



# Amnesty International Annual Report 2013 - Morocco/ Western Sahara

Publisher [Amnesty International](#)

Publication Date 23 May 2013

Cite as Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Annual Report 2013 - Morocco/ Western Sahara*, 23 May 2013, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/519f518453.html> [accessed 10 September 2013]

Disclaimer This is not a UNHCR publication. UNHCR is not responsible for, nor does it necessarily endorse, its content. Any views expressed are solely those of the author or publisher and do not necessarily reflect those of UNHCR, the United Nations or its Member States.

Head of state: **King Mohamed VI**  
Head of government: **Abdelilah Benkirane**

**The authorities restricted freedom of expression and prosecuted critics of the monarchy and state institutions as well as Sahrawi advocates of self-determination. The security forces used excessive force against demonstrators. People suspected of terrorism or other security offences were at risk of torture and other ill-treatment and unfair trials. Migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers were subject to attacks. Women and girls were discriminated against in law and practice. At least seven people were sentenced to death; there were no executions.**

## Background

The UN Security Council extended the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) for a further year in April, again without including any human rights monitoring component.

Morocco's human rights record was assessed under the UN Universal Periodic Review in May. The government subsequently agreed to criminalize enforced disappearances under the Criminal Code and enact a domestic violence law, but declined UN recommendations calling for a legal moratorium on executions and improved procedures for the registration of civil society organizations.

The UN Special Rapporteur on torture visited Morocco and Western Sahara in September.

## Freedoms of expression, association and assembly

The authorities continued to clamp down on journalists and others who criticized the monarchy or state institutions. The security forces used excessive force to disperse demonstrations.

- Abdelsamad Haydour, a student, was fined and sentenced to three years' imprisonment in February for "insulting the King" in an online video.
- Rap singer Mouad Belghouat had his one-year prison sentence, imposed for insulting the police, confirmed by the Casablanca Court of Appeal in July. He was charged after a video featuring one of his songs was posted on the internet. He was imprisoned in March and remained in prison at the end of the year.
- Tarek Rouchdi and five other activists in the 20 February Movement, which advocates political reform, were sentenced to prison terms of up to 10 months in September. They were convicted on charges such as insults and violence against public officials. Dozens of activists in the 20 February Movement were reported to be detained at the end of the year.

In August, police used excessive force against people demonstrating outside parliament in Rabat against an annual event marking the King's accession to the throne. A journalist reporting the event was also abused. In November, police used excessive force to prevent a planned demonstration outside parliament called by the 20 February Movement.

### **Repression of dissent – Sahrawi activists**

The authorities continued to target Sahrawi human rights defenders and advocates of self-determination for Western Sahara, and used excessive force to quell or prevent demonstrations in Western Sahara. They also continued to block the legal registration of Sahrawi civil society organizations.

- Police were reported to have injured dozens of people who demonstrated in Laayoune on 13 January in support of 23 Sahrawi prisoners. The 23 prisoners were held awaiting trial in connection with violence at Gdim Izik protest camp near Laayoune in November 2010. They were held in Sale prison, near Rabat, far from their homes. Many said they had been tortured or otherwise ill-treated in detention. Thirteen people, including 11 members of the security forces, were killed in the clashes that began at Gdim Izik and then spread to Laayoune.
- The Sahraoui Association for the Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State (ASVDH) continued to be denied legal recognition despite a 2006 ruling that an administrative decision rejecting its registration was unlawful. The government rejected a recommendation from the UN Universal Periodic Review to allow the legal registration of NGOs advocating Sahrawi self-determination.

### **Torture and other ill-treatment**

Torture and other ill-treatment continued to be reported, with detainees held for interrogation by the Department of State Surveillance (DST) particularly at risk. Following his visit in September, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture observed that torture tended to be more prevalent when the authorities perceived state security to be under threat. He noted that torture allegations rarely resulted in prosecutions of alleged perpetrators.

In October, the National Human Rights Council reported that prison staff continued to commit abuses against prisoners and that investigations were rare.

### **Counter-terrorism and security**

People suspected of terrorism or other security-related crimes were at risk of torture or other ill-treatment and unfair trials.

- Ali Aarrass, who was convicted of belonging to a terrorist organization in November 2011, had his 15-year prison sentence reduced to 12 years by the Sale Court of Appeal. A further appeal to the Court of Cassation was pending at the end of the year. He had been extradited from Spain to Morocco in December 2010 contrary to interim measures issued by the UN Human Rights Committee due to a risk of torture and other ill-treatment in Morocco. He was reported to have been made to "confess" under torture.
- In August, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention declared the detention of Mohamed Hajib, a Moroccan/German national, to be arbitrary, and urged the Moroccan authorities to release him. He was convicted of terrorism offences in 2010 on the basis of a confession allegedly obtained under torture while he was held in pre-trial detention and denied access to a lawyer. Mohamed Hajib received a 10-year prison sentence, reduced to five years in January. He was still held at the end of the year. The authorities did not investigate his torture allegations.

## **Transitional justice**

The authorities again failed to implement recommendations made by the Equity and Reconciliation Commission in November 2005, including ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, or to ensure justice for those who suffered serious human rights violations between 1956 and 1999.

## **Refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants**

Migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers were at risk of attack and ill-treatment. In September, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture reported a rise in "severe beatings, sexual violence, and other forms of ill-treatment" against undocumented migrants, and urged the authorities to investigate and prevent such "violence against sub-Saharan migrants".

## **Women's rights**

Women and girls faced sexual violence and discrimination in both law and practice. In November, the government began the process to enable Morocco to become party to the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. However, it continued to qualify its obligation under CEDAW to eliminate discrimination against women with the condition that this should not conflict with Shari'a law. The government rejected a recommendation under the UN Universal Periodic Review to revise the Family Code to give women the same inheritance rights as men. It remained possible for men to escape punishment for rape by marrying their victim.

## **Polisario camps**

The Polisario Front again failed to take any steps to hold to account those responsible for human rights abuses committed in camps under its control in the 1970s and 1980s.

## **Death penalty**

At least seven people were sentenced to death. No executions have been carried out since 1993.

Copyright notice: © Copyright Amnesty International

### **Search Refworld**

by keyword

and / or country

All countries



|       |        |
|-------|--------|
| Clear | Search |
|-------|--------|

[Advanced Search](#) | [Search Tips](#)

## Countries

- [Morocco](#)
- [Western Sahara Territory](#)

## Topics

- [Asylum-seekers](#)
- [Death penalty](#)
- [Freedom from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment](#)
- [Freedom of assembly and association](#)
- [Freedom of expression](#)
- [Migrants](#)
- [Refugees](#)
- [Saharawis](#)
- [Security situation](#)
- [Torture](#)
- [Transitional justice \(including amnesty laws\)](#)
- [Women's rights](#)