in Agadir for spying for the Polisario Front and sentenced to 4 years in prison for threatening the internal security of the state (see Section 1.e.).

After 11 years of house arrest for refusing to acknowledge the religious authority of then-King Hassan II, Islamist dissident Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine was allowed to leave his Sale home on May 16. Yassine's release came after a May 10 statement by Interior Minister Midaoui before Parliament that Yassine "leaves and returns to his residence as he likes." Minister Midaoui also stated that Yassine was free to take his case to court if he felt that his rights were being abused. In February four members of Yassine's Justice and Charity Organization were arrested for distributing a defiant memorandum from Yassine to King Mohammed VI. All four were charged with "violating the sacred institution of the Monarchy;" however, authorities later dropped the charges and released all four (see sections 2.a., 2.c., and 2.d.).

There are no known instances of forced exile. After King Mohammed VI took the throne in July 1999, formerly exiled political dissident Abraham Serfaty was allowed to return to the country in September of that year. Serfaty, a member of the (now defunct) Communist Party and a supporter of Western Saharan independence,

was expelled from the country in 1991 after having spent 17 years as a political prisoner. In September Serfaty, a mining engineer by profession, was appointed by King Mohammed VI as counselor to the newly established office responsible for developing recently discovered hydrocarbon reserves in the eastern part of the country.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; although the courts historically have been and remain to some extent subject to extrajudicial pressures, including bribery and government influence, the Government continued to implement reforms intended to increase judicial independence and impartiality during the year. Despite such efforts, the Government was criticized by the Denmark-based Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), the OMDH, and other groups for the slow pace of judicial reform. In January the Prime Minister announced plans to create an independent ombudsman that would investigate citizens' complaints and protect them from abuses involving the judiciary. The press reported in November, and the Ministry of Human Rights asserted, that the preparation of implementing legislation for the ombudsman post was nearing completion. According to press reports, in February Justice Minister Azziman reacted to accusations about the slow pace of reforms by calling upon the assistance of Supreme Court justices to increase and quicken the investigation of judges suspected of professional malfeasance. In March Azziman, through the High Council of the Magistrature, which often has been criticized by human rights organizations for the nontransparent nature of its deliberations, promoted a large number of judges whose records were considered exemplary, and disciplined a smaller number of judges. In November on public television Azziman reaffirmed the Government's commitment to reforming the judiciary. In 1998 Azziman had stated that judicial reform was his top priority, and addressed the issue of corruption by disbarring and disciplining a number of judges. With the encouragement of then-King Hassan II and the broad support of the business community, the Justice Minister in 1999 oversaw the creation of a system of commercial courts for business litigation to boost investor confidence. In the same year, the Ministry of Justice began to implement a 5-year reform plan that emphasized transparency, accountability, and professionalism as top priorities. During the past 2 years, the administrative courts frequently have ruled against local governments that exceeded their authority.

There are four levels in the common law court system: Communal and district courts, courts of first instance, the Appeals Court, and the Supreme Court. While in theory there is a single court system under the Ministry of Justice, other courts also operate, including: The Special Court of Justice, which handles cases of civil servants who are implicated in corruption; administrative courts, which deal with the decisions of the bureaucracy; commercial courts, which deal with business disputes; and the military tribunal, for cases involving military personnel and, on certain occasions, matters pertaining to state security (although state security cases also may fall within the jurisdiction of the regular court system).

Although there is a single court system for most nonmilitary matters, family issues such as marriage, divorce, child support and custody, and inheritance are adjudicated by judges trained in Shari'a (Islamic law) as applied in the country. Judges considering criminal cases or cases in nonfamily areas of civil law generally are trained in the French legal tradition. All judges trained in recent years are graduates of the National Institute for Judicial Studies, where they undergo 3 years of study heavily focused on human rights and the rule of law. It is not necessary to be a lawyer to become a judge, and the majority of judges are not lawyers.

In general detainees are arraigned before a court of first instance. If the infraction is minor and not contested, the judge may order the defendant released or impose a light sentence. If an investigation is required, the judge may release defendants on their own recognizance. According to reliable sources, cases often are adjudicated on the basis of confessions, some of which are obtained under duress.

While appeal courts may in some cases be used as a second reference for courts of first instance, they primarily handle cases involving crimes punishable by 5 years or more in prison. In practice, defendants before appeals courts who are implicated in such crimes consequently have no method of appeal if a judgment goes against them. The Supreme Court does not review and rule on cases sent to it by courts of appeal; in its role as a court of cassation, the Supreme Court may overturn an appellate court's ruling on procedural grounds alone. The absence of appeals for defendants in such crimes therefore becomes more problematic given the fact that an investigation into the case by a "juge d'instruction" (pretrial investigating judge) is only mandatory in those crimes punishable by sentences of life imprisonment or death.

Justice Minister Azziman has stated that he would attempt to end petty corruption in the judiciary by increasing judges' salaries and ensuring punishment for bribe-takers, as well as attempt to end all informal and inappropriate influences on judicial decision-making in the court system. Nonetheless, the court system remains subject to extrajudicial pressures. Despite recent increases, salaries for both judges and their staffs remain modest; as a result, some observers allege that petty bribery remains a routine cost of court business. In some courts, especially in minor criminal cases, some observers allege that defendants or their families must pay bribes to court officers and judges to secure a favorable disposition.

However, throughout the year, the national media reported on a number of arrests, convictions, and sentences of judicial officials for their role in petty corruption. Reports also indicated that the Special Court of Justice, despite its resource constraints, increasingly prosecuted public servants for corruption. In October at the recommendation of the Justice Ministry, the King approved new internal statutory regulations for the High Council of the Magistrature. According to press reports, the new regulations were implemented to strengthen the independence of the judiciary.

After his appointment in 1997 by then-King Hassan II, Justice Minister Azziman began to reduce the judiciary's relationship with the Ministry of Interior. Nevertheless, judges continue to work closely with the Interior Ministry's local network of officials, or "caids" (although as judicial police, caids technically fall under the jurisdiction of the Justice Ministry), who often legally are charged with the responsibility of questioning criminal

defendants. Caidis frequently prepare the written summary of an arrest and subsequent interrogation. The summary is admissible in court as an element of the evidentiary process and can carry great weight with the judge. After the new Justice Minister's appointment, the Ministry of Justice began to reassert its authority and control over judges.

The law does not distinguish political and security cases from common criminal cases. In serious state security cases, communications between the Ministry of Interior and the court are more direct. At the Government's discretion, such cases may be brought before a specially constituted military tribunal, which is subservient to other branches of the Government, especially the military and the Ministry of Interior.

Aside from external pressures, the court system also is subject to resource constraints. Consequently, criminal defendants charged with less-serious offenses often receive only a cursory hearing, with judges relying on police reports to render decisions. Although the Government provides an attorney at public expense for serious crimes (when the offense carries a maximum sentence of over 5 years), appointed attorneys often provide inadequate representation.

In 1999 Minister Azziman announced that in the preceding 12 months the judicial system had enforced judgments in 60,000 out of 100,000 cases of civil litigation, which represented significant progress toward eliminating a persistent backlog. The Justice Ministry continued to make progress clearing this backlog during the year.

In 1998 the OMDH issued a report that assessed the status of the judiciary. According to the OMDH, the Youssofi administration took a series of steps to improve the court system, including rooting out high-level corruption, naming a new Director for Judicial Administration at the Justice Ministry, reactivating a Justice Ministry disciplinary body, publishing that body's deliberations and decisions, and organizing free and fair elections to that body. Nevertheless, the OMDH called for additional reforms, including changing laws to reduce the Justice Minister's prerogative to suspend judges through the High Council of the Magistrature, revamping the Criminal Code (which the OMDH stated offers insufficient protection for a fair trial), strengthening the law on civil liberties, and compelling judges to place their assets in a blind trust. The OMDH also called on the State to punish those officials guilty of human rights abuses. Finally, the OMDH noted the lack of resources necessary for documentation tracking and for court facilities. At its fourth annual congress held in March, during which it distributed its annual human rights report for 2000, the OMDH called for the elimination of "courts of exception" (military tribunals, the Special Court of Justice, and the High Court), for the strengthening of judges' independence, and greater resources for the Justice Ministry.

During the year, the courts handled an increasing number of cases that involved sensitive human rights issues, most of which were covered openly and extensively by national and international media. Trial subjects included freedom of the press, alleged Polisario Front espionage, and Sahrawi student demonstrations in the capital and Marrakech. Defense attorneys involved in these cases, most of whom were prominent human rights activists and members of the AMDH and OMDH, generally agreed that the majority of the judicial processes pertaining to the cases were marked by significant irregularities, and that these irregularities infringed on the rights to a fair trial for the accused.

Mustapha Adib, a young air force captain, was incarcerated in December 1999 and tried before a military court for allegedly violating the Military Code and libeling the military. The authorities detained Adib after he spoke out against military corruption and harassment to a journalist from the French newspaper *Le Monde*. On February 17, a military court convicted Adib after 4 days of proceedings during which the judge rejected nearly every legal motion advanced by the defense. The court denied the defense's requests that the court make the trial public, allow the defense to summon more than a dozen defense witnesses and present documentary evidence, and recuse one of the military judges, who was a former superior of Adib's. The judge whom the defense asked to be recused allegedly was responsible for blocking Adib's promotions after Adib made the allegations of corruption in a 1998 letter to then-Crown Prince Sidi Mohammed (now King Mohammed VI).

The military tribunal sentenced Adib to the maximum prison term of 5 years and expelled him from the air force. Human rights activists criticized the unfair nature of the trial; the OMDH issued a report on February 21 contending that closed trials unjustly influenced the results and accused the court of partiality in refusing to recuse Adib's former superior. After deciding on a "silent defense" to protest the military court's conduct of the case, the attorney representing Adib characterized the trial as a "travesty of justice." Following an appeal on procedural grounds lodged by Adib's attorney immediately following the end of the trial, and after Adib staged a 5-day hunger strike in early May, the Supreme Court in June announced that it would review the case. On June 14, the Supreme Court overruled the military court and announced that the case would be retried by a new military tribunal composed of different judges. Adib's defense team called the decision a "historic judgment."

A newly constituted military court in Rabat retried Adib's case in early October. After 3 days of hearings, during which the court again refused to hear witnesses requested by the defense and rejected multiple other defense motions, the military court found Adib guilty of the charges initially brought against him. The court reduced Adib's sentence to 2 1/2 years in prison and upheld his expulsion from the military. Adib's lawyer criticized the verdict as "neither just nor equitable," and said that he would appeal the new verdict. On September 28, before the retrial began, the international NGO Transparency International recognized Captain Adib with one of its Integrity Awards for his courage in fighting corruption, which Adib's lawyer accepted for him in Canada. In early November, Amnesty International identified Adib as a "prisoner of conscience."

On April 5, a Moroccan civil court in the Western Sahara city of Laayoune sentenced five Sahrawi youth to prison terms of between 5 and 10 years for the "formation of a criminal association" after their alleged participation in a March 4 stone-throwing event in Laayoune, which reliable sources say was spontaneous, unorganized, and lasted for only 5 minutes. The demonstration followed similar protests by Sahrawi students in

several southern Moroccan and Western Sahara cities at the end of February and early March that security forces dispersed violently (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., 1.f., and 2.b.).

Attendees at the trial, including human rights activists and an attorney for the five defendants criticized the handling of the trial, particularly the court's refusal to hear witnesses for the defense who allegedly could have testified that at least two of the five defendants had been elsewhere at the time of the incident. In addition to the police reports, the court allegedly based its judgment on the testimony of two witnesses, one of whom reportedly could not positively identify the accused, and another who was not present at the trial, but who claimed that he saw in his rear view mirror a youth throwing a bottle at his car. The prosecution reportedly did not present any physical evidence, nor did it present any witness who could testify that the five accused were the ones who had thrown the bottle. The authorities claimed that the youths threw rocks at several vehicles, including one belonging to peacekeepers from the U.N. MINURSO contingent based in Laayoune, and attempted to set fire to a truck. However, the youth were acquitted of the arson charge during the trial.

A lawyer for the youths, who maintained the prosecution did not prove an incriminating act, said that "the verdict had nothing to do with justice." The lawyer also alleged that the judicial police investigating the affair committed several illegal acts by unlawfully entering homes of the accused and detaining them, torturing the accused during their detention, and forcing the accused under duress to sign police reports, which they were not allowed to read and which they claimed contained falsehoods. The decision was appealed to the court of appeals in Laayoune and then reportedly to the Supreme Court in Rabat; no final ruling had been made by year's end. Families of the five Sahrawi youth also sent a letter to the Royal Palace in May requesting a royal pardon (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., and 1.f.).

On May 26, the court of first instance in Marrakech sentenced 13 students to 3 years in prison for their alleged participation in a riot on May 17 and 18 near their university campus. The 13 students, 8 of whom were Sahrawis, were convicted on charges of armed gathering, assault with weapons, contempt of public servants while exercising their duties, destruction of public goods, and impeding free movement. Two others were sentenced to 2 months, and in June one more student was sentenced to 5 years for setting fire to a public vehicle, damaging municipal property, and contempt of a civil servant exercising his duty. Thirty to 40 students reportedly were detained by police initially. According to one of the lawyers representing the students, judicial authorities showed little concern for the need to respect due process throughout the investigation of the events and the trial. There were no arrest warrants and no evidence was presented against any of those charged except the police statement of facts, which none of the defendants had signed (all had been forced to provide their thumbprint on the statement in lieu of a signature). The lawyers were not allowed to present evidence in court that could have exonerated their clients. For example, one of those convicted claimed that he had not been in Marrakech during the events. He was not allowed to present the testimony of friends in another city with whom he said he had been visiting.

Students involved in the demonstrations and press reports claimed that after an initial encounter between students and police, both the police and students called in reinforcements to their respective sides. A sit-in of roughly 60 students (not all Sahrawis) in the public street in front of their residence then was held, which police reportedly broke up by force after negotiations failed. When another sit-in was organized, the police again forcibly dispersed students and arrested several dozen (not all Sahrawis). Lawyers for the 13 defendants appealed the court's conviction of their clients. According to Sahrawis and Sahrawi defense lawyers in Rabat, an appellate court in Marrakesh at the end of the summer upheld the original conviction. However, the court reduced all of the 3-year sentences by 1 year each. Among those detained by the police was a young Sahrawi student who claimed to have been tortured by two police officers in an isolated area near the university campus. The Sahrawi displayed fresh marks from cigarette burns to a foreign diplomat to support the allegations (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., and 2.b.).

During the late evening of May 17 in Rabat, police arrested 14 students at Mohammed V University and charged them with arson, violence against the police, erecting barricades, and impeding free movement. The students, 12 of whom were Sahrawis, had participated earlier in the evening in a solidarity protest for fellow Sahrawi students who had been arrested that morning in Marrakech. The detained students reportedly admitted to staging two sit-ins in solidarity with their peers in Marrakech, but denied, as alleged by the authorities, any use of force or violence against the police who arrested them. The police contended that the students refused to disperse, then threw rocks at them and their vehicles. According to students, near midnight the same evening, police squads returned to the university, entered it, set up checkpoints, detained students without identity cards, and broke into dormitories in search of those who participated in the sit-ins earlier in the day.

According to a lawyer who represented 13 of the accused students, one of his clients said that police took him to an unidentified location after his arrest, beat him severely, and interrogated him regarding his activities and links with other Sahrawi and human rights activists. Noting his client's difficulty in speaking in court and drawing attention to his swollen face and eyes, the lawyer requested the pretrial investigating judge to conduct a medical examination of his client, which the judge refused. According to the lawyer, after their arrest, the students were held incommunicado longer than the legal limit of 48 hours, and nobody was informed of their whereabouts during this time, as required by law. At preliminary legal proceedings on May 22 at the Rabat court of appeals, all 14 of the accused reportedly denied violent acts during the demonstration; however, in three of the police reports submitted to the court, three of the accused allegedly had admitted to violent acts. None of the depositions by the accused were signed; all were marked only by the defendants' thumbprints. After a series of hearings and delays, on November 17, the Rabat court of appeals acquitted and freed all 14 students who were detained in mid-May. According to a lawyer for the defense, all of the detained students denied before the court any involvement in the demonstration. The prosecution reportedly failed to produce any witnesses who could confirm the students' participation in the May 17 incident (see Section 1.c.).

On October 27, 10 students at the University of Hassan I in Settat were tried for their involvement in the

October 23 demonstrations that police broke up violently (see Section 2.b.). Each of the 10 students reportedly declared before the court that they were forced under duress and torture to sign (by thumb prints) their police statements. According to a PPS political party communique, two of its members involved in the incident "were victims of grave physical cruelty" during their transfer to the police station and during their detention. The defendants' lawyers unsuccessfully requested that the case be dropped on the grounds that the judicial police had not, as mandated by law, notified family members of the students' arrest. The court reportedly also refused the defense's request to have the students examined by a doctor, as is permissible by law if signs of physical distress are visible. At the end of the day-long trial, the Settati court of first instance found all 10 students guilty of the charges and sentenced them to from 3 to 5 months in prison (three were given suspended sentences). Following an appeal lodged by defense lawyers, on November 9, the Settati court of appeal reduced the sentences of the seven students sent to prison, reducing four of them from 5 to 3 months and three of them from 3 to 2 months.

In an abruptly convened trial, 14 students who had been arrested during violent clashes between students and police at Mohammedia University on November 21 were convicted of disturbance of public order and sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment and fines ranging from \$50 to \$150 (500 to 1,500 dirhams). The alleged victims of the students' vandalism did not appear at the trial to testify or be cross-examined (see Sections 1.c. and 2.b.).

The Government pressed charges against 33 human rights activists who were involved in a protest before Parliament on December 9: the trial was scheduled for February 2001 (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., 2.a., 2.b., and 4).

In December 1999, Moroccan security forces that reportedly were dispatched from Rabat detained one Sahrawi in the Western Sahara city of Laayoune and two Sahrawis in the southern Moroccan cities of Tan-Tan and Agadir. Alleged to be spies serving the Polisario Front, the three reportedly were held for 8 days before their appearance in an Agadir court and before their families were informed of their detention. Family members and the AMDH denounced the nature of the arrests, calling them a violation of human rights, due process, and proof that forced disappearances still occurred in Morocco. In a public trial convened on May 30 after a lengthy and largely unpublicized police investigation that was originally to be heard by a military tribunal, the three were convicted of threatening the internal security of the state and sentenced to 3 to 4 years in prison by Agadir's court of first instance. During an appellate hearing on July 5, at the request of the public prosecutor all three were given the same sentence of 4 years. The abrupt convening of the public trial at the end of May also coincided with the decision of judicial authorities to change the jurisdiction of the case from the court of appeals to the court of first instance. (The court of first instance deals with lesser crimes punishable by sentences of 5 years and less; the court of appeals with serious crimes involving sentences of 5 years and more.) According to a lawyer representing the Sahrawis, during the trial the three accused denied any relations with the Polisario Front, contradicting confessions allegedly made during their detention (see Sections 1.b. and 1.d.). On September 27, security forces in civilian dress detained a fourth Sahrawi at the Laayoune airport as he was about to board a flight to the Canary Islands. According to the Sahrawi's daughter, who witnessed the incident, two members of the security forces drove away with her father in a car with Casablanca license plates. Almost 10 days later, the Sahrawi reappeared in Agadir and also was charged before the court of first instance for spying for the Polisario Front. Two days later, the fourth Sahrawi was sentenced to 4 years in prison for threatening the internal security of the state.

Sadok El-Kihal, a trucker and regional bureau member of the Istiqlal party's union, the UGTM, contacted AMDH during the year with accusations that he had been arrested arbitrarily, jailed, tortured, and falsely convicted by authorities in June 1999 following his participation in a national truckers strike. Arrested and jailed on charges of forming a criminal gang and setting fire to a vehicle, El-Kihal alleged that security forces in the Gendarmerie of Taouriat (Oujda province) tortured him and wrote a false police report that they forced him to endorse with his thumbprint without allowing him to read it first. El-Kihal contests that it was this police report that formed the basis of his conviction at the Oujda court of appeals, which sentenced him to 2 years' imprisonment. El-Kihal subsequently benefited from a royal pardon and was freed on May 4 (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., and 6.a.).

During the evening of June 18, up to 100 members of the security forces attacked the UMT headquarters in Rabat, where 12 Group 314 members were in the 11th day of a hunger strike. Using tear gas and batons, security forces violently cleared all demonstrators from the area, arresting up to 100 protesters and evacuating the hunger strikers, who had been forced out by tear gas. Dozens of protesters were reported injured, some seriously. Twenty-two of those arrested, most of whom were ANDC members, were charged with "using violence against agents of authority." During their trial in July, 30 lawyers representing the 22 defendants withdrew after the tribunal refused their—and allegedly the prosecution's—request to summon witnesses. In a press conference following their withdrawal, the lawyers said "necessary conditions for a fair trial were absent." One lawyer defending the ANDC members said that there were multiple procedural errors in the conduct of the judicial investigation and the trial. The lawyer also claimed that all of the police statements regarding the defendants contained falsehoods, and that none of them had been signed. After the lawyers withdrew, the defendants refused to participate in the trial. The tribunal subsequently closed the proceedings to the public and proceeded to sentence all 22 defendants. Nineteen of the defendants received 2-month suspended sentences and \$50 (500 dirhams) fines and three were sentenced to 2 months in prison and \$50 (500 dirhams) fines (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., and 2.b.).

During and following public demonstrations in the Western Sahara city of Laayoune in September 1999, more than 150 persons were detained by police authorities. Most were released within a matter of days; however, 26 persons were tried on criminal charges for actions in connection with the protests and sentenced to imprisonment for periods ranging from 10 to 15 years. The OMDH claimed that the trial of these persons was unfair and insisted that the defendants were not provided adequate legal counsel for their defense. By year's end, none of the 26 persons convicted in 1999 had their sentences reduced or overturned (see Sections 1.f. and 2.b.).

The Government continued to hold a number of political prisoners. According to the AMDH and OMDH, seven political prisoners remained in detention at year's end. In January King Mohammed VI pardoned 2,000 prisoners, 1 of whom was Arsalan Samouzi, a political prisoner who was sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment for insulting the royal family during the reign of King Hassan II. The official Moroccan press agency, MAP, quoted the Justice Minister as saying in a July 23 television interview that there are no more political prisoners in detention. In the past, the Ministry of Interior claimed that there were 55 Islamists serving sentences for offenses that ranged from arms smuggling in the 1980's to participating in a bomb attack on a hotel in Marrakech in 1994. In the past, there also were claims that some of these Islamists were imprisoned solely for calling for an Islamic state during the 1980's. The AMDH claims that 2 members of the "Group of 26," an Islamist group involved in smuggling arms into the country from Algeria in the mid-1980's, remain in prison. The other 24 members completed their sentences or otherwise were released at various times between 1994 and the end of the year. Various international human rights groups' estimates of the number of persons in prison for advocating independence for the Western Sahara vary from none to 700. Amnesty International lists dozens of persons whom it considers to be political prisoners. According to several human rights organizations, achieving consensus on a definitively accurate number of political prisoners is extremely difficult, mainly because conditions in the Western Sahara complicate attempts to confirm whether Sahrawis were imprisoned solely for their political affiliation or open advocacy of Western Saharan independence, or whether they were imprisoned for other actions in violation of the law. The AMDH claims that it knows of no persons imprisoned for having overtly advocating Western Saharan independence.

Although the Government claims that it no longer holds political prisoners, it permits international humanitarian organizations to visit prisoners whom such organizations consider to be imprisoned for political reasons.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home or Correspondence

The Constitution states that the home is inviolable and that no search or investigation may take place without a search warrant, and the law stipulates that a search warrant may be issued by a prosecutor on good cause; however, authorities sometimes ignore these provisions. Security forces allegedly entered homes in pursuit of persons associated with a strike at a water-bottling factory in February (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., 2.b., 2.d., and 6.a.). One of the lawyers representing five Sahrawi youths who were sentenced to jail terms for their alleged participation in a March 4 stone-throwing incident in Laayoune, alleged that the judicial police who investigated the affair committed several illegal acts, including unlawfully entering homes of the youths (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., and 1.e.).

During protests in Laayoune in the Western Sahara in September and October 1999, police reportedly encouraged local thugs to break into, loot, and destroy private shops. Following the protests in October 1999, police unlawfully entered homes to arrest persons associated with the demonstrations. Human rights NGO's claimed that such police actions created a "climate of fear" in the city, forcing some families to flee the city or change residences nightly to avoid such police actions. There reportedly was no official investigation into such government actions by year's end (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., 1.e., and 2.a.).

Government security services monitor certain persons and organizations, both foreign and Moroccan, and government informers monitor activities on university campuses.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The Constitution provides for freedom of expression; however, the Government systematically restricted press freedom regarding a few topics that the Government considers sensitive, and appeared to increase restrictions on some other topics with the potential to reflect negatively on the country's international image. Nonetheless, newspapers and weeklies from across the political spectrum, from Socialist to nationalist to Islamist, publish freely, and the Government permitted extensive coverage during the year of formerly taboo topics.

The Government owns the official press agency, Maghreb Arab Press (MAP), and the Arabic daily Al-Anbaa. The Government also supports two semiofficial dailies, the French-language *Le Matin* and the Arabic-language *Assahra*. In addition the Government provides subsidies to the rest of the press through price supports for newsprint and office space. A 1958 decree grants the Government the authority to register and license domestic newspapers and journals. Authorities may use the licensing process to prevent the publication of materials that they believe cross the threshold of tolerable dissent. Offending publications may be declared a danger to state security and seized, the publisher's license suspended, and equipment destroyed. The Ministry of Interior may control foreign publications by collecting "banned" publications after they have been distributed. There were multiple reports that authorities pressured domestic-based printers not to print several newspapers, including two belonging to the JCO. In addition, the administrators of the new weekly publication *Demain* alleged in April that the authorities attempted to block the printing of their publication because of its investigative editorial line. According to *Demain*'s administrators, the alleged attempt to influence the magazine's editorial line led them to move the weekly's printing operations to Spain. The media continue to engage regularly in self-censorship to avoid the Government's attention and possible sanctions.

The Press Code empowers the Minister of Interior to confiscate publications that are judged offensive by the Government. Under the code, the Prime Minister may order the indefinite suspension of a publication. The

Press Code also empowers the Government to censor newspapers directly by ordering them not to report on specific items or events. In most past instances, government control of the media generally has been exercised through directives and "guidance" from the Ministry of Interior. However, during the year, the Government fined several journalists for articles that they had published, and sentenced one to prison. The King subsequently pardoned the journalist who was sentenced to prison, and the fines issued against the other journalists allegedly later were dropped. The Government generally tolerates satirical and often stinging editorials in the opposition parties' dailies. However, both law and tradition historically have prohibited criticism on three topics: The Monarchy, Morocco's claim to the Western Sahara, and the sanctity of Islam.

There were approximately 2,000 domestic and foreign newspapers, magazines, and journals in circulation during the year.

Prior to Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine's release after 11 years of house arrest for refusing to acknowledge the religious authority of then-King Hassan II, the Government on February 5 temporarily confiscated from newsstands in major cities several newspapers that contained a 19-page memorandum addressed by Yassine in late January to King Mohammed VI, in which Yassine asked the King to return to the populace the wealth that he alleged that the King's late father had stolen from the country. However, the Government permitted the three publications to be put back on the newsstands the same day. On February 8 and 9, then-Communication Minister Larbi Messari declared that the memorandum was not banned, that it was available on the Internet, and that the concerned newspapers were back in circulation. Messari reportedly said that the confiscation was "incidental," and that censorship was absurd and no longer practiced in the country. Four members of the JCO were arrested in February for distributing the memorandum in Tangiers and Ben Slimane (near Casablanca). All four were charged with "violating the sacred institution of the Monarchy." According to the AMDH, by February 7 the authorities had dropped the charges and released all four (see Sections 1.d., 2.c., and 2.d.).

The Government banned the distribution of the February 15-21 edition of the *Jeune Afrique L'Intelligent* weekly magazine. The weekly contained a letter by a Moroccan political scientist living abroad, which criticized the reign of King Hassan II and challenged King Mohammed VI to devote greater effort to much-needed reforms. According to press reports, civilian authorities from a Casablanca commissariat asked the national distributor of *Jeune Afrique* in Morocco not to distribute the issue. In the main editorial column in the subsequent edition of *Jeune Afrique*, the editors stated that they interpreted the commissariat's request as a ban and decided to withdraw its 8,000 copies from Morocco rather than wait for its local distributor to receive the written prohibition order it had requested from the authorities; the distributor reportedly never received the order. On February 16, Communication Minister Messari sent a letter to the distributor demanding to know who in the Government had banned the issue, claiming that the Communication Ministry was not involved. The Government never established who gave the order to the local commissariat.

The Government banned the distribution of the March 4 issue of the French daily newspaper *Le Figaro*. The issue contained an article about the fate of the late Mehdi Ben Barka, former National Union of Popular Forces (UNFP—later to become USFP) party founding member and secretary general who reportedly was killed in Paris in 1965 by French thugs, allegedly at the request of the Moroccan secret service. The source of the article reportedly at the time was a physician of then-King Hassan II. Although the Government gave no formal statement explaining the ban, on May 5 then-Communication Minister Messari commented at a U.N. Education and Science Organization (UNESCO)-sponsored seminar on human rights that "I banned the *Le Figaro* issue ... because it contained defamation threatening to a cause of our national history."

On April 15, police at Marrakech airport seized and prevented the distribution of two related leading weekly investigative newspapers, the French-language *Le Journal* and its Arabic-language counterpart *Assahifa*, after their arrival from printers in France. The two domestic publications were banned at the orders of Prime Minister Youssoufi after *Le Journal* published an interview that its editor in chief held with Mohammed Abdelaziz, leader of the Polisario Front. The Government's ban of the publications coincided with the visit to the country of U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson. The Government explained the ban in a Communication Ministry communique the same day, characterizing *Le Journal*'s interview with Abdelaziz "an event organized by certain milieus hostile to our country (and) in homage to the separatist (Sahrawi) impudence." The communique also cited as explanation "the extension of constant excesses in the editorial line of the two publications with regard to the handling of the question of our territorial integrity."

Aboubakr Jamaï, editor in chief of *Le Journal*, criticized the government decision to censor the newspaper, claiming that other Moroccan publications recently had published similar articles containing material from interviews with the Polisario Front leader. At a press conference convened on April 17 by *Le Journal*'s and *Assahifa*'s parent corporation, Mediastream, Jamaï expressed concern that the ban likely had more to do with his paper's aggressive reporting on other topics. On April 17, the board of directors of the state-run television station 2M fired the station's top three officials for, according to Communication Minister Larbi Messari, having made a "professional mistake" during an April 14 broadcast. The professional mistake is widely believed to have been the station's televised reference in its evening newscast to *Le Journal*'s controversial interview with Polisario Front leader Abdelaziz. On April 29, government spokesperson Khalid Alioua apologized for the ban of *Assahifa*, calling it an error. Unlike in *Le Journal*, *Assahifa* contained no reference to the interview with Abdelaziz. On April 19, the AMDH reacted to the bans of the two newspapers and the firing of 2M's leadership by issuing a communique criticizing decisions that "gravely threaten the freedom of the press."

On April 26, a Casablanca court convicted Mustapha Alaoui, the editor of the Arabic-language daily *Al-Ousbou*, of libel and defamation of Foreign Minister Mohammed Benaïssa, for a controversial article Alaoui published that alleged financial misfeasance in a real estate matter involving Benaïssa while the latter served abroad as an ambassador. The court sentenced Alaoui to 3 months in prison, forbade him to practice journalism for 3 years and ordered him to pay approximately \$100,000 (1,000,000 dirhams) in damages to Benaïssa and a \$2,000 (20,000 dirhams) fine. On April 27, Khalid Mechbal, the editor of the Tangiers-based weekly news publication *Al-Shamal*, also was convicted of libel and defamation in a case lodged by Benaïssa for publishing a similar article. Mechbal received a 6-month suspended jail term, was forbidden from practicing journalism for 1

year, and was ordered to pay an approximately \$2,000 (20,000 dirhams) fine. On May 3, another court convicted Alaoui of libel and defamation for an article he published concerning Fouad Filali, the estranged former brother-in-law of King Mohammed VI; Alaoui was sentenced a 3-month suspended jail term and ordered to pay approximately \$10,000 (100,000 dirhams) in damages and a \$500 (5,000 dirhams) fine.

Journalists and human rights activists protested the court's decision to invoke statutes from the Criminal Code--rather than the Press Code--to punish the editors and ban them from exercising their profession. The Moroccan National Press Union (SNPM) stated in an April 27 communique that "the pronouncement of prison terms in issues of publishing and the press flagrantly contradicts the rule of law and the freedom of expression." On May 3, human rights activists and journalists demonstrated in front of the Communication Ministry to express their concerns about the convictions and other press censorship cases. Mustapha Alaoui stated that "not even in the time of the French protectorate had a Moroccan journalist ever been forbidden from exercising his profession."

After immediately appealing the Casablanca court's decision, Alaoui and Mechbal learned in late May that the King had pardoned them, and allowed them to return to their professions without serving time in jail. However, they still were obligated to pay the damages and the fines. On July 6, while Alaoui awaited an appellate hearing to determine the issue of damages and fines, the authorities banned Alaoui's newspaper from publication, and forbade Casablanca printers from printing it. According to press reports, on July 31, the Casablanca court of appeal accepted reciprocal requests from lawyers representing Alaoui and Benaissa to withdraw Alaoui's appeal and Benaissa's civil litigation. The press reports indicated that the court of appeal also reduced Alaoui's \$2,000 (20,000 dirhams) fine to \$100 (1,000 dirhams); however, independent sources alleged that Alaoui's fine was dropped altogether, as were the damages that he originally was ordered to pay to Benaissa in April.

On May 15, the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (Reporters Sans Frontieres--RSF) criticized Morocco for banning seven local and foreign newspapers, and appealed to King Mohammed VI to ensure press freedom. The International Committee to Protect Journalists also raised the same concerns in a letter to Prime Minister Youssoufi in the spring.

According to press reports in late May and early July, the authorities allegedly blocked the publication of two newspapers, Al-Adl Wal Ihsane and Rissalat Al-Futuwa, associated with Sheikh Yassine's Justice and Charity Organization. The authorities reportedly ordered printers of the two newspapers to suspend their distribution (see Sections 1.d., 2.c., and 2.d.). In September the directors of the two publications delivered to human right organizations and the press a letter that claimed that government authorities had issued administrative orders against the publication and sale of the two newspapers. The directors also stated that various printers had been threatened and pressured not to print the newspapers.

In its June 23-29 issue, the independent weekly Le Journal reported that the secretary general of RSF had written a letter to Interior Minister Midaoui protesting the Government's "heavy surveillance" of a visiting French journalist, and its confiscation of the reporter's videocassette tapes as he was leaving Rabat airport. The secretary general asked Minister Midaoui to "provide him with explanations" of the Government's actions. The French journalist allegedly was writing an investigative article about Mehdi Ben Barka, a leftist political leader allegedly kidnapped and murdered in Paris in 1965 by French thugs at the request of the Moroccan secret service.

During a protest by disabled unemployed university graduates on September 12, police reportedly attempted to remove the camera equipment of one photojournalist covering the demonstration, and jostled and threatened other news correspondents on the scene (see Sections 1.c. and 2.b.).

In its September 23-29 edition, Le Journal reported that government authorities banned the distribution of a September issue of the London-based magazine The Economist, which contained a report on Morocco's August announcement of new oil finds in the eastern part of the country. The Economist report questioned the scale of the findings as announced by the Government. A local representative of The Economist confirmed the banning.

On October 4, at a press briefing convened by the Government, Interior Minister Midaoui publicly threatened Aboubakr Jamai, the director of Le Journal, warning against publishing sensitive stories related to Mohammed Abdelaziz, the leader of the Polisario Front. Midaoui threatened to ban Le Journal again if the newspaper conducted and published more such interviews. RSF responded to the incident with a letter to Prime Minister Youssoufi, which related the NGO's concerns about the recent decline in press freedoms.

In early October, over the period of several days, the Government accused of espionage, detained, and held under house arrest three French television journalists from France's FR3 television station, who were reporting on a government-authorized human rights demonstration at the notorious former secret detention center of Tazmamart. Despite their possession of two authorization papers from the Government to tape throughout the country, the journalists were stopped by security forces after they had taped the former detention center the morning before the October 7 demonstration. (Other domestic and international media later filmed the same footage without incident.) Local justice officials summoned the FR3 journalists to a nearby tribunal on October 8, but the journalists refused the officials' request to hand over the material that had been taped at Tazmamart. The journalists then were placed under house arrest in the city of Er-Rachidia by security forces and kept under surveillance. During this time, the authorities confiscated the journalists' video material, passports, and personal belongings, and accused them of "violating military secrets" for videotaping Tazmamart (which became a military weapons depot after the secret detention center closed in 1991). After French officials intervened, the authorities released the three journalists on October 9. Before leaving the country, the journalists signed a document agreeing to return to cooperate with the legal investigation of the affair. One of

the FR3 journalists who was detained was Joseph Tual, the French journalist who had been monitored in June and whose video material then also was confiscated by security forces at Rabat airport.

On November 4, the Government withdrew the accreditation and ordered the expulsion of Claude Juvenal, a Morocco-based French correspondent for Agence France Presse (AFP). According to MAP, a source from the Ministry of Culture and Communication stated that Juvenal had "breached professional ethics by engaging in initiatives hostile to Morocco and its institutions." According to the semiofficial daily newspaper *Le Matin du Sahara*, Juvenal had "for several years continually, and in sheer bad faith, cast doubt on, criticized and misrepresented every initiative and reform undertaken by Morocco." Juvenal's expulsion resulted in a strong negative reaction from domestic and international media. The SNPM issued a communique protesting the expulsion, stating that the authorities' justification for the expulsion "remains ambiguous and hence unacceptable." The SNPM in its communiqués and the RSF claimed that the expulsion illustrated growing intolerance by the authorities toward press freedom. A group of Morocco-based Spanish journalists wrote a letter to Minister of Culture and Communication Mohammed Achaari, in which they expressed their concerns that similar measures could be taken "at any moment against other journalists" and informed the Minister that they were seeking the protection of the Spanish Government and the European Union for themselves. Minister Achaari refused to explain the reasons for the expulsion when he was asked on national television.

On December 2, Prime Minister Youssoufi banned indefinitely three independent weekly publications known for their politically sensitive investigative reports. The Prime Minister banned the French weekly publications *Le Journal* and *Demain* and the Arabic weekly *Assahifa*, a sister publication of *Le Journal*, after they published or commented on a 1974 letter alleging that Youssoufi had participated in coup plotting with other leftist leaders and the military against then-King Hassan II in 1972. In banning the three publications, Youssoufi used the highly controversial and long-criticized Article 77 of the Press Code, which allows both the Prime Minister and Interior Minister to ban any publication that "threatens the kingdom's political and religious foundations." At their press conference on December 3, the three editors in chief of the banned publications criticized the banning as "a manifestation of intellectual terrorism." The SNPM denounced the ban and the application of Article 77, urging the Government to reconsider its decision and to reform the entire Press Code. The AMDH also protested the ban, calling it a violation of the Constitution and international conventions on human rights. International NGO's criticized the banning as well. RSF called attention to the fact that Youssoufi had promised to defend press freedoms upon assuming office in 1998, including revision of the entire Press Code. In mid-December, two of the three weeklies filed a lawsuit against the government at the administrative court of Rabat. In the meantime, *Le Journal* filed paperwork to establish a new publication; approval of the application was still pending at year's end.

Also in mid-December, the Government confiscated and prevented distribution of the December 14-20 printed issue of the international publication *Courier International*. The publication contained four pages of articles written by the editors in chief of the three domestic weeklies banned indefinitely by Youssoufi on December 2. In their articles, the editors in chief attacked the Prime Minister's decision to shut down their publications. The electronic versions of the articles were available in the country on *Courier International's* Internet web site.

Police reportedly confiscated journalists' photography equipment during their December 9 and 10 violent dispersions of human rights activists and JCO members in Rabat and other large cities (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., 1.e., 2.b., and 4).

In general press articles containing unflattering material that routinely had been prevented from circulation in past years, with the exception of those related to the topics the Government still considers sensitive, were permitted free circulation during the year. These included reports on corruption in the Government and military, financial scandals at public institutions, sensitive human rights-related court cases, torture, violence against women, the exploitation of child maids, prostitution, poverty, abandoned children, and harsh conditions inside prisons.

In an October 23 "Open Letter to the Minister of Justice" that it distributed to domestic as well as international media, the AMDH for the first time published a list containing 14 names of alleged former torturers and officials involved in disappearances and arbitrary detention. The first domestic newspaper to republish the list was *Le Journal*. Agence France Presse then distributed the list of names abroad through its wire services. Some of the listed names were high-ranking officials currently holding office. In the letter, the AMDH called for "the truth and pursuit of those responsible for disappearances." The AMDH also criticized the Justice Ministry for its alleged nonintervention in past cases of torture and disappearance (see Section 1.c.).

Also in October, the Government lifted its 17-year ban on the book "For Bread Alone" ("Le Pain Nu") by the Moroccan writer Mohammed Choukri. The book had been banned during King Hassan II's reign reportedly for its sexually explicit overtones.

Throughout the year, journalists, NGO's, and human rights activists increased their calls on the Government to enact a new public liberties law, which Prime Minister Youssoufi announced that he would enact when he assumed power in 1998. In January 1999, 42 NGO's addressed a memorandum to the Prime Minister proposing amendments to the law that governs the press, associations, and public gatherings. Their proposals were aimed at easing current restrictions and giving associations more freedom to organize and function. The present Public Liberties Law dates from 1958, and many legal observers agree that the sole amendment to the law, which was ratified in 1973, constituted a setback to civil liberties. The amendment apparently introduced restrictions that established firmer government control over the legal establishment of associations and the associations' scope of action once they are recognized legally and allowed to operate. In January before Parliament, Youssoufi announced his intention to open a debate on the law. However, unsatisfied with what it perceived to be the Government's slow handling of the issue, the NGO network *Espace Associatif* held a large roundtable conference in March in which it discussed reform of the law and urged the Government to act more quickly and transparently. In an April communique following the censorship of *Le Journal* and *Assahifa*, the

AMDH demanded "the immediate modification of the Public Liberties Law and abrogation of all constraints that hinder freedom of the press." At the same time, the OMDH issued a communique expressing frustration at the Government's slow progress with respect to the reforms that the OMDH had called for on numerous occasions. In May the Moroccan Barrister's Association also called for reform of the Public Liberties Law.

In July and November, the King announced in two nationally televised speeches that the Government was preparing legislation for reforming the Public Liberties Law. Prime Minister Youssoufi's Cabinet discussed draft legislation and reviewed a draft in mid-December. The SNPM on December 19 rejected the draft Press Code contained in the three-part legislation on the grounds that the SNPM had not been consulted during the code's formulation. The SNPM claimed that the draft text still permitted the Government to seize, confiscate, and ban publications, and to punish those convicted of libel and defamation with jail sentences. Domestic media and human rights activists long have criticized these central provisions, which widely are perceived to repress and stifle the freedom of expression. No final decisions were made by year's end regarding the public liberties legislation. Before presenting the draft legislation to the Cabinet in December, Prime Minister Youssoufi presided over two interministerial discussions of the law in May and July.

The Government controls Radio-Television Marocaine (RTM) broadcasts. Another major broadcaster is the French-backed Medi-1, which operates from Tangier and broadcasts throughout Morocco and other parts of North Africa. While nominally private and independent, Medi-1 practices self-censorship, as do other media outlets. The Government owns the only television stations whose broadcasts may be received in most parts of the nation without decoders or satellite dish antennas. In 1996 the Government purchased a majority share in 2M, formerly the country's sole private station, which can be received in most urban areas. The ostensible reason for the Government's action was to save 2M from bankruptcy; the Government now owns 68 percent of 2M stock, and the Minister of Communication, by virtue of his position, has become the chairman of the board. A government-appointed committee monitors broadcasts. Privatization of these stations continued to be a major topic of political debate during the year, and the Government announced in 1998 that it was preparing a plan for 2M's resale to the private sector.

In its October 28-November 3 issue, the independent magazine *Demain* reported that since July the Government had censored five broadcasts of a local news team that worked for the Qatari satellite television station Al-Jazira. According to *Demain's* and other press reports, spokesmen for the government-controlled television stations stated that the censored broadcasts (of domestic news items) were "technical problems" experienced during satellite transmissions. In late October, the SNPM criticized what it perceived to be a ban on the Qatari station, charging that the government-controlled television stations allowed other Arabic television stations to broadcast from the country. The Government had recalled its ambassador to Qatar in mid-July, allegedly in diplomatic retaliation for the Qatari Government's votes against Morocco's bid to host the 2006 World Cup and its bid for the presidency of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The Government also allegedly was concerned over what it perceived to be several negative reports on Morocco that recently were produced by Al-Jazira.

For the past 13 years, the popular humorist Ahmed Snoussi (also known as Bziz) has been prohibited from performing in the country due to his satire of those in power. While the authorities allowed Bziz to perform at the Mohammed V Theater in Rabat during the summer, he still is prohibited from performing live on television. He also faces restrictions on performing on university campuses. In November the authorities reportedly prevented him from accepting students' invitations to perform at universities in both Rabat and Tangiers.

In April Reuters news services reported the lifting of a 13-year ban on a book that described harsh conditions in a high-security prison. According to the author, Abdelkader Chaoui, his book "The Unachieved Past" had been banned since its publication in 1987. The book described the harsh conditions of the Kenitra prison in which Chaoui was held for 15 years. Chaoui was jailed in 1974 because of his leftist political opinions (see Section 1.c.). In November in Marrakesh, the King awarded Chaoui a literary prize for his most recent novel.

After 11 years of house arrest for refusing to acknowledge the religious authority of then-King Hassan II, Islamist dissident Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine was allowed to leave his Sale home on May 16. Yassine's release came after a May 10 statement by the Minister of Interior before Parliament that the Sheikh "leaves and returns to his residence as he likes." The Minister also stated that Sheikh Yassine was free to take his case to court if he felt his rights were being abused. Yassine's books, articles, and audio cassettes were sold only at some bookstores; however, editorials calling for his release prior to the Government's action were published without impediment (see Sections 1.d., 2.b., 2.c., and 2.d.).

In May the wire service Agence France Presse and the French daily newspaper *Le Monde* reported that Government had banned the book "Letter from Morocco," which was written by Christine Serfaty, the wife of former political dissident Abraham Serfaty (who was allowed to return to Morocco in September 1999 after 8 years of exile and 17 years of imprisonment). According to the two sources, the preface of Serfaty's book allegedly caused advisors at the Royal Palace to ban its distribution; the preface referred to Serfaty's collaboration with a French author on a controversial book, "Notre Ami Le Roi," which has been banned in Morocco since it was published in 1990 for its criticism of the rule of then-King Hassan II. In an interview given by Abraham Serfaty to *Jeune Afrique L'Intelligent* in September, the former exile claimed that his wife's book had not been banned, but rather "bookstores (in Morocco) that would like to import the book still cannot." In October Christine Serfaty claimed in an interview with *Jeune Afrique L'Intelligent* that she did not believe that a banning was in effect because she had received copies of her book from abroad through the postal system. However, she said that Moroccan bookstores that ordered her book still were waiting to receive it from the national distributor. The distributor reportedly sent the book to the government agency responsible for reviewing publications before their entry onto the market. The agency had yet to release the book to the distributor by year's end.

Also in May, the Government permitted the local publication and sale of a comic book called "They Even Starve

Rats." Written and illustrated by Abdelaziz Mouride, a former leftist student whom the authorities arbitrarily detained in 1974, sentenced to 22 years in prison, and then freed in 1984, the comic book vividly recounts the torture, injustice, and humiliation that he and other political dissidents suffered at the hands of the authorities (see Section 1.c.).

Dish antennas permit free access to a wide variety of foreign broadcasts and are available at low cost on the market. The antennas are in wide use throughout the country. Residents of the north are able to receive Spanish broadcasts with standard antennas. The Government does not impede the reception of foreign broadcasts or Internet access.

The universities enjoy relative academic freedom in most areas, but are barred from open debate on the Monarchy, the Western Sahara, and Islam. Government informers monitor campus activities (see Section 1.f.) and rectors are approved by the Ministry of Interior. Police and university students conducting elections clashed violently during the fall at university campuses throughout the country (see Sections 1.c., 1.e., and 2.b.).

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly; however, the law also permits the Government to suppress even peaceful demonstrations and mass gatherings, and at times police forcibly prevented and disrupted gatherings during the year. Most conferences and demonstrations require the prior authorization of the Ministry of Interior, ostensibly for security reasons.

Throughout the year, many meetings and marches took place peacefully without government interference; however, numerous demonstrations involving unemployed demonstrators were disrupted by the Government. Security forces often resorted to violent means to disperse and prevent from marching unemployed demonstrators, including the ANDC, the Group 314, disabled unemployed protesters, and other affiliated groups. Security forces also used violent means to disperse human rights activists and members of Islamist organizations late in the year. In early October, the Denmark-based organization EMHRN noted that "measures inspired by security police are still in existence; force is being used, outside the law, with protesters and, notably, with unemployed academics."

During their February 2 operation in the village of Tarmilet (48 miles from the capital), security forces used force to remove striking workers who had blockaded a water-bottling factory. The operation, which involved a large-scale military presence and reportedly was led by senior military officers, took place after a court order in January had ruled in favor of the factory owners who charged the protesting workers with interruption of means of production and obstructing the freedom to work. Dozens of strikers and members of the security forces were injured during the operation (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., 1.f., 2.d., and 6.a.).

On two consecutive days in February, security forces violently dispersed striking members of Group 314 (unemployed doctoral graduates of medicine and engineering). Members of Group 314 conducted a sit-in on February 10 at the Ministry of Employment and were dispersed by charging security forces, who beat the protesters with their hands, boots, and batons. Police arrested eight protesters, who later were released without charges. Seven protesters reportedly were injured. On February 11, approximately 300 members of Group 314 staged a sit-in before the Wilaya (regional office of the Interior Ministry) of Rabat to demand the release of the 8 members who were arrested the previous day. Approximately 200 members of the security forces intervened to disperse the demonstrators, again using violent methods. This time, police arrested four protesters, who also later were released without charges. Employment Minister Khalid Alioua denied during a February 10 press briefing that abusive acts against the group had occurred (see Sections 1.c. and 1.d.).

On March 1, security forces in the Western Sahara city of Smara violently dispersed Sahrawi students and their families who were demonstrating in solidarity with Sahrawi students in the nearby Moroccan city of Agadir. Police had disrupted violently demonstrations by the Agadir students on February 28 and 29. The Agadir students were protesting the December 1999 incarceration of three Sahrawis accused of spying for the Polisario Front (see Sections 1.b. and 1.d.). The Sahrawi students and families in Smara organized a march toward the police station, which security forces subsequently broke up forcefully. Dozens of persons allegedly were injured, as were a dozen police officers. According to reports, nobody was arrested during the protest.

Security forces used force to break up a May 3 demonstration in Meknes by members of the ANDC and other unemployed protesters (see Sections 1.c. and 1.d.).

On May 11, police violently broke up a peaceful demonstration in front of the Tunisian Embassy, where approximately 50 human rights activists had gathered to protest the Tunisian Government's treatment of a Tunisian journalist (he was on a hunger strike) and his family. After issuing an order to cease the demonstrations, police used force to disperse the activists, pushing them, beating their legs with batons, tearing up their posters, and pursuing them down side streets. Police reportedly injured six protesters.

On May 12, at the Ministry of Finance, police used excessive force to disperse approximately 500 engineers who were preparing to hold a sit-in to protest their terms of employment. Police used batons to disperse the protesters, clubbing a regional leader from the independent Moroccan Workers Union, who was knocked unconscious and required hospitalization. When the protesters regrouped nearby, the police again pursued them, and used batons to disperse them. Some police reportedly entered a ministry building and clubbed innocent bystanders whom they mistook for protesters. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in Brussels issued a communique that denounced police for using brutal methods against the protesters and

asked the Government "to work to put an end to brutal attacks against peaceful trade-union demonstrations." On May 17, the OMDH issued a communique that strongly criticized the brutal police actions on May 11 and 12, and questioned the Government about "the objective of using violence against civil society" at a time when royal speeches on human rights urged a new and more humane relationship of authority between the Government and citizens.

On May 17 and 18, police violently broke up student demonstrations in Marrakech, initially detaining 30 to 40 mostly Sahrawi participants. There were conflicting accounts regarding the origins of the large-scale demonstrations (see Sections 1.c. and 1.d.).

Within a 1-week period in June, security forces in the capital used excessive force to break up both a march by unemployed graduates associated with the ANDC and to evict 12 Group 314 hunger strikers from UMT's Rabat headquarters. According to eyewitnesses, on June 13, hundreds of security force members violently stopped up to 4,000 members of the ANDC from staging a protest march at the Parliament. Security forces used batons, chased protesters down streets, and violently dispersed large groups of marchers who had gathered before the Parliament. Thirty-three protesters reportedly were injured during the violent dispersal, 2 of them seriously. Over 20 persons were arrested, all of whom later were released without charges. On the evening of June 13, authorities detained two union leaders not involved in the demonstrations and released them the following day without charges (see Sections 1.c. and 1.d.).

During the evening of June 18, up to 100 members of the security forces attacked UMT headquarters in Rabat, where 12 Group 314 members were in the 11th day of a hunger strike. The attack allegedly began after ANDC demonstrators outside the headquarters threw rocks at security forces. Security forces then reportedly threw the rocks back at the demonstrators, breaking windows in the process, and fired tear gas into the building. They subsequently used force to clear all demonstrators from the area, arresting up to 100 persons. Security forces then removed the hunger strikers, who had been forced out by the tear gas. Later in the evening, the authorities cut the water and electricity supply to the UMT's headquarters, which they restored the following morning. Dozens of protesters were injured, some seriously. Twenty-two of those arrested were charged with "using violence against agents of authority;" 19 received suspended sentences and 3 received 2 months' imprisonment. Prime Minister Youssoufi convened an interministerial meeting on June 19 to address the violence and condition of the unemployed population. The Government stated that it "affirms its choice of dialog and rejects all forms of pressure and tension." Justice Minister Azziman then met with some members of the ANDC. On July 5, the Group 314 hunger strikers ended their 28-day strike after a meeting with the Government, in which both sides pledged to engage in a substantive dialog (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., and 1.e.).

On July 26 in downtown Rabat, police violently dispersed disabled unemployed university graduates, who were protesting the denial of their right to employment. The protesters arrived in Rabat from throughout the country to meet the Secretary of State in charge of the disabled, whom they accused of reneging on promises to assist them. The police reportedly removed the disabled protesters to the Ain Atiq detention center, outside the capital. On September 12, police again used force to break up a protest by approximately 40 disabled graduates before the Parliament. There were reports of injured protesters and, according to a communique issued by an association of unemployed handicapped university graduates, police again removed uninjured handicapped protesters to the Ain Atiq detention center. Police reportedly attempted to remove forcibly camera equipment of one photojournalist covering the demonstration, and jostled and threatened other news correspondents on the scene. The SNPM issued a communique criticizing the police treatment of the journalists, claiming that it was not the first time security forces exhibited such behavior toward them (see Sections 1.c., 2.a., and 5).

On October 9 in Casablanca, police dispersed with tear gas 2,000 to 3,000 Islamists who were protesting the Israeli Government's use of force against Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza in September and October. Islamist leaders had asked for and were refused permission to hold the demonstration.

On October 23, security forces used violent means to break up a demonstration by students preparing to begin a march to protest transportation problems at Hassan I University in Settat (southeast of Casablanca). Police intervened when the students were gathering on the edges of the university for a march toward the Wilaya of Settat. The police arrested 10 students, some of whom reportedly were not participating in the march, and accused them of disobedience, inciting disobedience, violence, and contempt of public servants while exercising their functions. Numerous students reportedly were injured in the violence, as well as two policemen. Press reports indicated that security forces intervened once students belonging to the Justice and Charity Organization inserted themselves into the march and began chanting anti-Israeli and anti-American slogans. Security forces reportedly clubbed students indiscriminately with truncheons, even entering neighborhood cafes and cafeterias to do so. After two of its youth members were detained in the incident, the political bureau of the PPS political party issued a communique on October 27, in which it claimed that security forces acted with "unprecedented brutality" in pursuing and attacking students indiscriminately within university grounds and in neighboring streets, and in conducting "targeted arrests." At their trial on October 27, the 10 students were sentenced to between 3 and 5 months in prison (three were given suspended sentences); the students' sentences later were reduced on appeal (see Sections 1.c. and 1.e.).

On November 5, security forces reportedly used violent force to break up a sit-in by ANDC members in the southern city of Tan-Tan. The local ANDC branch had called for a march to protest the lack of employment opportunities in the city, irregularities in the region's hiring practices, the lack of dialog with the authorities, and the local governor's abusive treatment of ANDC members. The police reportedly injured 25 demonstrators, 3 seriously, during the attack.

On November 21, security forces violently clashed with JCO students at Mohammedia University (in the Casablanca suburbs) as the latter prepared for annual student elections. According to news reports, over 100 students were injured and 14 arrested. Police claimed that they responded because the students illegally

remained on campus overnight and committed acts of vandalism. The students were sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment and fines ranging from \$50 to \$150 (500 to 1,500 dirhams) (see Sections 1.c. and 1.e.). Other reports indicated that similar although less violent clashes occurred between security forces and JCO students at other university campuses around the country engaged in student elections.

On November 27, security forces reportedly used violent means to break up a 5-day sit-in strike at a canning factory in the southern city of Agadir. The attack reportedly resulted in the death of one worker and injuries to eight others (see Sections 1.a., 1.c., 1.d., and 6.a.).

During the weekend of December 9-11, security forces throughout the country used violent means to disperse human rights activists, members of the JCO, and unemployed graduates who gathered separately in Rabat and other large cities to demonstrate for different reasons. The three groups decided to gather despite a prior Interior Ministry statement that the gatherings were unauthorized and would be forbidden. On December 9, human rights activists from the AMDH and Forum for Truth and Justice (FMVE) gathered before the Parliament to demand trials for those responsible for past arbitrary detention, forced disappearance, and torture. Security forces violently attacked the demonstrators with truncheons and arrested about 40 persons. Security forces also reportedly confiscated journalists' photography equipment. After spending 1 night in jail, 39 of the detained protesters appeared before the court of first instance in Rabat the following day and were released that evening. The Government pressed charges against 33 of the demonstrators; the trial was scheduled for February 2001. The AMDH's president Abderrahmane Benameur, who was among those arrested and released, condemned the use of violence by security forces, characterizing such violence as "a step backward in human rights." On December 17, the AMDH filed a lawsuit in Rabat's administrative court against the Government for banning its demonstration. On December 10, the FIDH issued a communique, in which it expressed its "extreme concern" regarding the Government's suppression of peaceful gatherings.

Later during the weekend, in Rabat and other large cities, security forces again resorted to violent force to break up public gatherings by members of the JCO. The JCO had called for peaceful nationwide protests in large cities to demonstrate against the Government's banning of their newspapers and to demand the legalization of their organization. At the Rabat train station, security forces used truncheons to disperse violently assembled JCO members, and arrested dozens of persons. The authorities again confiscated photography equipment, including that of demonstrators and of a British Broadcasting Company journalist. The authorities charged 18 of those detained with holding an unauthorized demonstration. Their trial was scheduled to take place in January 2001. Security forces violently dispersed a similar demonstration in Casablanca on the same day, arresting hundreds of additional JCO demonstrators; all of the Casablanca demonstrators had been released by year's end. Of the released demonstrators, 22 were scheduled to be tried in early 2001.

On December 11, security forces used force to arrest members of the ANDC who had gathered before the Parliament to protest against Government inactivity regarding their unemployment. Those arrested later were released.

During the year, there were no new developments related to the police excesses in the Western Saharan city of Laayoune in September and October 1999, in which police used brutal force to break up demonstrations organized by students, unemployed graduates, miners, and former Sahrawi political prisoners. Some who were detained during the police violence were subjected to systematic beatings and other forms of physical coercion. Most of those detained were released; however, 26 persons were charged and sentenced to between 10 and 15 years in prison on charges of destruction of property during the protests. Despite appeals lodged by defense lawyers during the year, none of the sentences were reduced or overturned.

In the aftermath of the September 1999 protests, King Mohammed VI immediately replaced the governor of the province, relieved the local police chief of his duties, and dispatched military security forces to the city to help restore order. A new royal commission was dispatched quickly to the city by King Mohammed VI to explain to local residents proposed new measures to decentralize authority in the region, which would allow local residents more of a choice in their affairs, and to propose elections to choose members to a royal advisory council on the Western Sahara.

Despite these actions taken to restore confidence and order and to lessen tensions, renewed violence broke out in late October 1999. There were credible reports that police provoked the violence and there were further credible reports that police authorities unlawfully entered homes to arrest persons associated with the demonstrations in September 1999. Thirty-one persons reportedly were detained. Of these persons, 10 reportedly were released within 24 hours and the remainder released within the following 2-week period.

No investigation has been initiated into the excessive use of force by the police, nor have any charges against police been filed. There also was no progress during the year on local elections to choose members to the proposed royal advisory council on the Western Sahara.

However, there also were numerous peaceful protests during the year. For example, on February 4, 60 Sahrawi students organized a sit-in protest in front of the Ministry of Human Rights to protest what they claimed to be the illegal detention of 3 Sahrawis who were detained in December 1999 and accused of espionage activities on behalf of the Polisario Front (see Sections 1.b. and 1.e.). The sit-in proceeded peacefully. On February 18 and 19, teachers who were members of two different trade unions protested without disruption for 2 consecutive days the freezing of family allowances and teacher promotions. On March 4, hundreds of supporters and members of the NGO Forum for Truth and Justice, which was created by former political prisoners and their survivors, staged a sit-in before the notorious Derb Moulay Cherif police station to demand an accounting for and details regarding over 30 years of forced disappearance and arbitrary arrest. Police did not intervene. On March 12, two large rallies took place in Rabat and Casablanca that collectively involved over 200,000 persons. The march in Rabat was called by civil society in observance of the international day for

women. The march in Casablanca was a counterdemonstration organized by Morocco's two major Islamist groups. In spite of the large numbers of demonstrators and the political sensitivity of the marches, they both proceeded peacefully and without intervention by security forces (see Section 5). To protest government inaction on their behalf, 115 members of Group 314 staged a 48-hour hunger strike on March 17 and 18. The hunger strike proceeded peacefully, without any incidents or intervention by security forces. On May 3, journalists and human rights activists peacefully demonstrated in front of the Ministry of Communication against several cases of press censorship. On October 7, hundreds of former political prisoners, their families, and human rights activists peacefully demonstrated at Tazmamart, the notorious former secret detention center. On October 8, several tens of thousands persons peacefully participated in a march in Rabat led by the Prime Minister to demonstrate their solidarity with Palestinians.

On November 5, 1999, Prime Minister Youssef revoked an order issued earlier in the year by former Interior Minister Driss Basri to ban all public meetings from government-owned facilities unless they otherwise were authorized by the Government. Basri's decision triggered protests by human rights activists who asserted that such tactics constituted a serious violation of freedom of expression. Amid the protests caused by Basri's order, government spokesman Khalid Alioua stated that the Interior Ministry's decision had been "badly interpreted," and applied only to meetings in municipal council and administration buildings, not to the public halls that routinely are used by unions, parties, NGO's, and other groups.

According to Youssef's November 5, 1999 revocation, only a declaration of a public meeting would be necessary for public meetings to proceed. However, on November 25, 1999, several weeks following the Prime Minister's revocation of Basri's order, government spokesperson Khalid Alioua announced that—in apparent contradiction to the Prime Minister's revocation—both a declaration and authorization must be issued before public-venue meetings could proceed. Alioua attributed the Government's decision to a series of illegal sit-ins and protests in public spaces that had followed the revocation. Human rights organizations reacted negatively to the announcement. The OMDH issued a communique that criticized the decision as illegal. The OMDH cited the 1958 Public Liberties Code and Youssef's November directive in asserting that a declaration alone suffices to proceed with a public meeting, and that meetings may be prohibited only if deemed a threat to public order. Since the Government's November 25 announcement, local observers generally agree that the authorities indiscriminately apply the authorization rule, allowing those demonstrations to proceed that it considers inoffensive.

After violent police suppression of demonstrations in Rabat in October 1998, Basri agreed in December 1998 to recognize officially the ANDC, whose request for recognition had been pending for 7 years. Basri also agreed to grant members of the group 5,000 taxi licenses. Members of the ANDC also were invited by then-King Hassan II to a national conference on unemployment in December 1998. In June 1999, the Ministers of Interior and Employment toured the regions to instruct walis (regional and city leaders appointed by the Interior Ministry) and governors on how to take steps to reduce unemployment, and to listen to the needs of the unemployed. However, despite repeated meetings with the Ministers of Interior and Employment, the ANDC has not obtained official recognition, and the promised taxi licenses have not been issued.

The Constitution provides for freedom of association; however, the Government limits this right in practice. Under a 1958 decree, which was amended substantially in 1973 to introduce restrictions on civil society organizations, persons who wish to create an organization must obtain the approval of the Ministry of Interior before holding meetings. In practice the Ministry uses this requirement to prevent persons suspected of advocating causes opposed by the Government from forming legal organizations. Historically, extreme Islamist and leftist groups have encountered the greatest difficulty in obtaining official approval. Although there are over 20 active Islamist groups, the Government has prohibited membership in 2, the JCO and Jama'a Islamiya, due to their perceived anti-Monarchy rhetoric. Political parties also must be approved by the Ministry of Interior, which has used this power to control participation in the political process. However, individual Islamists are not barred from participating in recognized political parties. The last known instance in which a proposed political party failed to receive such approval was in 1996, when an Islamist group's application was not approved. The group instead was permitted to present candidates for the 1997 elections under the banner of an existing party. One Islamist party, the Party for Justice and Development (PJD—formerly the Popular Democratic Constitutional Movement), won nine seats in Parliament in the 1997 elections. In by-elections held in August, the PJD won two additional seats in Parliament.

During the summer, the Government prevented members of the JCO from gaining access to campgrounds and beaches for group prayer sessions, and arrested and jailed some of the group's members (see Sections 1.d., 2.a., 2.c., and 2.d.).

c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, only Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are tolerated in practice. The Constitution provides that Islam is the official religion, and designates the King as "Commander of the Faithful," with the responsibility of ensuring "respect for Islam." In 1996 a small foreign Hindu community received the right to perform cremations and to hold services, and other foreign communities enjoy similar religious privileges. However, Baha'is face restrictions on the practice of their faith. The Government monitors the activities of mosques.

The Government does not license or approve religions or religious organizations. The Government provides tax benefits, land and building grants, subsidies, and customs exemptions for imports necessary for the observance of the major religions.

Islamic law and tradition call for strict punishment for any Muslim who converts to another faith. Citizens who convert to Christianity and other religions sometimes face social ostracism, and in the past a small number

have faced short periods of questioning by the authorities. Voluntary conversion is not a crime under the Criminal or Civil Codes; however, the authorities have jailed some converts on the basis of references to Koranic law. Any attempt to induce a Muslim to convert is illegal. Foreign missionaries either limit their proselytizing to non-Muslims or conduct their work quietly. The Government cited the Penal Code prohibition on conversion in most cases in which courts expelled foreign missionaries.

The Ministry of Islamic Affairs monitors Friday mosque sermons and the Koranic schools to ensure the teaching of approved doctrine. The authorities sometimes suppress the activities of Islamists, but generally tolerate activities limited to the propagation of Islam, education, and charity. Security forces commonly close mosques to the public shortly after Friday services to prevent the use of the premises for unauthorized political activity. The Government strictly controls authorization to construct new mosques. Most mosques are constructed using private funds.

After 11 years of house arrest for refusing to acknowledge the religious authority of then-King Hassan II, Islamist dissident Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine was allowed to leave his Sale home on May 16. On May 17, Sheikh Yassine then received at his home leading council members of his Justice and Charity Organization, attended a Sale mosque prayer service on May 19, and gave a May 20 press conference that was attended widely by domestic and foreign media representatives. In February prior to Sheikh Yassine's release, the Government temporarily confiscated several newspapers that printed a 19-page memorandum addressed by Yassine to King Mohammed VI asking for the King to return to Moroccans the wealth that Yassine alleged the King's late father had stolen from them. On February 8 and 9, then-Communication Minister Larbi Messari claimed that the memorandum was not banned, that it was available on the Internet, and that the concerned newspapers were back in circulation. Messari stated that the confiscation was "incidental," and that censorship was absurd and no longer practiced. Four members of the JCO were arrested in February for distributing the memorandum in Tangiers and Ben Slimane (near Casablanca). All four were charged with violating the "sacred institution of the Monarchy." According to the AMDH, by February 7, the authorities had dropped the charges and released the four JCO members.

According to press reports in late May and early July, the authorities allegedly blocked the publication of two newspapers—Al-Adl Wal Ihsane and Rissalat Al-Futuwa—that were associated with the JCO, ordering printers to suspend their distribution. Yassine's books, articles, and audio cassettes were sold only at some bookstores, and editorials that had called for his release were published without impediment. The JCO has an active presence on university campuses and occasionally had organized protests of Yassine's house arrest. However, prominent members of the JCO are subject to constant surveillance and sometimes are unable to obtain passports and other necessary documents. During the summer, the Government prevented members of the JCO from gaining access to campgrounds and beaches for group prayer sessions, and arrested and jailed some of the group's members. In August two JCO members were sentenced to 3 months' imprisonment for their proselytizing activities on a beach in El-Jadida. During the same month, Interior Minister Ahmed Midaoui declared before Parliament that "we are one sole nation and nobody can impose upon others their own vision of Islam," and that "people go to beaches for recreational purposes and we do not have Islamic beaches." He also added that "we cannot tolerate the appearance of sectarianism in our society" (see Sections 1.d., 2.a., 2.b., and 2.d.).

The teaching of Islam in public schools benefits from discretionary funding in the Government's annual education budget, as do other curriculum subjects. The annual budget also provides funds for religious instruction to the parallel system of Jewish public schools. The Government has funded several efforts to study the cultural, artistic, literary, and scientific heritage of Moroccan Jews. In 1998, the Government created a chair for the study of comparative religions at the University of Rabat.

Since the time of the French protectorate (1912-1956), a small foreign Christian community has opened churches, orphanages, hospitals, and schools without any restriction or licensing requirement being imposed. Missionaries who conduct themselves in accordance with societal expectations largely are left unhindered. However, those whose proselytizing activities become public face expulsion.

The Government permits the display and sale of Bibles in French, English, and Spanish, but confiscates Arabic-language Bibles and refuses licenses for their importation and sale, despite the absence of any law banning such books. Nevertheless, Arabic Bibles reportedly have been sold in local bookstores. There were no known cases in which foreigners were denied entry into the country because they were carrying Christian materials, as occurred in the past.

The small Baha'i community has been forbidden to meet or participate in communal activities since 1983; however, there were no reports during the year that the Government summoned members of the Baha'i Faith for questioning or denied them passports, as had occurred in previous years.

There are two sets of laws and courts—one for Jews and one for Muslims—pertaining to marriage, inheritance, and family matters. The family law courts are run, depending on the law that applies, by rabbinical and Islamic authorities who are court officials. Parliament must authorize any changes to those laws. Non-Koranic sections of Muslim law on personal status are applied to non-Muslim and non-Jewish persons.

The Government organizes events to encourage tolerance and respect among religions. In April and May, the Government hosted the first meeting of the "Traveling Faculty of the Religions of the Book" at Al-Akhawayn University in Ifrane.

The Government annually organizes in May the "Fes Festival of Sacred Music," which includes musicians from many religions. The Government has organized in the past numerous symposiums among local and international clergy, priests, rabbis, imams and other spiritual leaders to examine ways to reduce religious

intolerance and to promote interfaith dialog. Each year during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, the King hosts colloquiums of Islamic religious scholars to examine ways to promote tolerance and mutual respect within Islam and between Islam and other religions.

In late August, the King declared in a nationally televised speech that 100 mosques throughout the country would be used as teaching centers to fight illiteracy. In the first (and pilot) year of the announced program, 10,000 citizens between the ages of 15 and 45 were to receive literacy courses on Islam, civic education, and hygiene. If successful, the program was expected to be expanded to include a larger part of the population in subsequent years. The King designated 200 unemployed university graduates to administer the literacy courses during the program's pilot stage, which began in September.

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The Constitution provides for freedom of movement; however, the Government restricts this right in certain areas. The gendarmerie maintains checkpoints throughout the country, at which drivers' licenses and vehicle registrations are examined for validity. Although checkpoints have been maintained in the same places for years, the degree of inspections of motorists has relaxed, while the emphasis on inspecting trucks and buses continues. In addition while there are continuing allegations that gendarmes demand small bribes to clear vehicles, press reports indicate that gendarmes found guilty of such behavior are punished. In 1998 the Gendarmerie Royale began a campaign to combat such abuses within its ranks. In the Moroccan-administered Western Sahara, authorities restrict movement in areas regarded as militarily sensitive.

The Ministry of Interior restricts freedom to travel outside the country in certain circumstances. In addition all civil servants and military personnel must obtain written permission from their ministries to leave the country. The OMDH and AMDH have compiled lists of individuals who reportedly have been denied passports or who have passports but are denied permission to travel. In February the AMDH reported in the French-language weekly *Quotidien du Maroc* on 33 past and previous cases in which the Interior Ministry has blocked the issuance of passports to former political prisoners. On February 26, the OMDH issued a communique protesting a lack of governmental action on outstanding passport cases. The OMDH contended that the Government, in resorting to arbitrary administrative delays, continues to harass former political prisoners who seek to resume normal lives. The OMDH also alleged that some citizens were forbidden by the Government to leave Moroccan territory during the year. The communique listed no names.

In March the investigative French-language weekly *Le Journal* reported on two cases of former leftist political activists and political prisoners who were unable to renew their passports. Pardoned in 1992, Abdellah El-Harri, the national secretary of a far-left political party unrecognized by the Government, discovered during a passport-renewal procedure that the authorities have sought his whereabouts since 1996. Despite numerous inquiries to the Government to determine the reason behind his particular status, El Harri reportedly had not received a response by year's end. However, he remained free to continue his professional and political life without hindrance, and is free to travel within the country. El Harri's deputy, Mostapha Brahma, reported similar difficulties. Brahma has been without a passport since 1994, the year of his pardon, and has received no answer from the Interior Ministry, Human Rights Ministry, or the CCDH regarding the nonissuance of his passport. According to press reports in November, a former prisoner who was convicted in 1996 for "threatening the sacred institution of the monarchy" and freed 3 years later, still was waiting to receive his passport a year after submitting a passport request.

According to press reports, before, during, and after their February 2 operation in the village of Tarnilet (48 miles from the capital) to remove striking workers from a water-bottling factory, a reported 1,000 security forces encircled and sealed off the village. Gendarmes erected blockades and strictly controlled access to the village. According to the AMDH, security forces maintained checkpoints near the village well after the February 2 confrontation with workers. The operation, which involved a large-scale military presence and reportedly was led by senior military officers, took place after a court order in January had ruled in favor of the factory owners, who had charged the protesting workers with interruption of means of production and obstructing the freedom to work. Dozens of strikers and members of the security forces were injured during the operation, in which security forces used rubber bullets, tear gas, and water cannons to remove strikers and their supporters from the factory and access areas (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., 1.f., and 2.b.).

After 11 years of house arrest for refusing to acknowledge the religious authority of then-King Hassan II, Islamist dissident Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine was permitted to leave his Sale home on May 16 (see Sections 1.d., 2.a, and 2.c.).

Moroccans may not renounce their citizenship, but the King retains the power--rarely used--to revoke it. Tens of thousands of Moroccans hold more than one citizenship and travel on passports from two or more countries. While in Morocco, they are regarded as Moroccan citizens. Dual nationals sometimes complain of harassment by immigration inspectors.

The Government welcomes voluntary repatriation of Jews who have emigrated. Moroccan Jewish emigres, including those with Israeli citizenship, freely visit Morocco. The Government also encourages the return of Sahrawis who have departed Morocco due to the conflict in the Western Sahara, provided that they recognize the Government's claim to the region. The Government does not permit Western Saharan nationalists who have been released from prison to live in the disputed territory.

The Government cooperates with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees. While Morocco has from time to time provided political asylum to individuals, the issue of first asylum never has arisen. There were no reports of forced expulsion of persons with a valid claim to refugee status.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change their Government

Constitutional provisions establishing periodic free elections notwithstanding, citizens do not have the full right to change their government. The King, as head of state, appoints the Prime Minister, who is the titular head of government. Constitutional changes in 1992, retained in the Constitution of 1996, authorize the Prime Minister to nominate all government ministers, but the King has the power to replace any minister at will. The Parliament has the theoretical ability to effect change in the system of government. However, the Constitution may not be changed without the King's approval. The Ministry of Interior appoints the provincial governors and local caids (district administrative officials). Municipal and regional councils are elected.

The Government of Prime Minister Abderrahmane Youssoufi is the first government formed from the political opposition since the late 1950's, and his 1998 appointment by then-King Hassan II marked a significant step toward increased democratization. With the support of the Monarchy, Youssoufi, who was sentenced to death in absentia in the 1970's but subsequently received a royal pardon in 1980, has declared his intention to modernize the administrative and judicial structures and to liberalize the economic and political system. Of the 41 cabinet-level posts in the Government that Youssoufi appointed in 1998, only 4 posts (Interior, Foreign Affairs, Justice, and Islamic Affairs) plus the Secretary General of the Government and the Minister-Delegate for Defense Administration were filled by holdovers from the former Government. In 1999 King Mohammed VI replaced one of the four holdovers, Interior Minister Driss Basri. In order to develop reforms, the King granted cabinet ministers a greater degree of responsibility for the management of their individual portfolios. In September Prime Minister Youssoufi consolidated his Cabinet to include fewer ministerial areas of responsibility. The Government now consists of 33 cabinet-level posts, but still contains 6 "sovereign" ministerial posts directly appointed by the King (Interior, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Islamic Affairs, Defense Administration, and Secretary General of the Government).

Morocco created a bicameral legislature in 1997. Fourteen parties have members in Parliament, and 7 are represented in the governing coalition. While opposition parties urged in 1996 and 1997 that all members of Parliament be elected directly by the citizenry, then-King Hassan II proposed in 1996 the creation of a bicameral legislature, in which all members of the lower house would be elected through universal suffrage and the upper house by various regional, local, and professional councils.

In June 1997, Morocco held municipal council elections, followed by balloting for regional professional councils. In the wake of the June 1997 elections, political parties accused each other of manipulation and vote-buying, and claimed government intervention on behalf of candidates. The Election Commission examined numerous petitions during the course of the electoral season in 1997 and recommended the reversal of over 60 municipal election results, including in Tangier, Khoribga, and Oujda, noted irregularities in four parliamentary races in Casablanca, Chefchaouen, and Fez, and called for the results to be set aside. The OMDH criticized the prominent role of the Interior Ministry in the June 1997 elections, as well as the numerous allegations of vote-buying, both by the Government and political parties, electoral list manipulation by the Government, and electoral card falsification.

In August 1997, then-King Hassan II convoked a special session of Parliament to ratify two laws creating a bicameral assembly, and, in the same month, Parliament unanimously approved these laws, which created a 325-seat lower house, the Chamber of Representatives, to be filled by direct elections, and a 270-seat upper house, the Chamber of Deputies, whose members would be elected by various directly elected professional and regional councils. There were widespread, credible allegations of vote-buying and government manipulation in the November 1997 legislative elections. The fraud and government pressure tactics led most independent observers to conclude that the election results were heavily influenced, if not predetermined, by the Government. All opposition parties criticized the Government, and some called for a boycott of Parliament. Two winners renounced their seats, alleging unsolicited government interference on their behalf. The Election Commission concurred that irregularities had occurred in two Casablanca cases and recommended that new elections be held in those districts. After a long appeals process initiated by the losers of the seats, new elections for the seats were held on August 31, as well as elections for four other seats throughout the country. The new elections followed the formal invalidation of the six 1997 election results throughout the year by the Constitutional Council. Press reports indicate that the August 31 by-elections overall proceeded more fairly than in 1997, despite allegations that two of the races involved some cases of vote-buying. Also in August, the Constitutional Council invalidated an additional by-election held in the Casablanca-Mechouar district in June that allegedly involved vote-buying. Despite the invalidations by the Constitutional Council throughout the year, the body continued to attract criticism for the alleged slow pace of its deliberations.

On September 15, Morocco held indirect elections to replace, for the first time since the body's inception, one third of the 270 seats in the Chamber of Counselors. After the polls had closed, Interior Minister Midaoui reported in a nationally televised press conference that various political parties had engaged in vote-buying and fraud. Criticizing the electoral corruption, Minister Midaoui claimed that his ministry had done everything it could to prevent fraudulent practices, including conducting investigations into 108 cases, at least 26 of which the Interior Ministry was certain involved fraud. The Interior Minister also reported that the Ministry had turned the cases over to the Justice Ministry for further action, and that the Government "is going to do its duty." However, by year's end, few of the cases involving electoral fraud had been presented before the courts and prosecuted. According to press reports, the Constitutional Council also had received several hundred grievances relating to the election from throughout the country.

Women are underrepresented in government and politics. There is 1 female minister delegate in the 33-member Cabinet. There are no women among the 325 members of the Chamber of Representatives, and only one woman in the 270-seat Chamber of Counselors. Women occupy only 84 out of 22,000 seats (or .34 percent) of local communal councils throughout the country.

In March for the first time in the country's history, King Mohammed VI appointed a female royal counselor. In August the King also appointed a woman to head the National Office of Oil Research and Exploration, an office created as part of the Government's efforts to exploit newly discovered hydrocarbon reserves in the east. In September the King confirmed the first-ever female ministerial appointment; she is to be responsible for a newly reorganized ministry overseeing the status of women, the first time a ministry has been charged explicitly with the issue. In October the King appointed the first woman to head the National Office of Tourism.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

There are three nationally organized and officially recognized nongovernmental human rights groups: The Moroccan Organization for Human Rights, the Moroccan League for the Defense of Human Rights (LMDDH), and the Moroccan Association for Human Rights. A fourth group, the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (CDDH), was formed in 1992 by former AMDH members. There are also numerous regional human rights organizations. The Government maintains close and collaborative relations with all of these groups.

Founded in the 1979 and 1988, respectively, the AMDH and OMDH have spent years struggling to end human rights abuses. During this time, they were subjected to harassment and restrictions by the Government. Some of their former leaders now occupy high posts in the Youssoufi Government, particularly in the human rights field. In May the Government accorded the two organizations "public utility" status, which confers organizations financial benefits as recognition of their serving the public interest.

In October the OMDH hosted a regional congress on protecting human rights defenders and promoting democracy in the Arab world. The congress was attended by Arab jurists and the Human Rights Minister. The congress called for constitutional reforms throughout the Arab world that would protect democracy and ensure public freedoms.

During the weekend of December 9-11, security forces throughout the country used violent means to disperse human rights activists, members of the JCO, and unemployed graduates who separately gathered in Rabat and other large cities to demonstrate for different reasons. On December 9, human rights activists from the AMDH and FMVE gathered before the Parliament to demand trials for those responsible for past arbitrary detention, forced disappearance, and torture. Security forces violently attacked the demonstrators with truncheons and arrested about 40 persons. Security forces also reportedly confiscated journalists' photography equipment. After spending 1 night in jail, 39 of the detained protesters appeared before the court of first instance in Rabat the following day and were released that evening. The Government pressed charges against 33 of the demonstrators; the trial was scheduled for February 2001. The AMDH's president, Abderrahmane Benameur, who was among those arrested and released, condemned the use of violence by security forces, characterizing such violence as "a step backward in human rights." On December 17, the AMDH filed a lawsuit in Rabat's administrative court against the Government for banning its demonstration. On December 10, the FIDH issued a communique in which it expressed its "extreme concern" regarding the Government's suppression of peaceful gatherings (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., 1.e., 2.a., and 2.b.).

Two new prominent national human rights NGO's, the FMVE and the ONPM, were formed in 1999. Created by victims of forced disappearance and surviving family members, the FMVE's principal goal is to encourage the Government to address openly the issue of past forced disappearances and arbitrary detention. It also lobbies for reparations for former political prisoners that extend beyond financial compensation. Created by lawyers, doctors, journalists, former inmates, and entertainment personalities, the ONPM's main purpose is improving the treatment and living conditions of prisoners. ONPM also supports penal reform efforts. Both the FMVE and the ONPM maintained collaborative relations and fairly regular contact with government authorities throughout the year.

In March the Moroccan Barrister's Association opened a human rights center in Rabat. The Human Rights Minister and other government officials attended its opening. The barrister's association plans to use the center to train lawyers in human rights laws and standards. The center is to undertake studies on reforming existing legal texts to ensure harmonization with international human rights conventions. Additionally, the center intends to track and monitor court cases and verdicts with human rights implications.

On December 8, the Government signed an agreement with the Democratic Association of Moroccan Women (ADFM) to cooperate on gender equality programs.

Amnesty International has local chapters in Rabat, Casablanca, and Marrakech. These chapters participate in AI international letter-writing campaigns involving issues outside Morocco. In September AI held a national youth forum outside the capital that focused on human rights awareness training and children's rights. The Government hosted a visit by AI secretary general Pierre Sane in June 1999, during which Sane met with senior government officials and announced that AI would consider Morocco as a site for a regional office and would hold its International Congress in Marrakech later that year. However, later in June 1999, articles in the French and domestic press reported that the Government had decided not to host the conference, allegedly because of fears that AI delegates would organize protests in Rabat concerning the human rights situation in the Western Sahara. The conference was not held. Amnesty International chose Lebanon as the site for its regional office, which opened in the fall.

In the latter part of the year, the Government and Amnesty International discussed and signed two cooperation

agreements on human rights education and public awareness. In September Human Rights Minister Aujjar received an Amnesty International delegation from Norway, which presented a draft 10-year program on cooperation for the country's new focus on human rights education. Amnesty International and the Government still were negotiating an official agreement on the draft program at year's end. The Government and the Moroccan chapter of Amnesty International signed a similar cooperation agreement on a human rights public awareness program on December 9, the 52nd anniversary of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

According to the MAP news agency, the Paris-based International Federation of Human Rights Leagues decided in March to hold its next world congress in Morocco, reportedly because of the country's progress in the area of human rights. FIDH officials visited the country in January to meet with Human Rights Minister Mohammed Aujjar, Prime Minister Youssoufi, and other government officials, and to discuss preparations for the congress, which was scheduled to take place in January 2001. The FIDH's world congress reportedly is the first to be held by an international human rights organization in the Arab world.

In Cairo in March, the Arab League Council chose the Moroccan academic and jurist Khalid Naciri as the next president of the Arab Commission for Human Rights. Naciri is to occupy the post for 2 years, heading the commission's review of human rights questions in the Arab world. Naciri was a founding member of the OMDH and once served as its president.

In October at its general assembly session held in Cairo, the Arab Human Rights Organization (OAH) elected two Moroccans to serve 3-year posts on the organization's Council of Secretaries. The two Moroccans also are active members of the OMDH. Also in October, the International Committee of the Red Cross, in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education and Boston University, conducted a pilot program to introduce the teaching of international humanitarian law to educators. The program is part of the Government's current efforts to reform the education system, including by integrating the teaching of human rights into the national curriculum.

In April U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson visited the country to attend an international conference on national human rights institutions and to open a U.N.-sponsored human rights information center. During her visit, her second in as many years, Robinson said that while there still were problems to resolve, particularly with respect to unemployment and the plight of women, the country had achieved "significant progress" in human rights during the past 2 years.

At the end of her stay, Robinson inaugurated the opening of a center for human rights documentation, training, and information. Cosponsored by the Human Rights Ministry, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, and the U.N. Development Program, the center is intended to operate as an independent entity and to provide a framework for dialog between governmental and nongovernmental bodies concerned with human rights. The center's work is to be directed toward persons involved in the application and implementation of laws related to human rights, including police officers, judges, lawyers, and representatives of human rights advocacy NGO's.

Prime Minister Youssoufi chairs a human rights commission that reviews cases of past and present human rights issues. The commission is composed of members of the Government, including the Ministers of Justice, Human Rights, and Interior.

The Royal Consultative Council on Human Rights, a 10-year-old advisory body to the King, counsels the Palace on human rights issues, and was the organization charged by the King to resolve cases related to persons who had disappeared. The CCDH is composed of five working groups responsible for promoting the protection of human rights. They include groups on penal law; prison conditions; communications with human rights NGO's; inhuman conditions of refugees in Polisario-controlled camps in Tindouf, Algeria; and economic, social, and cultural rights. In his annual Throne Day speech on July 30 and again in a December 9 speech before the CCDH in commemoration of the 52nd anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, King Mohammed announced plans to reform the Council's structures, responsibilities, and working methods. Critics of the CCDH welcomed the King's announcements on the recomposition of the Council, which they have long maintained lacks true independence and the political will to address openly and fairly sensitive human rights issues. None of the announced reforms of the CCDH had been instituted by year's end.

Throughout the year, the Human Rights Ministry held human rights awareness training sessions with educators and some police personnel. The sessions were directed at school inspectors at both the primary and secondary school levels. Up to 75 additional such training sessions are planned; the inspectors in turn are expected to transfer the training to teachers for integration into their teaching programs. Officials at the Human Rights Ministry state that some police officers and other enforcement officials also are being trained. The Government increased efforts to introduce human rights as a core subject of the national school curriculum during the year; in September Human Rights Minister Aujjar stated that the Government planned to establish an experimental phase-in program during the 2000-2001 school cycle, with plans for human rights to become a core component of the national curriculum within the next 2 years.

In September the country cohosted a human rights training seminar for representatives of Arab governments and nongovernmental organizations in the Arab world. The seminar included discussions on education in human rights, education in democracy, and the rights of women in the Arab world.

In January the Human Rights Ministry announced its intention to open, in collaboration with the Moroccan Barristers Association, a network of support centers charged with providing legal and psychological assistance to needy citizens. Targeted at children and women who have suffered physical or psychological violence, the centers are to be staffed by doctors, lawyers, psychologists, and teachers. Officials at the Human Rights Ministry say that the Ministry also intends to involve the participation of police officers at the centers. The

primary mission of the centers is to provide quick, effective, and direct assistance to those in difficult situations, with an emphasis on clients' legal rights. The centers were scheduled to open in early 2001.

Also in January, Mohamed Said Saadi, then-Secretary of State for Social Protection, the Family, and Children, announced his department's plans, in collaboration with the European Union, to open a national center dealing with women's issues. The center would provide training, documentation, and information on women's issues. Saadi also announced the creation of bureaus within government ministries that would be responsible for overseeing the respect for equal employment and promotion opportunities for women.

At the end of October, the Ministry of Human Rights hosted a conference in Rabat on "Human Rights, Cultural Identities and Social Cohesion in the Mediterranean Region," which represented a follow-up to a dialog initiated in 1995. Attended by Morocco's human rights community and European leaders, such as former Portuguese President Mario Soares and former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez, the 2-day conference focused on issues in the Mediterranean region such as human rights, migration, culture, and the impact of economic development on human rights.

Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Religion, Disability, Language, or Social Status

Although the Constitution states that all citizens are equal, non-Muslims and women face discrimination in the law and traditional practice.

Women

Spousal violence is common. Although a battered wife has the right to file a complaint with the police, as a practical matter she would do so only if prepared to bring criminal charges. While physical abuse is a legal ground for divorce, a court only grants it if the woman is able to provide two witnesses to the abuse. Even medical certificates are not sufficient. If the court finds against the woman, she is returned to her husband's home. Consequently, few women report abuses to the authorities.

The Criminal Code provides for severe punishment for men convicted of rape or sexually assaulting a woman or a girl. The defendants in such cases bear the burden of proving their innocence. However, sexual assaults often go unreported because of the stigma attached to the loss of virginity. While not provided for by law, victims' families may offer rapists the opportunity to marry their victims in order to preserve the honor of the family. The law is more lenient toward men with respect to crimes committed against their wives; for example, a light sentence may be accorded a man who murders his wife after catching her in the act of adultery. However, "honor crimes," a euphemism that refers to violent assaults with intent to commit murder against a female for her perceived immodest or defiant behavior, are extremely rare.

In February local police in the city of Azrou in the Middle Atlas region, initiated an operation against prostitution, which resulted in a series of arrests of prostitute, arraignments of brothel leaders, and closings of brothels that previously had been tolerated (see Section 6.f.).

Women suffer various forms of legal and cultural discrimination. The civil-law status of women is governed by the Code of Personal Status (sometimes referred to as the "Moudouwana"), which is based on the Maliki school of Islamic law. Although the Code of Personal Status was reformed in 1993, women's groups still complain of unequal treatment, particularly under the laws governing marriage, divorce, and inheritance.

In order to marry, a woman generally is required to obtain the permission of her "tuteur," or legal guardian, usually her father. Only in rare circumstances may she act as her own "tuteur."

It is far easier for a man to divorce his wife than for a woman to divorce her husband. Under Islamic law and tradition, rather than asking for a divorce, a man simply may repudiate his wife outside of court. Under the 1993 reforms to the Code of Personal Status, a woman's presence in court is required in order for her husband to divorce her, although women's groups report that this law frequently is ignored. However, human rights activists reported that in one NGO-sponsored test in the late 1990's, officials refused to order a divorce without the wife being present, despite offers of bribes. Nevertheless, women's groups complain that men resort to ruses to evade the new legal restrictions. The divorce may be finalized even over the woman's objections, although in such cases the court grants her unspecified allowance rights.

A woman seeking a divorce has few practical alternatives. She may offer her husband money to agree to a divorce (known as a *khol'a* divorce). The husband must agree to the divorce and is allowed to specify the amount to be paid, without limit. According to women's groups, many men pressure their wives to pursue this kind of divorce. A woman also may file for a judicial divorce if her husband takes a second wife, if he abandons her, or if he physically abuses her. However, divorce procedures in these cases are lengthy and complicated. In November 1998, the Minister of Islamic Affairs proposed the institutionalization of additions to the basic marriage contract that would outline the rights and duties agreed upon between husband and wife and permit legal recourse for the enforcement of the contract.

Under the Criminal Code, women generally are accorded the same treatment as men, but this is not the case for family and estate law, which is based on the Code of Personal Status. Under the Code of Personal Status, women inherit only half as much as male heirs. Moreover, even in cases in which the law provides for equal status, cultural norms often prevent a woman from exercising those rights. For example, when a woman inherits property, male relatives may pressure her to relinquish her interest.

While many well-educated women pursue careers in law, medicine, education, and government service, few make it to the top echelons of their professions. Women constitute approximately 35 percent of the work force, with the majority in the industrial, service, and teaching sectors. In 1998 the Government reported that the illiteracy rate for women was 67 percent (83 percent in rural areas), compared with 41 percent for men (50 percent in rural areas). Women in rural areas suffer the most from inequality. Rural women perform difficult physical labor. Girls are much less likely to be sent to school than are boys, especially in rural areas, where the quality of schooling is inferior to urban areas and demands on girls' time for household chores often prevent school attendance. Some families also keep girls at home because of rural schools' lack of facilities. However, women who do earn secondary school diplomas have equal access to university education.

The Government and the King continued to promote their proposal to reform the Personal Status Code in order to advance women's rights. Islamists and some other traditional segments of society firmly opposed the proposal, especially with respect to its more controversial elements, such as reform of women's legal status in marriage and family law issues. On March 12, an estimated 50,000 demonstrators marched peacefully in Rabat in observance of the International Day for Women and in support of political reform in the area of women's rights. On the same day, Islamist groups organized a peaceful counterdemonstration in Casablanca that drew an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 persons protesting such reform (see Section 2.b.). In October the Denmark-based Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network repeated concerns expressed by domestic civil society organizations late in the year about the future of the proposal to reform the Personal Status Code. According to the EMHRN, the plan to integrate women into the development process that the Government prepared in its discussions with civil society "has been pushed to one side."

According to press reports and reliable sources, in early July, an unspecified number of imams of state-administered mosques sermonized against the social work of Aicha Ech-Chenna, president of the NGO Feminine Solidarity, and attacked her character; during prayer services, one of these imams allegedly threatened Ech-Chenna. Ech-Chenna's NGO primarily focuses on encouraging the social reintegration of marginalized and abandoned single mothers with illegitimate children. Some opposed to Ech-Chenna's work have characterized it as encouraging prostitution. After the reported attack on Ech-Chenna's character and other threats, a group of domestic NGO's issued a communique in late July that criticized "any attempt to use religion and mosques to subdue the voice of women." The communique also held the Government primarily "responsible for anything that occurs within mosques." According to reliable sources, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs took disciplinary actions against the imam who had threatened Ech-Chenna, stripping him of his position and removing him from the mosque. In early November, at the beginning of the third annual "Solidarity Campaign" to help impoverished and needy citizens, the King decorated Ech-Chenna for her social work.

In January Mohamed Said Saadi, then-Secretary of State for Social Protection, the Family, and Children, announced his department's plans, in collaboration with the European Union, to open a national center dealing with women's issues. The center would provide training, documentation, and information on women's issues. Saadi also announced the creation of bureaus within government ministries that would be responsible for overseeing the respect for equal employment and promotion opportunities (See Section 4). The national center was scheduled to open in Rabat in early 2001.

According to a 1997 government survey, 76 NGO's work to advance women's rights and to promote women's issues. Among these are the Democratic Association of Moroccan Women, the Union for Women's Action, and the Moroccan Association for Women's Rights, which advocate enhanced political and civil rights, as well as numerous NGO's that provide shelters for battered women, teach women basic hygiene, family planning, and child care, and educate illiterate women.

Children

The law provides for compulsory education for children between the ages of 7 and 13; however, not all children between these ages attend school due to family decisions and shortfalls in government resources, and the Government does not enforce the law. The Government conducts an annual campaign to vaccinate children against childhood diseases.

The Government has had difficulty addressing the problem of child labor (see Section 6.d.). Young girls in particular are exploited as domestic servants. Teenage prostitution in urban centers has been estimated in the thousands by NGO activists (see Section 6.f.). The clientele consists of both foreign tourists and citizens. More young girls than boys are involved; however, young boys also work as prostitutes (see Section 6.f.). The practice of adoptive servitude, in which urban families employ young rural girls and use them as domestic servants in their homes, is prevalent. Credible reports of physical and psychological abuse in such circumstances are widespread. Some orphanages have been charged as knowing accomplices in the practice. More often parents of rural girls "contract" their daughters to wealthier urban families and collect the salaries for their work as maids. Adoptive servitude is accepted socially, is unregulated by the Government, and has only recently begun to attract public criticism. However, at the end of the year, the Moroccan UNICEF chapter and the National Observatory of Children's Rights (ONDE), presided by Princess Lalla Meryem, began a human rights awareness campaign regarding the plight of child maids. The campaign received widespread and extensive media exposure, including coverage in official publications.

Another problem facing orphans of both sexes is their lack of civil status. Civil status is necessary to obtain a birth certificate, passport, or marriage license. In general men are registered at local government offices; their wives and unmarried children are included in this registration, which confers civil status. If a father does not register his child, the child is without civil status and the benefits of citizenship. It is possible for an individual to

self-register; however, the process is long and cumbersome. While any child, regardless of parentage, may be registered within a month of birth, a court order is required if registration does not take place in that time. Abandoned children sometimes receive kafala (state-sponsored care).

Several NGO's, including the Bayti Association and the Moroccan League for the Protection of Children, work to improve legal protection for children and to help at-risk children. In December the French Government awarded Najat Mjid, Bayti's president of 17 years, France's prestigious Human Rights Award in recognition of her activism on behalf of Moroccan children. Also in December, the United Nations nominated Mjid for the post of Special Rapporteur on the Traffic and Exploitation of Children. There are several shelters in the major cities that provide food and lodging for street children, while other NGO's work to reduce the exploitation of street children and to cure those street children with drug addictions.

People with Disabilities

A high incidence of disabling disease, especially polio, has resulted in a correspondingly high number of disabled persons. Current statistics from the Government estimate the number of disabled persons in Morocco at 2.2 million, or 7 percent of the population. While the Ministry of Social Affairs attempts to integrate the disabled into society, in practice this is left largely to private charities. The annual budget for the ministerial department in charge of disabled affairs is only .01 percent of the overall annual budget. Even nonprofit special-education programs are priced beyond the reach of most families. Typically, disabled persons are supported by their families; some survive by begging. The Government continued a pilot training program for the blind sponsored in part by a member of the royal family. In March the Government created a special commission for the integration of the disabled, presided over by Prime Minister Youssoufi. The commission is responsible for developing programs that facilitate societal integration of disabled persons. Also in March, the Government organized a "National Day of the Disabled," which is aimed at increasing public awareness of issues affecting the disabled. On March 30, King Mohammed VI visited a center for disabled children in the Khemisset province and donated \$720,000 (7,200,000 dirhams) to a project to expand the center's activities. There are no laws mandating physical changes to buildings to facilitate access by the disabled.

On July 26 and again on September 12, police used force to break up protests by disabled, unemployed university graduates (see Sections 1.c., 2.a., and 2.b.).

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The Constitution affirms, and the Government respects, the legal equality of all citizens. The official language is Arabic. Both French and Arabic are used in the news media and educational institutions. Science and technical courses are taught in French, thereby precluding the large, monolingual-Arabic-speaking population from participation in such programs. Educational reforms in the past decade have stressed the use of Arabic in secondary schools. Failure to transform the university system to a similar extent has led to the disqualification of many students from higher education in lucrative fields. This especially is true among the poor, for whom French training is not always affordable.

About 60 percent of the population claim Berber heritage. Berber cultural groups contend that Berber traditions and the Berber language (which consists of three dialects) rapidly are being lost. Their repeated requests to King Hassan II to permit the teaching of Berber languages in the schools led to a 1995 royal speech authorizing the necessary curriculum changes; however, such changes have not been implemented. Official media broadcast in the Berber language for limited periods each day.

In 1996 a number of Berber associations issued a communique petitioning the Government to recognize their language as an official language and to acknowledge their culture as a part of Moroccan society. These associations claimed that the Government refuses to register births for children with traditional Berber names, discourages the public display of the Berber alphabet, limits the activities of Berber associations, and continues to Arabize the names of towns, villages, and geographic landmarks. The Government thus far has made no response to the petition, although Prime Minister Youssoufi acknowledged Berber culture as an integral part of Moroccan identity in a speech before Parliament in 1998. A full page of a major national newspaper is devoted on a monthly basis to articles and poems on Berber culture, which are printed in the Berber language, although with Latin script.

On March 14, the Government prevented a sit-in before the Parliament by two Berber NGO's, Tamaynout and the Moroccan Association for Research and Cultural Exchange (AMREC). The two NGO's filed a declaration for the sit-in on March 13; however, they received a letter later the same day from the Wali of Rabat banning the sit-in on the grounds that it threatened public order and security.

In late 1999, Tamaynout published a report on violations of the cultural rights of Berber. As evidence the report cited the refusal of the authorities to recognize Berber names and to use the Berber language in commercial advertisements, and threats by the authorities of physical abuse if shop owners displayed such advertisements in their establishments. According to Tamaynout, Massinisa, a related NGO based in Tangiers, was contacted by government authorities and threatened on the evening before its congress. The report also stated that the government television channel 2M did not broadcast any Berber-language programs, despite the fact that Berbers pay taxes for the channel in the form of payments for other government-provided services. In its report, Tamaynout asked for government recognition of the Berber language and an end to harassment of Berber associations.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

Although workers are free to establish and join trade unions, the unions themselves are not completely free from government interference. About half a million of the country's 9 million workers are unionized in 17 trade union federations. Three federations dominate the labor scene: The Union Marocaine du Travail (UMT), the Confederation Democratique du Travail (CDT), and the Union Generale des Travailleurs Marocains (UGTM). The UMT has no political party affiliation. The CDT is affiliated with the ruling Socialist Union of Popular Forces of Prime Minister Youssoufi, and the UGTM with the Istiqlal party, the second partner in the ruling coalition. It is widely believed that the Ministry of Interior has informants within the unions who monitor union activities and the election of officers. Sometimes union officers are subject to government pressure. Union leadership does not always uphold the rights of members to select their own leaders. There has been no case of the rank and file voting out its current leadership and replacing it with another.

Workers have the right to strike and do so. Work stoppages normally are intended to advertise grievances and last 24 to 72 hours or less. In May a report by the International Labor Organization (ILO) noted that there were allegations of violations of the right of association and threats to freedom of opinion and speech. The report cited arrests and jailings of union members as examples of violations of the right of association. The report also noted allegations that the Government hampered collective bargaining by its civil servants.

In addition to numerous short-term strikes intended to highlight grievances, there were a number of narrowly focused work stoppages during the year. During a February 2 operation in the village of Tarnilet (48 miles from the capital), security forces used force, including rubber bullets, tear gas, and water cannons, to remove striking workers who had blockaded a water bottling factory to protest layoffs of temporary workers. The operation, which involved a large-scale military presence and reportedly was led by senior military officers, took place after a court order in January had ruled in favor of the factory owners, who charged the protesting workers with interruption of means of production and obstructing the freedom to work. Dozens of strikers and members of the security forces were injured during the operation. Security forces also reportedly arrested random passersby in addition to more than a dozen factory workers. According to sources in the Government, the workers and passersby later were released without charge. The Democratic Confederation of Workers trade union, which is aligned politically with the ruling USFP party, reported that security forces also detained two of its regional delegates 2 weeks after the February 2 incident. The two officials reportedly were freed by royal pardon on May 1 (Moroccan Labor Day) while an investigation into the incident was still ongoing. The owner of the factory and others involved in the incident reportedly claimed that security forces resorted to force only after the protesters initiated violence against unarmed police (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., 1.f., 2.b., and 2.d.).

Arrested and jailed on charges of forming a criminal gang and setting a vehicle on fire during a national truckers strike in June 1999, Sadok El Kihal, a trucker and regional bureau member of the UGTM, contacted the AMDH after his May 4 release with accusations that he had been arrested, jailed, tortured, and falsely convicted by authorities (see Sections 1.c., 1.d., and 1.e.).

On November 27, security forces reportedly used violent means to break up a 5-day sit-in strike at a canning factory in the southern city of Agadir. The attack reportedly resulted in the death of one worker and injuries to eight others. Conflicting reports attributed the death to either police abuse or "natural causes." There were confirmed reports that police arrested 21 of the strikers, 17 of whom were women, and ransacked the striking workers' dormitories inside the canning facility. All but one of the strikers later was released. The strikers were protesting their employer's alleged negligence in failing to pay its social security contributions. According to press reports, the striking personnel reportedly obeyed Labor Code regulations in filing an intent-to-strike notification 5 days before the November 22 strike. Members of the striking workers' trade union and politicians affiliated with it called on the Prime Minister to initiate an immediate investigation into the incident and free those detained. According to the workers' trade union, within 1 week after the incident, the cannery already had hired 60 new workers to replace the strikers.

In August during labor unrest near Casablanca, the nephew of a private transportation company owner drove a bus into a crowd of striking workers, killing 3 persons and wounding 12, in an attempt to end the occupation and obstruction of the company's bus depot. The workers were demonstrating to have their salaries increased to the level of the new national minimum wage and to compel the company to make its contributions to the national social security administration, as required by law. Government security forces arrested the nephew and son of the owner, the owner himself, and local thugs the company allegedly hired to intimidate the strikers. The owner's daughter also was charged in the case. An investigation into the affair was opened, and the Palace announced that it would offer \$ 10,000 (100,000 dirhams) to the families of each of the victims. The AMDH and the OMDH issued a joint press release encouraging the Government to ensure due process and enforce the rule of law. Union leaders sent a letter to the King and the Cabinet criticizing the attack and seeking their intervention to salvage labor-management relations throughout the country. There were no further developments in the ongoing investigation by year's end.

Unions may sue to have labor laws enforced, and employers may sue unions when they believe that unions have overstepped their authority.

Unions belong to regional labor organizations and maintain ties with international trade union secretariats. The UMT is a member of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The right to organize and bargain collectively is implied in the constitutional provisions on the right to strike and the right to join organizations. Trade union federations compete among themselves to organize workers. Any group of eight workers may organize a union and a worker may change union affiliation easily. A work site may contain several independent locals or locals affiliated with more than one labor federation.

In general the Government ensures the observance of labor laws in larger companies and in the public sector. In the informal economy, such as in the family workshops-dominated handicrafts sector, employers routinely ignore labor laws and regulations, and government inspectors lack the resources to monitor violations effectively.

The laws governing collective bargaining are inadequate. Collective bargaining has been a longstanding tradition in some parts of the economy, such as the industrial sector, and is becoming more prevalent in the service sector, including banking, health, and the civil service. The wages and conditions of employment of unionized workers generally are set in discussions between employer and worker representatives. However, wages for the vast majority of workers are set unilaterally by employers.

Employers wishing to dismiss workers are required by law to notify the provincial governor through the labor inspector's office. In cases in which employers plan to replace dismissed workers, a government labor inspector provides replacements and mediates the cases of workers who protest their dismissal. Any worker who is dismissed for committing a serious infraction of work rules is entitled by law to a court hearing.

There is no law specifically prohibiting antiunion discrimination. Under the ostensible justification of "separation for cause," employers commonly dismiss workers for union activities that are regarded as threatening to employer interests. The courts have the authority to reinstate such workers, but are unable to enforce rulings that compel employers to pay damages and back pay. Ministry of Labor inspectors serve as investigators and conciliators in labor disputes, but they are few in number and do not have the resources to investigate all cases. Unions have resorted increasingly to litigation to resolve labor disputes.

Labor law reform is such a controversial issue that a draft revised labor code has remained under discussion among the social partners and in parliamentary committee for more than 20 years.

Labor law applies equally to the small Tangier export zone. The proportion of unionized workers in the export zone is about the same as in the rest of the economy, roughly 5 percent.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

Forced or compulsory labor is prohibited by royal decree, and when authorities become aware of instances of forced labor, courts enforce the decree; however, in practice the Government lacks the resources to inspect all places of employment to ensure that forced labor is not being used, and forced labor persists in the practice of adoptive servitude.

The Government prohibits forced and bonded labor by children, but does not enforce this prohibition effectively. The practice of adoptive servitude, in which families employ young girls and use them as domestic servants, is socially accepted, and the Government does not regulate it. Credible reports of physical and psychological abuse in such cases are widespread (see Sections 5, 6.d., and 6.f.). Forced prostitution occurs, especially in cities with large numbers of tourists (see Section 6.f.).

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

In October the Government ratified ILO Convention 182, which prohibits the worst forms of child labor. Abuse of child labor laws is common, particularly in the informal sector. Education is compulsory for children between the ages of 7 and 13, although not all children attend school. Special regulations pertain to the employment of children between the ages of 12 and 16. In practice children often are apprenticed before age 12, particularly in the informal handicraft industry. The use of minors is common in the small family-run workshops that produce rugs, ceramics, wood work, and leather goods. Children, particularly rural girls, also are employed informally as domestic servants and usually receive little or no wages. Safety and health conditions, as well as wages in businesses that employ children often are substandard. The law prohibits forced or bonded labor by children; however, the Government does not enforce the law effectively (see Section 6.c.). The practice of adoptive servitude often is characterized by physical and psychological abuse (see Sections 5, 6.c., and 6.f.). The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and with the support of UNICEF, is pursuing a strategy to ensure basic education and health services for child workers.

Ministry of Labor inspectors are responsible for enforcing child labor regulations, which generally are well observed in the industrialized, unionized sector of the economy. However, the inspectors are not authorized to monitor the conditions of domestic servants. The Government maintains that the informal handicrafts sector is difficult to monitor.

The Government lacks the resources to enforce laws against child labor, and there is general acceptance of the presumption that, to properly learn traditional handicraft skills, it is necessary for children to start working at a young age. In addition many citizens claim that having children working to learn a craft is better than having them live on the streets, where they sometimes turn to juvenile delinquency, prostitution, and substance abuse.

In September authorities in Fez announced plans to open four centers for the protection of children handicraft workers. Cosponsored by UNICEF, the centers are to provide children's rights education to child workers, their families, and employers. The centers are to take in street children and provide them with handicraft training and recreational opportunities. Health services for children also are planned for each center. One center opened in late September and three others were scheduled to open by the end of March 2001.

In 1997 the Government announced a new voluntary labeling system for carpet exports to certify that no child labor was involved in production. The system is cosponsored by German rug importers. However, the Government does not monitor nonparticipating handicraft producers that violate child labor laws.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The threat of a general strike in April led to negotiations among the Government, the Employers Association, and the labor confederations over increasing the minimum wage and improving health and social benefits. All three parties agreed to a 10 percent increase in the minimum wage effective July 1, raising it to approximately \$180 (1,800 dirhams) per month in the industrialized sector and to approximately \$9 (90 dirhams) per day for agricultural workers; however, not all private sector businesses had implemented the agreed-upon wage increase by year's end. Neither the minimum wage for the industrialized sector nor the wage for agricultural workers provides a decent standard of living for a worker and family, even with government subsidies for food, diesel fuel, and public transportation. Unions continue to appeal unsuccessfully for a minimum wage of approximately \$200 (2,000 dirhams). In many cases, several family members combine their income to support the family. Most workers in the industrial sector earn more than the minimum wage. They generally are paid between 13 and 16 months' salary, including bonuses, each year.

The minimum wage is not enforced effectively in the informal and handicraft sectors. However, as a result of the agreement reached in the April negotiations, the Government no longer pays less than the minimum wage to workers at the lowest civil service grades. To increase employment opportunities for recent graduates, the Government allows firms to hire them for a limited period through a subsidized internship program at less than the minimum wage.

The law provides for a 48-hour maximum workweek with no more than 10 hours worked in any single day, premium pay for overtime, paid public and annual holidays, and minimum conditions for health and safety, including a prohibition on night work for women and minors. As with other labor regulations and laws, these are not observed universally.

Occupational health and safety standards are rudimentary, except for a prohibition on the employment of women in certain dangerous occupations. Labor inspectors attempt to monitor working conditions and accidents, but lack sufficient resources. While workers in principle have the right to remove themselves from work situations that endanger health and safety without jeopardizing their continued employment, there were no reports of any instances in which a worker attempted to exercise this right.

f. Trafficking in Persons

The law does not prohibit specifically trafficking in persons; under the Penal Code, perpetrators are prosecuted either as scam artists, corruptors of minors, or persons who force others into prostitution.

Prostitution is prevalent and forced prostitution occurs, particularly in cities with large numbers of tourists, as well as near towns with large military installations. In 1998 a case was reported in which a girl allegedly had been held against her will and forced to work for 5 years in a brothel in Hajeb until she escaped at age 19.

According to the Party of Progress and Socialism's French-language daily newspaper Al-Bayane, in February local police in the city of Azrou in the Middle Atlas region, initiated a surprise operation against prostitution there. Coming after the nomination of a new director to lead the Interior Ministry's regional security force, the operation resulted in a series of arrests of prostitute, arraignments of brothel leaders, and closings of brothels that previously were tolerated. Al-Bayane claimed that Azrou is home to numerous brothels that lure vulnerable women in desperate situations (see Section 5.).

Forced prostitution involving Moroccans also occurs abroad. In 1999 a Moroccan woman who had been recruited to be a domestic servant in Saudi Arabia, escaped a prostitution ring there and informed police, which led to the arrest of her Moroccan handlers, an extended family group numbering about 40 persons. This same group of Moroccans had been involved in organizing similar such activities throughout the Persian Gulf region.

Voluntary teenage prostitution in urban centers has been estimated in the thousands by NGO activists. The clientele consists of both foreign tourists and citizens. More young girls than boys are involved; however, young boys also work as prostitutes (see Section 5.).

The practice of adoptive servitude, in which families employ young girls and use them as indentured servants, is prevalent and accepted socially, and the Government does not regulate it. Reports of physical and psychological abuse in such cases are widespread; reports of sexual abuse are less frequent. Some orphanages have been charged as knowing accomplices in providing these young child maids; however, more often, parents of rural girls "contract" their daughters as maids to wealthier urban families and collect their salaries (see Sections 5 and 6.d.).

Several domestic NGO's, as well as a branch of Terre Des Hommes, a Swiss-based international NGO, help victims of trafficking by assisting and rehabilitating street children, educating delinquents and runaways, assisting single mothers to become financially independent, educating youths and prostitutes about the dangers of unprotected sex, and advocating women's rights issues.

[End.]

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