



Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network  
Réseau Euro-méditerranéen des droits de l'homme  
الشبكة الأوروبية المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان



CAIRO INSTITUTE  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES  
Institut du Caire pour les études des droits de l'homme  
مركز القاهرة لدراسات حقوق الإنسان

## **United Nations Human Rights Council: 31<sup>st</sup> Session**

### **Item 4: General Debate**

#### **Oral Intervention**

**15 March 2016**

**Thank you Mr. President,**

Our organizations reiterate their concern over rising restrictions against journalists, freedom of expression advocates, and freedom of association in Morocco.

One week from today, on March 23rd, the trial of seven prominent Moroccan journalists, human rights defenders, and NGO workers will resume. Five of them are facing charges of ‘undermining state security,’ and the other two are facing charges for ‘failing to report foreign funding’. If found guilty, the five activists could face up to five years in prison.

These individuals are facing politically motivated charges for taking part in a citizen journalism project. Their trial comes following an escalation of state harassment against journalists and activists and a crackdown on peaceful dissent, including increased restrictions against national and international human rights groups in the country.

A broadly worded article in the Moroccan penal code criminalizes receiving support from foreign organizations with the purpose of “harming the integrity, sovereignty or independence of the Kingdom, or shaking the loyalty that citizens owe to the state.” This article can be used to penalize a wide range of legitimate forms of expression and association and to curtail the right of Moroccan civil society to seek funding freely as guaranteed by the international human rights conventions to which Morocco is party.

On the same week as the trial of the activists, the prominent journalist and editor-in-chief of an independent Moroccan news website, Ali Anouzla, will face trial on charges of harming the country’s territorial integrity. If convicted, Anouzla could also face up to 5 years in prison.

We call upon the Moroccan authorities to drop all charges against the seven activists and the journalist Ali Anouzla; to halt all undue restrictions imposed on civil society and freedom of expression in the country; and to accelerate the delayed process of adopting and revising legislations to comply with the country’s self-stated obligation including the revision of the penal code in order to uphold the rights of freedom of expression and association under international human rights law and as stipulated by Morocco’s 2011 constitution.

**Thank you Mr. President.**

**Signed Organization:**

- **Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies**
- **Committee to Protect Journalists**
- **Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network**
- **International Media Support**
- **Moroccan Association for Human Rights**