

Profile Of Political Violence, Human Rights & Makhzen's Kontrol In Morocco: Today & Yesterday

ABDER-RAHMANE DERRADJI

Reading Universitesi

ABSTRACT

Political violence and human rights are two inter-linked issues in world politics. While the former deals with forms, tools and patterns of usually unconventional means and of low intensity conflict, the latter seems to be the product of a counter-attack policy. It is also the result of an oppressive and repressive political establishment whether being a nation-state or an organisation targeting a group of individuals [political, religious, or ethnic] to prevent them, force or alienate them from a particular action which the established regime sees fit. Human rights' violation and censorship despite their worldwide proliferation are not therefore an exceptional case to Morocco, but only an example that needs to be highlighted here. This article is an attempt to historically discuss both politics under the control of the Palace [Makhzen], and human rights as well as the main political dynamic forces in Moroccan society since the seventies to date.

Key Words: Moroccan politics, human rights, Makhzen's ruling

Fas'ta Siyasal Şiddet, İnsan Hakları ve Mahzen'in Kontrolü: Dünü ve Bugünü

ÖZ

Siyasal şiddet ve insan hakları, dünya siyasetinde birbiriyle ilişkili iki konudur. Önceki kavram, düşük yoğunluklu çatışmanın genellikle geleneksel olmayan yöntemlerinin şekli, araçları ve modelleri ile ilgilenirken, sonraki kavram karşı-saldırı siyasetinin bir ürünü gibi görünüyor. Bu kavram; ister ulus devlet olsun isterse siyasi, dini ve siyasi grupları ilgilendiren bir örgüt olsun, insanları kurulu düzenin uygun gördüğü belli bir davranıştan engellemek, zorlamak veya yabancılaştırmak isteyen baskıcı siyasal rejimlerin bir sonucudur. Dolayısıyla, tüm dünyada yaygın olan insan hakları ihlali ve sansürlemesi, sadece Fas'a özgü değildir; ancak burada vurgulanması gereken bir örnek olarak ele alınacaktır. Bu makale, Fas toplumunda 1970'lerden bu yana devam eden Saray'ın [Mahzen'in] kontrolü altındaki siyaseti, insan haklarını ve başlıca siyasi dinamik güçleri tarihsel süreçte incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Fas siyaseti, insan hakları, Saray (Makzen's) yönetimi

Any political, social or economic injustices will automatically lead to unrest, uprising, or even a revolution. The logic of this dictum can be easily explained by that people are not born violent, nor not naturally resort to violence unless they are either, provoked or totally marginalised from political participation or economic reform programmes in their respective countries. In the case of the currents in the Arab and the Middle East region, in general and the Great Maghreb in particular, these push factors are also not a mere exception. Regardless of the nature of the established regimes in the said region, popular masses expect to live in total justice, harmony as well as economic betterment. They also expect to have a share not only in the country's economic wealth, but also, in political matters that is to say. They have – according to the law of nature– the right to decide or at least to elect competent representatives to speak on their behalf about their fate, protecting their rights of citizens while requesting on how to fulfil their national duties.

Historically, the socio-political situation in Morocco was distinguished by a set of a number of factors. The Kingdom faced a typical pattern of low intensity conflict during the seventies, due to the nature of the regime in place. It may however be important here to remind that during, for instance, the sixties and the seventies, the country went through a cycle of political violence that ranged from butter and bread violence (The economic level), to students' riots and ending with a ruthless, aborted-failed coup against King Hassan the second. From the beginning, Morocco as Kingdom has often been portrayed as a unique example. That the royal King and his close entourage or what is referred to as *Al Makhzen*, has always been the sole controller, and decider of the country's matters. From the opposition's side [legalised or underground], this nature is very well pronounced in their views. So it is rather logical to see, for instance, frequent and historically successive violent incidents of low intensity conflict in nature to occur inside the Kingdom. Jean Shaoul (July 1999) noted in '*King Hassan of Morocco: World Leaders Mourn A Ruthless Despot*' that "as early as 1965, there were violent student riots in Casablanca and elsewhere over plans to cut higher education. Arrests, imprisonment, exile and execution of opposition leaders followed. Mehdi Ben Barka, 'to remind' a prominent nationalist and opposition leader of the Union Des Forces Populaires, who had taught the King mathematics for four years, was kidnapped in Paris and assassinated. Israeli Intelligence experts have said that Mossad, the Israeli Intelligence Agency, helped with the assassination. The King's right hand man, the Minister of the Interior, Mohamed Oufkir, was widely believed to have been responsible but charges were never pressed."⁴⁵

This pattern of violence as observed and partly confirmed by the opposition, occurred in fact as a result of the King's harsh policy and the *Makhzen*'s control. The move provoked not only the popular masses, but also directly incited part of the King's entourage in the armed and security forces themselves. It is acceptable to believe for instance that during the sixties the Kingdom of Morocco was still living with the bur-

den of the ex-colonial legacy despite its full independence. That heritage and the insecurities of the royal Palace in place still required stronger stability. For example, not for long, and as a result of the Makhzen's attitudes, both the masses and part of the security establishment revolted against the King himself. Jean Shaoul (July 1999) further noted in this respect that "Hassan dissolved Parliament and instituted a state of emergency, wielding about power until a new constitution was adopted in 1970. For much of his reign, he suppressed opposition with an iron hand and sought help from the west in maintaining his rule. The CIA had him on their payroll for years." But probably one of the most spectacular events of political violence that needs to be mentioned here was the attempt on the King's life personally by some army officers like Ahmed Rami [who after the attack managed to flee the country] and other secret activists in the Palace.⁴⁶

J. Shaoul (July 1999) remarked that in 1971, at his 42nd birthday banquet for 800 guests at the summer Palace, 1400 armed cadets invaded the Palace, shooting indiscriminately. They killed more than 100 people, including the Belgian ambassador and wounded some 200 others. Hassan hid in a bathroom until the firing died down. Loyal troops crushed the revolt, killing more than 150 rebels and capturing 900 others. A dozen high ranking, conservative officers were later executed. The King appointed General Oufkir as Minister of defence. But the irony of ironies was when the same scenario repeated itself, but this time under the leadership of the King's trusted man, General Oufkir himself (Mustapha Tossa; July 1994). It was noted that a little more than 12 months later, four Royal Moroccan Air force F-5 fighters attacked the King's aircraft as it came into land at Rabat after a visit to Paris. The fighters continued strafing the runway after it made an emergency landing, until Hassan seized the radio and told them that they had been successful and the King was dead. The rebels broke off the attack and within hours, the leaders were arrested and shot by a firing squad. One of these was General Oufkir who had been involved in the earlier attack on the Palace. According to official reports, the General committed suicide, but his body was found with several wounds. After razing their Rabat home to the ground, Hassan had Oufkir's widow and six children banished to the desert where they were placed under house arrest and not released until 1991.⁴⁷

With the failure of General Oufkir's coup against King Hassan II and Royal retaliation against the coup makers and their supporters, serious opposition groups, perceived as a threat the Kingdom's stability, were since then merely present at the political scene. Amongst the most important activists, who emerged or flourished during the eighties, however, and which characterised the political life in Morocco, and soon would lead the protest and challenge the power of the Makhzen, one could cite a number of secular movements and parties alike, ranging from left to central and right wing political gatherings.⁴⁸

More important, however, it was the emergence of activities of the Islamic Justice Welfare Party, led by Sheikh Yacine which called for security and tight measures by the authorities. From now on, the cycle of political violence scenes would become more frequent, but would also be fluctuating in accordance with domestic as well as regional events as they developed. Those opponents remained, since then, publicly present despite the Kingdom's passed reforms and conciliatory policies intended to ease the tensions between the regime and the secular as well as religious opposition already formed. With the mid-eighties and the early nineties, security and stability became one of the major concerns for the Moroccan authorities.

These latter were mainly caused by a number of Arab Muslim's regional as well as international factors. Amongst the most important ones, however, one could refer to the effects of post-war policies in the Kingdom itself, including the number of failed coup attempts against the King himself, and their aftermath. Further, there was [still pending], the Problem of the Western Sahara, the Algero-Moroccan silent conflict, the rise of home and grown political and religious opposition, political discontent as a result of economic austerity as well as the lack of genuine political participation of the popular masses. Left wing circles from all denominations including trade unionists, students' continuous protest at universities over the lack of facilities and an overdose of bureaucracy and unemployment alongside the growing Islamic militancy [like *Islamiya Jihadia*] as a result of frustration and the regime's failure to honour the Sharia law at home with view to form an Islamic establishment in the country, were all challenging the Kingdom [*Ma-khzen*] to change and alter its policies. This was also well-illustrated during the Islamic protest against the government for not having supported Islamic causes abroad. Socially, too, conditions were critical and attracted - as a result - popular protest at various levels in society. George Joffe (African Contemporary Record, B442.) remarked that

"During 1989 and early 1990, the Moroccan social scene was dominated by two considerations - increasing international disquiet over Morocco's human rights record [which is in fact still continuing] and gathering social unrest over living conditions as austerity continues to bite the three Moroccan Trade Union organisations- the Union Marocaine du Travail (UMT), which is affiliated to political parties close to the government, the USFP's CDT, and the Istiqlal-linked UGTM- all emphasised their anxieties over worsening domestic economic conditions. The UMT is to be affiliated to the new trade union organisation created by the UMA during a meeting in Casablanca in December 1989, which the other two bodies have been excluded...the general unease over social conditions was underlined in February 1989, when the ten week strike by coal miners at Jerada finally came to an end. Some weeks later, at the start of March, employees went on a forty eight hour strike for a 10 per cent increase - as had been awarded to junior civil servants - while senior civil servants and army officers received considerable pay increases."

HUMAN RIGHTS AT GLANCE

For sure and by western standards, Morocco, which is not very much different from other countries in the region, and the Middle East in particular, was -and still is- seen by human rights organisations and civil liberties' movements as a country that does not respect human rights, or is doing little to improve them and freedom at home. The situation of political prisoners held with or without trial - as a result of libel cases, [like in Algeria and Tunisia] treasons as the Kingdom perceives - were so alarming in the late eighties, that the Kingdom had under some western pressures to release those who did not represent a direct threat to its national security. It was noted that 'at the international level the major social focus during the year was on human rights. In January 1989 King Hassan had suggested that he might make a gesture towards political prisoners. Two months later, two of Morocco's three human rights organisations - the Ligue Marocaine des Droits de L'homme which is linked to Istiqlal, the Association Marocaine des Droits de L'homme linked to the USFP, and the Organisation Marocaine des Droits de L'homme, which had originally been banned in 1988- called for a general amnesty for political prisoners, jailed trade unionists and exiles abroad. June 1989, the King granted amnesty to over 20 political prisoners; those released included 50 members of the secular left-wing organisations Illal Amam and the Mouvement du 23 Mars. (George Joffe: African Contemporary Record, B442.)

As historically observed, governments' amnesties in North African countries notably the Maghreb was still seen -until that time- either insufficient or not general as it had often excluded those whom the Maghreb governments see and perceive until now as a serious threat to their security and establishments. In the Algerian, Libyan, Tunisian, [before the collapse of their regimes] and Mauritanian cases, the threat tended to remain within Islamic militants' circles. As for the Kingdom of Morocco, this perception has been widened to even include former political prisoners or staunch instigators of the previous, failed coup makers against the King himself. The issue was that "the releases did not, however, include the veteran left-wing opponents of the monarchy, Abraham Serfaty, or the widow of General Oufkir. Nor did the releases included the USFP Central Committee member, Mohamed Ait Khaddour, who had been arrested in April 1989 on returning to Morocco for a conference from France." (George Joffe: African Contemporary Record, B442). This was in contrast to what King Hassan himself argued on his visit to Spain declaring that "There were no political prisoners in Morocco...that those involved had been condemned for treason...he had earlier argued that those described as political prisoners were all persons who opposed the monarchy, opposed Islam, or rejected Morocco's claim to the Western Sahara." (George Joffe: African Contemporary Record, B443).

Nonetheless and despite the King's pardon, International Human Rights Organisations counted around two hundred political prisoners who did not benefit from that Royal pardon. With four prisoners at al Alou Prison going on a hunger strike and others dying in August, the concern became international, and by December 1989, it drew the attention of the European Community, which had later on passed a resolution as a sign to put some pressures on Morocco calling it to respect International Conventions on Human Rights.⁴⁹ In response, Europeans individually and as a regional bloc (European Union) still use and in some instances abuse the issue of human rights as a card against North African countries only when relations get sour or their interests get threatened. This as Euro-Maghreb dialogue goes is still noticeable especially in between them and the European southern flank countries. While for instance France did not hesitate to harshly criticise former President Ben Ali in Tunisia, Qaddafi in Libya and Mohammed Abdel Aziz in Mauritania, including Morocco and Algeria, North African migrants and those of the second generation on her soil are still marginalised and deprived of their social as well as political rights.

The respect of International Conventions of Human Rights played as developments went along in favour of the Europeans' national interests especially, when forcing North African governments to pursue or retreat from a particular policy related to European interests. The years of the eighties and nineties were without doubt, marked by important aspects of political violence. Prior to the King's pardon, and violation of Human Rights as both National and International Human Rights Organisations confirmed - there were still around 400 political prisoners in jail than previously, and in the wake of January 1984, 1988, riots at Safi region, hunger strikes amongst these prisoners were also recorded. These events were also recorded during the incidents of Rabat and in Rabat civil prison itself over bad treatment and conditions. But it was in December 1987 when Islamic prisoners attempted an escape, and its aftermath, which had in fact marked this pattern of low intensity conflict. After clashes with prison's guards, the official reports counted only one death and several wardens wounded whereas, the exact number of dead and wounds amongst the inmates remained rather controversial. Like any other Maghreban regimes, the official declared estimates tend to be often very modest. This is partly due to the wider National Press's censorship especially when reporting on security matters.

In February 1988, however, hunger strike was also reported at Casablanca's Ain Borj Prison; and in 1989 events were repeated accusing those instigators of belonging this time to left wing radical movement Illal Al Amam [Forward] (George Joffe, *The Kingdom of Morocco: Confidence in the Future*, Ibid, B500). Those who were either captured or seized found themselves later on subjected to severe torture. Amongst those incidents, and which had publically, attracted the attention of Human Rights Watch and soon after the departure of King Hassan II himself was the case of Amin

Tahlani. Helen Zuber wrote in Spiegel Magazine (12, 2005) online that "...In eleven autumn days, a group of government thugs destroyed Maria Charaf's life. During those days, her husband was interrogated, tortured and killed at the hands of Moroccan secret Police...She remembers how on October 27th 1985, she -an active trade unionist...and her policeman husband Amine Tahani were arrested and hauled off to the Derb Moulay Cherif Police Headquarters in Casablanca. The Moroccan Secret Police had installed a torture centre in a building behind the notorious Police station, and it was there that Tahani was tortured to death. His crime? He was a member of the prohibited Marxist organisation Illal Al Amam (Forward), where he used words instead of weapons to fight for a revolution. He has spoken out against the repressive regime of King Hassan II, a man who called himself the ruler of all the faithful."

KING MOHAMMED VI & THE NEO-MAKHZEN'S RULE

With the arrival of King Mohammed VI after his father's death, tensions became to ease or at least at the beginning, in order to mark a new era, a new ethos and as many observers remarked a new system. Unlike his predecessors, the new monarch seemed to be more interested in working towards a new regime and system. As observers remarked, he believed in coalition government in political as well as social reforms. This trend was later on noticed by his acceptance of for instance younger Ministers, the reform of political parties and other social issues. Helen Zuber (12: 2005) further remarked that "... Unlike Bashar Al - Assad, who stepped into his father's tyrannical shoes in mid-2000, Mohammed has been demonstrated that he understands the signs of the times. He's had a modern western education, including law school in Rabat and a Ph.D. earned in Nice, France. As such, he has made major changes, including tolerating an elected Parliament. By confronting his royal family's past, he wants to secure the monarchy and democracy in our country, anchoring it once and for all in the universal principles of human rights. Abdelhay Moudden, a Political scientist at the University of Rabat and a member of the Commission, says his nation is on the right path and because of its particular history."⁵⁰

Probably there were two considerable issues, which the young King had introduced to ease those tensions and to regain popularity, which his predecessor father had more or less lost under the grip of the oppressive nature of his regime. These evolved around bringing a new but younger generation of technocrats and Politicians around him, and by setting up an Investigative Commission to act as a Court of Justice and reconciliation to look into previous human rights abuses, torture cases and murder under his father's rule. It is important to note that there were according to reports, more than 22000 victims of political prosecution to look into as well as, thousands of abuses and torture cases to investigate. Helen Zuber (12, 2005) confirmed on this issue, that

“The members of the organisation that promises justice and reconciliation meet in a remarkably inconspicuous house in Rabat...dozens of men sit on comfortable sofas in waiting rooms, while others stand in hallways, waiting to tell their stories to the commission...A doctor and a nurse are on hand to treat former prisoners or provide them with psychological counselling. Three young women sit in front of computer screens in a small room, typing out the transcripts of recorded victims’ testimony. Their work has already produced an archive containing about 4000 stories. It also names the torturers. Meanwhile, 300 documentalists and clerks work on clearing up the horrors of the past. More than 220.000 victims of political persecution have reported to the commission, and so far 200 have agreed to tell their stories publicly. While most of the victims are demanding financial compensation, some just want to know what happened to family members, have their names removed from employment blacklists or be allowed to renew their cancelled health insurance policies.”

At the higher level at the Palace, King Mohammed VI designated two of his former School mates; Mohammed Chraïbi, to run the Royal Office Secretariat, and Secretary of State position, and Zoulikha Nasri, who according to reports, her expertise lays in Social Affairs alongside another member, like Amina Benkhedra to run oil and minerals. In security matters however, it was reported that the King’s closer friend El Hima was amongst favoured trustworthy individuals and who is now also seen as the most powerful man than the nominated, Interior Minister, Mustapha Sahel, who had served as a former Budget Minister. The fact was that “El Hima still controls parts of Basri’s former security apparatus and fills an important niche in the power structure. Some suspect that General Hamidou Laanigri, head of the Direction Generale de la Surete Nationale (DGSN), is past the peak of his power, along with his protégé at the Direction de la Surete du Territoire DST, Ahmed Harari and rivals such as General Hosni Benslimane (whose stock has declined since allegations surfaced that he had some connection with the murder of Mehdi Ben Barka 40 years ago.” (Africa Confidential, April 15th 2005, p.5. For further information refer to Africa Confidential Vol.44, No.17).

Royal pardon of political prisoners and others within opposition circles, including a reconciliatory move towards Islamic activists, did not prevent clashes and instability in the near future within the Kingdom. The political, religious as well as the socio-economic protests [bread and butter demands] were in fact kept frequent. And also there were the ‘Islamist groups, at least the moderates’, which re-gained their strength especially after the departure of King Hassan II and also, as a result of their backing of Mohammed VI against his rival cousin Moulay Hisham Ben Abdallah. But this support would - as we are going to investigate later on- soon fade away. Generally, alongside the ‘Islamists’, there were the radical left wing movements either individually or in bloc as well as Western Sahara advocates who had probably remained the most preoccupying torments for the new King to solve and settle. With the exclusion of the hard

core communists who tended to lately activate their power, that is seen today, as both seasonal and fluctuating, there are currently the Islamic hard core militants [like, the Islamiya Jihadiya] which became not only the main serious threat to national security but also the prime concern for the King himself especially, after the Algerian Islamic move and transfer into Al Qaeda, or what became termed as Al Qaeda in the Arab Islamic Maghreb [AQIM]. But in order to tackle those serious issues, the young King had a new approach and a strategy of reconciliation to implement at all levels. This has also, been dictated by the new system and developments in the region.⁵¹

Further, and back into the nineties, there were reassurances of other politicians, officials as well as individuals from the Islamic party itself who endorsed this democratic debate, rather than violence by giving a number of justifications and the different nature as well as the historical characteristics of the Kingdom of Morocco. For instance, this was the case of the Deputy Secretary General of the Popular Constitutional Democratic Movement who talked of impossibility of Algerian Islamic extremism affecting Morocco, whereas the Islamic official Abdul Elah Bankir remarked that the Islamic opposition was neither negative, nor a threat to Morocco's security, and that the Kingdom had different history and experience than Algeria. (Arabic News.com: *Opposition is not a Threat to Security says official, Morocco, Politics, 27.06.1998*). But as regional and international events developed in mainly the Arab Middle Eastern and Islamic countries, the impact was very much felt in Morocco as well as in the Maghreb. The years of 2000s onwards confirmed in contrast that all the calculations put on Morocco to remain stable due to the young King reforms, proved totally wrong and different. The deadly suicide operations which rocked into the heart of Moroccan cities sowing both a climate of fear and terror and insecurity proved that Morocco was neither different as perceived, nor immune to get its share of terrorism and contrary, to what was projected. The reality of the Maghreb lies also in linkages of internal as well as regional currents. The prolonged euphoria of Morocco being stable for a while and not getting - what some Moroccan advocates believed - the Algerian contagion proved to be only short-lived. With the advent of social networking, and the changes in tools of protest had directly affected the idea of stability in the said region. Also, that the security threat of the established status-quo became not only shared by the Maghreb regimes alone, but it also stretched to the African Sahel countries, including the South European flank countries. So, with the shared perceived threat of 'Islamist terrorism' quick response to the USA's appeal to join the alliance individually, and in bloc to fight *International Terrorism*, became soon a case in point.

On the other hand, from Islamic militants' point of view, in contrast, radicalisation and militancy became more or less uncontrollable. This grew especially after the failure of Arab governments to fully respect human rights and civil liberties, after the failure to introduce genuine democratic debate far from the authorities' pressures, and more important after total ignorance of appeals to respect Islamic values and imple-

mentation of full Sharia law in some instances. In practical terms, many frustrated youngsters who migrated to Europe, either illegally to enforce those who overstayed their students' visas joined the ranks of either organised crime, Islamic militants, or simply remained to form the backbone of future opposition groups through social networking. As for those still tormented inside their countries, some found grounds to express their anger and frustration within the ranks of underground crime or simply enforced Al Qaeda in the Arab Islamic Maghreb, AQIM previously, although currently AQIM became ineffective in attracting new recruits.

Further, and amongst those who embraced militancy, found suitable grounds for their ideals that promised their future under an *Islamic State* establishment where real Justice and fairness would be for all. The project to fully establish such a programme as those groups thought had intentionally been either ignored or totally rejected. And as a result of the further, pro-Western attitudes of many Arab and Islamic leaders as well as their failed policy reforms, the incitement and resort to crude violence became the ultimate answer. Soon, as events developed, a tailor-made fatwas and interpreted Jihad alongside terror campaigns became not only frequent in some instances, but also intensified in a number of the said countries where suicide and bombing against even civilians and government symbols became justified since the targeted were already perceived as infidels, or traitors to the Islamic cause. In the Kingdom of Morocco, however, this did not take longer to materialise. For instance after the 2003 bombings, (Owen Clegg, Dramatic day of Moroccan attacks, BBC News 2003) government security forces retaliated with massive arrests and crackdown on all whom it perceived as militants. But soon, as a result, and under the pretext of the war against *International Terrorism*, the Kingdom found itself embroiled into a barrage of Human Rights' abuses, which led it further to international criticism mainly from western as well as Human Rights Organisations. (Africa Confidential, April 15th 2005, 5).⁵²

For instance, in June 2006, Moroccan security forces launched one of the biggest crackdowns against the Islamic Party opposition members. Military Photos.net noted that "Security forces have arrested more than 500 members of all Adl Wal Ihsan (*Justice & Charity*) since late May after it launched an "Open Doors" campaign to recruit outside traditional areas such as mosques and Universities. Some were beaten and nearly all were quickly released. Al Adl spokesman Fathallah Arslane told Reuters that 45 group activists were arrested in the town of Bouarfa in Northeast Morocco on Tuesday night before being set free in the early hours of the morning. He said 43 Al Adl members were rounded up earlier in Oujda and Nador, also in the Northeast, among them the group's second-in command Mohammed Darif, an Islamism specialist at Hassan II University in Mohammedia near Casablanca...Arslane said "The authorities want to muzzle us." (Military Photo.net, Morocco launches Crackdown against biggest opposition party, 14.06.2006). The crackdown did not in fact stop by fear that those spared or still at large might retaliate

in revenge through spectacular and random bombing. So pre-emptively, the authorities went ahead with their massive arrest campaign. Since Casablanca bombing attacks of May 16th 2003 and just after Madrid's on May 11th 2004 the Moroccan government took severe measures against any Islamic groups whether perceived as militants or simple activists. (Mar Roman, Madrid Bombing Suspect Denies Guilt, Associated Press, 15/02/2007). This securitarian policy, still in place in most Arab Middle Eastern countries, was further well adopted and maintained in Morocco especially after the 7th July London bombing of 2005. It became later on, also, very apparent to the Moroccan security officials especially when links were found between some Moroccan militants and the Al Qaeda network. (Owen Clegg, Dramatic day of Moroccan attacks, BBC News 2003).

The Madrid incidents on May 11th where ten bomb attacks resulted into 191 people killed and over 600 wounded as well as the implication of some Moroccans in the attacks gave further indices to the Kingdom of Morocco of the seriousness of the situation and the threat of Moroccan Islamic activists. (Eric, Marquardt, Al Qaeda's Proliferating Ideology: August: 2005). So in response, like its neighbouring country, Algeria, it further doubled surveillance as well as security into the country. For example on September 28th 2003, it retaliated with a series of arrests and massive trials. It was reported that "Anti-terrorist Judges in Rabat handed down sentences of six to 20 years to eight men for belonging to an organisation called the Moroccan Islamic combatant group. Another 10 were sentenced to up to 12 years on charges of criminal association with intent to carry out terrorist acts. The 10 included a man with dual UK-Moroccan nationality, whose British wife vowed to campaign for his release. The eight convicted members of the Moroccan Islamic combatant group were found guilty of training in guerrilla warfare in Afghanistan and receiving support from Al Qaeda to attack American and Jewish targets in Morocco... The other 10 were accused of belonging to a group planning terrorist attack under the umbrella of Salafia Jihadia, the organisation blamed for the Casablanca bombings. All had denied all the charges... Human rights groups have criticised the speed with which the cases of more than 100 suspected Islamists have been handled. There has also been criticism of the court's failure to test police evidence against the suspects in court by calling witnesses." (BBC News / Africa, Sunday September 28th 2003). With international links and the Al Qaeda network already franchised, Morocco, like the other, Maghreb states, found itself on the other hand, directly, involved in the global fight against *International Terrorism* and siding with the US and its allies. But on the other, it tried to remedy the problem through a local campaign while attempting to integrate those whom the Kingdom perceived as Islamic moderates into national politics. But due to the harsh trials of those suspects in the Casablanca suicide bombings, which occurred according to some reports, with less evidence, or genuine witnesses, Morocco found itself again subject to direct criticism by not only human rights movements, as said, but also by the Moroccan Islamic Party of Justice

and Development (PJD). (Ilhem, Rachidi: *Shaken by Attacks, Morocco Cracks Down on Militants*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 27/08/2003).⁵³

The unprecedented suicide bombing attacks in Morocco had in fact occurred only three months after Osama Bin Laden, Al Qaeda's leader accused the Kingdom of Morocco as being an apostate state and as reports had further confirmed, just a few days after the Riyadh attacks in Saudi Arabia. This open criticism was read by some observers as a warning by Al Qaeda to Morocco, making it its second target after Saudi Arabia in its forthcoming attacks. In contrast, the Moroccan authorities, which did not take the threat seriously, were taken as it seemed by a real surprise. This tactic became henceforth, routinely, pursued during future, coming attacks on the Algerian soil by Al Qaeda in the Arab Islamic Maghreb, in 2006 and 2007 respectively. In the Moroccan case, however, the operation seemed to have very well been pre-planned on May 16th by the terrorists, but also, very unpredictable to the Moroccan authorities until when suddenly "...Five coordinated terrorist attacks took place in Casablanca, the country's largest city, hitting two international restaurants, a hotel, and two Jewish centres. Thirty-three people and a dozen suicide bombers were killed. The bombers were all Moroccans, but they belonged to the Salafia, an underground movement close to Al Qaeda created by former Afghanistan fighters in the 1990s."⁵⁴ Strategically, the impact of those attacks and their aftermath succeeding the massive trials that followed suit was very bad on other, Moroccan Islamic groups like, the Islamic Party for Justice and Development despite its leaders strongly, denounced violence and its disassociation from the Salafiya Jihadia Movement.⁵⁵

But despite government pressures, Muslim activists kept their protest campaign on sight whilst maintaining their social and religious demands. For instance, in its daily Attajdid Newspaper (*The Movement for Unification and Reform* (MUR) criticised Jews and attacked alcohol stores while appealed for their closure including other immoral places. Reformist as it appeared, the *Islamic Party for Justice and development* had in fact practically failed in attracting younger militant recruits and transforming them into 'peaceful' moderates.

CONCLUSION

Further, that the realities of current, Moroccan Islam it seemed had also grown bigger than expected to the degree of escaping government's control. Islamic militancy, like in any other Muslim country, which grew out of frustration as a result of the failure of local governments in providing genuine reform programmes, and respect of Islamic precepts and morals, is getting today, less secretive than before especially, under the current advent of Al Qaeda in the greater Maghreb and the Desert Sahel. The Libyan instability, and other Middle Eastern colourful revolts, despite their distinctions, including social networking tools [like face-book, twitter and the alike] seemed to have

played their part in provoking stability into the Kingdom too.⁵⁶ Social, political as well as economic injustices alongside religious dis-respect and alienation had also all promoted radical ideas and further encouraged extremism including terrorism to flourish throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds. It will therefore be neither counter-violence, [Shoot to Kill as was for example adopted by the UK against the IRA in the eighties but failed] nor securitarian policy that would bring stability and control to the said countries. The Libyan case, the Tunisian example, the Egyptian as well as others in the extended Middle East further confirmed that security policy would not fully cure unrests or guarantee total stability. Algeria which has been fighting its way to eradicate terror networks seemed to have also failed to fully accomplish its mission despite its success in relatively maintaining stability. The daily and seasonal current, terror operations which cost the country a number of lives and infrastructures' damage are only cases to further confirm. For example, the successive suicide attacks in 2011 and the lately assault on one of its prestigious Military Cherchell Academy is another blow that security and counter-terrorism policies alone would only provisionally guarantee full stability. (Attef Kdadra, El Khabar Online Newspaper, 28/08/2011).

This security policy as had been observed in a number of countries to eradicate terrorism and terror networks has also its setbacks. Its use and abuse had most of the time embroiled its adoptees into the mud of human rights' violation and expose them not only locally but also internationally. Human rights watch and similar world organisations became also tools of new challenges for nation-states to confront and deal with. The Guantanamo detainees, the torture and kidnapping of other suspects, the Iraqi Abu Ghrib Prison scenario under the US and allies are in fact good examples to also illustrate the picture here. On the other hand, it is important to also remind the case of the Maghreb states, and human rights issues too. For example how the fight against '*International Terrorism*' played well in favour of Maghreb leaders at least, for some for a while to firmly stick to power and suffocate rights, media or any literature that incites, encourages or helps in criticising government policies, or any other acts, judged as a threat to national security. (Michael J. Willis: noted in *Islamism, Democratisation and Disillusionment: Morocco's Legislative Elections of 2007*) noted that "...Many non-democratic and even repressive states in the Middle East – notably Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria - have exploited this mistaken view to persuade western governments that they are democratising. To be fair, many Western governments are probably aware of this but are willing to publicly go along with the deception because the regimes in place provide more valuable services such as (in the case of Tunisia and Algeria) allies in the 'War on Terror' or, in the case of Egypt, a peace treaty with Israel."

For sure, the war against *International Terrorism*, as it is witnessed today throughout the world, will in fact fail to bring back normality and permanent stability to the affected countries as being witnessed in the wake of current, Arab Spring. It is also wise

to add that the current anti-terrorism acts throughout the world, became henceforth a real norm rather than an exception for countries to adopt as a result of dramatic paranoiac security policies. Whether real or exaggerated, this became almost a vogue policy for nation-states with no exception. The bitter truth in contrast is that neither military harsh, policy responses, nor its diplomatic backing will in fact, win over the currently, franchised terror groups and Al Qaeda worldwide. The genuine wise policy would alternatively be permissible in the Great Maghreb case only, through a set of genuine, reform-programmes as well as proper national reconciliation and dialogue that would also seriously consider the punishment of those already in power and who are now accused of a number of diverse crimes.

The current popular disturbances and other forms of low intensity conflict that occurred in current Tunisia (Sidi Bouzid, Tala and other regions in December and January 2010-2011) and the Algerian ones in January 2010 and August 2011 in Algiers, Jelfa, and other regions) as well as the Libyan radical revolt [Although partially, orchestrated from abroad] are in fact stronger cases in point. One should also not disregard neighbouring shaky regimes throughout the Middle East where triggered, spontaneous *Popular Intifada Styles* are now all thinkable due to the strong nepotism, favouritism, social injustices as well as, power supremacy by the same ruling elites in place. But under the current *Liberalised Autocracy* systems, where real democratisation is absent, the solution would remain pending unless mass demonstrations would be fully, or partially, transformed into real popular uprisings, and these would also be at a price, like in current fragmented, Libya and Yemen and unstable, Tunisia, Syria and Egypt.

The other challenging problem, for the younger Moroccan King to settle and which is still pending, is the *Western Sahara Problem*. A crisis, which has been inherited, but has ever since remained a complicated issue especially when it directly involved neighbouring Algeria⁵⁷ and currently after the popular uprisings during the 2010 Layoun massacres, and the 2011 Dekhla mass arrests of Sahraoui activists. It is however permissible to question for instance, why does Morocco strongly stick to the Western Sahara issue whilst being less demanding of other Moroccan territories, like Ceuta and Mila, or even the Leila Islands, which are all still occupied by Colonial Spain?

We believe that the topic requires both research and thorough historical investigation. But in short, it can be asserted that the Sahara problem would remain not only an obstacle in the relaxation of Algero-Moroccan relations, but also would block any future advent of the Arab Maghreb Union to get successfully established. Also, from the Sahraoui side, the armed struggle, although thinkable, would be - if the Polisario resumed it - at a heavier price since neither Algeria, nor Morocco would afford to engage into a new conflict [similar to the one during the seventies] especially when neighbouring Tunisia, and Libya are living post revolutions' chaos and uncertainties whilst the Al Qaeda in the Arab Islamic Maghreb is waiting at their doors' steps any given opportunities.

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NOTES

¹In the early righties, on January 25th General Ahmed Dlimi (Who led a repressive armed campaign against western Saharan people) died in a mysterious car accident. Rumours which talked about him preparing a military coup against the King, further speculate on his enigmatic death.

²Mostapha Tossa noted on Rami's biography that "...Ahmed Rami was born in 1946 in Tafraout, Morocco. He was educated at a senior high school in Tiznit in southern Morocco. From 1963 to 1966 he was a teacher at secondary grammar schools in Casablanca. In 1966 he was admitted to the armed forces staff college in Meknès and two years later appointed a lieutenant at the armoured forces in Rabat. He took part in two attempted coups d'état, the one at Skhirat in 1971 and the one starting with an attack on the royal aeroplane in 1972. After disappearing for a year he reached Sweden, where he got a place of refuge and acquired Swedish citizenship. After being an active member of the UNFP (Union Nationale des Forces Populaires) he presents himself today as a militant Islamist, but as one who "bypasses the debate on the folklore and the rites". Being a self-taught person he has published numerous works in Swedish, the language of his new motherland, on the Palestinian question, the state of Israel and the conflicts between Muslims and Jews. Twenty years have changed Ahmed Rami. Today he believes in a peaceful political dialogue, provided that "all liberties are guaranteed in the bosom of a state governed by law". Mustapha Tossa, Interview with Ahmed Rami, *Maroc Hebdo International*, July 22nd, 1994, [Translated into English. September 1, 1994]. This article was also, republished in the French periodical, *Courrier International*.

³For further information on the two coup-attempts against King Hassan II, and attacks on his life refer to: Mustapha Tossa, Interview with Ahmed Rami, *Maroc Hebdo International*, July 22nd, 1994, *ibid*.

⁴For example, one could count the following: The Party for Progress and Socialism, led by Ali Yata (PPS), the Central Left Union Socialist led by Ali Yousfi (USFP), the Radical Socialist Union des Forces Populaires led by Abdullah Ibrahim (UNFP), the OPAD: Organisation Pour L'Action Democratique, Illal Ammam, (A communist faction) and other left wing groups, which were in their majority banned at that time, or are still operating clandestinely, the MN, or National Movement formed on October 16th 1991 under the leadership of a veteran Berber, Politician, Mr. Mahjoubi Aherdan and PADS, the Socialist Democratic Vanguard Party, formed by some USFP dissidents; as well as, the DB: the Democratic Bloc

already formed back in May 1984, and which gathered the Istiqlal Independent Party led by M. Boucetta, the USEP, the UNFP and the OPAD.

- ⁵ In February 1990, a critical report on detention was published by Amnesty International, which later on, directly provoked Moroccan authorities. And had even led to the sentencing for instance, of the Editor of the Istiqlal opposition newspaper *L'opinion*, Mohammed Idrissi Kaitouni, to two years in prison and fined him 2000 Dirhams for - as claimed false reporting - of four Moroccans who died under mysterious conditions in their prison cell. This also led to the closure of *Lamalif Monthly Magazine*, and the radical *Kalima Magazine* issue in March 1989. Ibid, p.B443. For further information on this issue, refer to Jean Shaoul, King Hassan of Morocco: World leaders Mourns a Ruthless Despot, World Socialist website www.org, July 28th 1999.
- ⁶ For further information on this issue, refer to *Africa Confidential*, April 15th 2005, pp.4-5. "Older generation politicians in the senior coalition partner, the union Socialiste des forces Populaires (USFP), led by the veteran Mohammed Elyazahi, were not keen to make room for the PI Ministers. Many of its younger members feel alienated; some like the well-regarded secretary of state for Youth, Mohammed El Gahs; have fallen out with the leadership. El Gahs is now closer to the King than to his old mentor El Yazahi... Other parties are modernizing, with some difficulty. Former Premier Ahmed Osman was driven out of the leadership of the centre -right Rassemblement national des independents (RNI) during investigations into his use of party funds. His problems became critical after he agreed to pressure from Jettou and royal advisor Abdel Aziz Meziane Belfkih to provide younger technocrats for the government namely Mohammed Boussaid and Mohammed Mezourir." Ibid.
- ⁷ For instance, it was observed at the last 2002 elections that "The PJD [Parti de la justice ET du Development] finished in third place with 42 seats. Moroccans had got used to keeping quiet about the political future. Now they talk openly about the PJD's rise... Almost two years after the Casablanca suicide bombing of 16 May 2003, a loyalist Islamic camp has re-emerged and is agreeing the rules of competition within the monarchical system. PJD leader Saad Eddine el Othmani says his Party's cadres are ready to enter a coalition government under a Prime Minister from a Party approved by King Mohammed, on the tacit understanding that it will take several portfolios, it is very keen on Ministers affecting education and social affairs."Ibid.
- ⁸ The Kingdom's retaliation, after the 2003 bombings attacks against Islamic activists and its brutal nature led to open debate over 'the human rights' situation, during the time when "The security elite is suffering from questions about the death of a former palace insider, Hisham Mandari, and from international criticism of human rights abuses under cover of the global war on terror. Observers say the army shows few signs of political ambitions."Ibid.
- ⁹ It was reported for instance, that Abdelkarim El Khatib, the party leader, had declared that "This [Trial] will not bring people back to reason and will create discontent. According to Mr. Khatib, the Casablanca verdict will not have any impact on his more moderate party. Yet he denounces the breath of the trial, saying that the people directly involved in the attacks must be convicted, not the nebula created around this case. We are convicting people for what they think".
- ¹⁰ In the aftermath of those attacks, around 634 people, a French convert to Islam and 33 other militants were arrested and tried.
- ¹¹ It was noted that "Abdelilah Benkirane, a prominent member of the PJD, rejects comparisons between his party and extremist organisations like the Salafiya. The [Salafiya] has transformed itself into a politically violent movement after the jihad in Afghanistan and the Gulf war, he says. "We knew it would be difficult for us because, like us they have an Islamic

background"...Since the attacks, the PJD has adopted a low profile, voicing its opposition to violence and supporting the new government's anti-terrorism policy. Yet the party had been accused of having created a climate which enabled the bombings to take place." *ibid.*

¹² Refer to 16-17 March 2011 appeals to general strike and protest by Moroccan opposition group (Screaming Moroccans) mainly, Harakat Sarkhat Ashaab Al Maghrebi [Scream Action of the Moroccan People], (www.sarkhamaroc.com).

¹³ On the occasion of the Green March on 11/9/2009 HM the King indirectly, hinted at Algeria as being part of the conflict by noting that "As for the adversaries of our territorial integrity - and those who consort with them - they know, better than anyone else, that the Sahara is a crucial issue for the Moroccan people, who unanimously support the Throne, which is the guarantor of the nation's sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity...By putting the Sahara issue at the heart of their hostile strategy, they confirm that they are, in fact, the party concerned in this artificial conflict, a reality which is inconsistent with the mutual fraternal feelings between the Moroccan and the Algerian peoples." (<http://www.corcas.com/SearchResults/Kingspeech/tabid/499/ctl/Details/mid/2945/ItemID/12204/Default.aspx>).