

## HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION IN MOROCCO

A Project of Freedom House  
Through the RIGHTS Consortium

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**Sixth Quarterly Narrative Report**  
**Reporting Period: January 1 to March 31, 2003**

### I. Summary

In October 2001, Freedom House, through the RIGHTS Consortium, launched a project entitled, "Human Rights Promotion in Morocco," aimed at strengthening the capacity of Moroccan human rights organizations to monitor, report on, and advocate for improved human rights. In June 2002, USAID granted a cost-extension of \$150,000 for an additional 10 months to this associate award agreement. In March 2003, Freedom House received a no-cost extension to September 30, 2003 for the project. The project's total budget is \$300,000.

Through this project, Freedom House provides training and on-site technical assistance to build the institutional capacity of Moroccan human rights organizations to monitor and report on human rights violations, as well as to undertake advocacy on specific human rights issues. The second phase of the program has the following objectives:

- Strengthen the knowledge of international human rights standards and mechanisms among a core group of geographically and organizationally diverse human rights activists/trainers and among Moroccan law students.
- Strengthen the ability of the core group of human rights activists/trainers and interested Moroccan law students to monitor, document, and report human rights violations.
- Strengthen the ability of the core group of human rights activists/trainers to conduct training sessions on the substance and methodology of human rights work.
- Encourage Moroccan youth generally, and Moroccan law students in particular, to work to improve the Moroccan human rights situation and to become involved in human rights monitoring groups.
- Promote communication and coordination between Moroccan human rights organizations.
- Increase the number of human rights activists and the amount of human rights work outside of Rabat and Casablanca.
- Improve Moroccan human rights organizations' public outreach initiatives, including media relations and human rights advisory services to the general public.
- Improve the recruiting and management skills of Moroccan human rights organizations.

This report summarizes program activity and results for the sixth quarter of the project.

## **II. Project Activity and Results**

During the reporting period, Freedom House focused on developing and implementing the following Phase II activities: (1) regional follow-on workshops conducted by the core group of human rights activists/trainers for members of Moroccan human rights organizations and for Moroccan law students on international human rights standards and mechanisms and on human rights monitoring, documenting, and reporting; (2) bringing two human rights defenders as part of the Freedom House delegation to the 59<sup>th</sup> United Nations Human Rights Commission Meeting in Geneva; and (3) providing targeted technical assistance to Moroccan human rights organizations. As demonstrated by the composition of recent activities, Freedom House places a strong emphasis on achieving organizational and regional diversity as well as a gender balance among its training participants.

### **A. Regional Follow-On Workshops for Moroccan Law Students**

During this reporting period, Freedom House planned for and implemented its series of four regional follow-on workshops for law students on international human rights standards and mechanisms and on monitoring, documenting, and reporting human rights violations. The workshops took place in four cities: on January 27 and 28 at the University of Mohammedia, on February 5 and 6 at the University of Fes, on March 4 and 5 at the University of Rabat, and on March 13 and 14 at the University of Tangier. Four Moroccan human rights trainers, all of whom participated in Freedom House's October 2002 "training of trainers" workshop, led the workshops. Drawn from the respective local chapters of the Forum for Truth and Justice ("Forum"), the Moroccan Organization for Human Rights ("OMDH"), the Moroccan Prison Observatory ("OMP"), and the Moroccan Association for Human Rights ("AMDH"), the trainers worked extensively with Freedom House's on-site representative, Abderrahim Sabir, in the weeks prior to the workshops to prepare the agenda and workshop materials.

All four workshops drew over 70 participants each day, including graduate and undergraduate law students, university professors, and administration staff. The trainers employed similar but flexible training materials and formats for each workshop. The training sessions used interactive and participatory sessions and were designed to impart a common understanding of human rights, an introduction of monitoring and documentation techniques, and a basic comprehension of domestic and international mechanisms to remedy human rights violations.

The first session of the first day of the training consisted of a session titled, "Toward a Common Understanding of Human Rights." In this session, participants were divided into groups and given 13 pictures of different scenes, such as a schoolhouse, an airplane, and a doctor. Each group was asked to decide whether the picture depicted a "need" or a "desire." After each group presented its conclusion, the trainers illustrated that most of the "needs" they had identified were in fact enumerated as "rights" in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The second session of the first day was designed to illustrate the importance of thorough investigations of alleged human rights violations. Participants were again divided into groups and given one piece of a larger picture. Each group was asked to describe its piece in detail. At the end of the

session, the entire picture was reassembled, and the groups learned that they could not comment accurately on a situation without seeking information about “the whole picture.”

The second day of training consisted of a morning session on specific international instruments, such as the Convention against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and an afternoon session on international instruments and domestic mechanisms for addressing human rights violations. At the end of the workshop, the trainers discussed the mandates of their individual human rights organizations and facilitated a discussion on ways the students could deepen their involvement in human rights issues and workshop ideas.

The workshops had the following immediate impact:

- In the workshops in both Fes and Mohammedia, students formed human rights clubs to promote awareness of and involvement in human rights issues.
- The workshops raised students’ awareness of Morocco’s current human rights situation. Although many students knew about the widespread human rights violations that occurred in Morocco’s past, a significant portion expressed surprise about Morocco’s existing human rights violations.
- The workshops provided a rare opportunity for universities’ highly politicized and markedly diverse communities to come together in an open but challenging forum. Students from Islamic organizations, activist associations, and leftist political parties worked together to discuss the issues presented during the workshop. The trainers stated that the common understanding and collaboration achieved by the participants was a remarkable achievement for the highly polarized campuses, and one of the most notable successes of the entire workshop series.

At the conclusion of each of the workshops, professors expressed considerable interest in working with Freedom House to develop future programming to build upon the knowledge, interest, and momentum created by the workshops.

## **B. On-Site Technical Assistance**

### **1. Targeted Assistance to Individual Organizations**

During the reporting period, Freedom House provided the following targeted technical assistance to individual organizations:

- **Forum for Truth and Justice:** Freedom House worked with the Forum on preparing an agenda and proposal for an upcoming international conference on the issue of the disappeared. Freedom House also provided guidance to the Forum on its organizational structure, discussing extensively the possibility of opening four regional offices to coordinate better the activities of its sections.

- Moroccan Association for Human Rights: In addition to training several local sections of the AMDH on professional human rights journalism techniques, Freedom House focused on helping the AMDH eliminate the political nature of their current press releases and produce more responsible, professional and accurate press releases.
- Centre des Droits de Gens: Freedom House continued to consult with the Centre des Droits des Gens in Fes, advising them on methods and techniques for their regular human rights trainings.
- Social Democrats: A new Moroccan political party, the Social Democrats, asked Freedom House to provide human rights training to its members. In response to this request, Freedom House conducted a two-day training in Tetouan, the agenda of which was similar to the trainings conducted for law students. Freedom House expects that the training with the Social Democrats will increase the chances that human rights issues will be considered and implemented into the party platform.
- Harassment of Journalist: Freedom House provided technical assistance and practical guidance in connection with a journalist who was harassed and physically attacked by security officials after writing an article about a Moroccan detention center. Mr. Sabir worked with the journalist to contact local human rights organizations and to publicize the incident as widely as possible through a number of press releases. In addition, Mr. Sabir facilitated contact between the journalist and both Reporters Sans Frontieres and the Committee for the Protection of Journalists, which led to additional press releases and increased attention to the incident

## **2. Freedom House Delegates to the 59<sup>th</sup> United Nations Human Rights Commission Meeting in Geneva**

Freedom House's Project Director in Morocco, Aderrahim Sabir worked closely with the two Moroccan human rights defenders – Mr. Youssef Madad and Mr. El Mustapha Soulaïh - chosen to join the Freedom House delegation to the 2003 annual meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) in Geneva. Mr. Youssef Madad is currently the assistant Secretary General of the Moroccan Prison Observatory (OMP) and Mr. El Mustapha Soulaïh is the President of the Moroccan Association of Social Science Teachers, a human rights trainer, and the chief editor of the Arab journal *Wijhat Nadar*. Using guidelines provided by Freedom House's, Washington D.C. office and methodologies developed from previous Freedom House delegations, Mr. Sabir worked with the two delegates on material for their roundtable speeches and general participation.

## **3. NGO Coalition on Anti-Terror Legislation**

Freedom House also supported the creation of and provided consultation to an NGO coalition to address anti-terror legislation submitted by the Moroccan government to Parliament in early February. The coalition included representatives from OMDH, AMDH, OMP, the Forum, and a prominent women's organization. Similar to Freedom House's spring 2002 project on the

proposed Moroccan penal procedure code, Freedom House worked with coalition members to analyze and recommend changes to the proposed legislation and discouraged them from immediately issuing broad public criticism.

Freedom House learned in mid-April that after vigorous debate and vociferous opposition from the human rights community, the Moroccan government withdrew proposed anti-terror legislation from the Parliament for further amendments. The withdrawal of the legislation was viewed by Moroccan human rights groups not only as a healthy sign for Moroccan democracy, but also as a significant positive development in their work.

#### **4. Ministry of Education and Nationwide Curriculum**

Through successful consultation with the Ministry of Education, Freedom House contributed to an important addition to Morocco's nationwide high school curriculum. Although the Ministry of Education had been developing new material on democracy issues for some time, it had never consulted with Freedom House or other NGOs actively promoting democracy and human rights in Morocco. Freedom House's Project Director, Mr. Sabir therefore initiated a meeting with the Ministry member and prominent educator in charge of drafting the coursework on democracy and citizenship. In its original design, the schoolbook would have included only a cursory treatment of human rights. However, upon Mr. Sabir's presentation, the Ministry of Education decided to include more material on human rights issues, including Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* survey and map, in the new curriculum.

### **III. Future Activities**

In the next reporting period, Freedom House will prepare for a training session on freedom of expression and access to information to be held in June or early July in cooperation with the National Democratic Institute, the Moroccan Press Union, and various Moroccan human rights organizations.