

## **Massive arrests of migrants in Morocco**

Roundups of migrants on a very large scale have again taken place on the night of 25-26 October 2007, simultaneously in Rabat in an area where Subsaharans live and on the campus of Oujda university, in the east of the country near the Algerian frontier, where many migrants live. They happened two days after the visit of Nicolas Sarkozy to Morocco and follow in a long line of such events. The last one took place in Oujda on 27 July, and there was also a big roundup on December 23 2006. This information was transmitted by organisations which are partners of Migreurop (see the messages below), but had not yet (by October 28) been taken up by the media.

### **Massive arrests of migrants in Morocco – Effects of EU-Moroccan cooperation in the area of migration and asylum**

Rabat, Friday 26 October 2007

Between 4am and 6am on Friday 26 October 2007, the Moroccan authorities carried out two large scale arrest operations against Subsaharan migrants and asylum seekers, one in Rabat and the other in Oudja. According to the information collected by civil society organisations, at least 100 people were arrested and removed in Rabat by Moroccan police. Among them were refugees and asylum seekers; however the latter were released by the Moroccan authorities, following consultation with the Moroccan office of the UNHCR. All of the others arrested were taken by bus to Oudja and then to the Algerian frontier, as was the case in previous arrest operations.

We, civil society organisations and human rights defenders:

- express our concern in relation to the risks represented by such massive arrest operations and refoulement of migrants and asylum seekers in Morocco;
- denounce the conditions under which these massive arrests have taken place;
- stress that these arrests have taken place in an unpredictable and arbitrary way;
- refer to the undertakings by Morocco, in particular under article 3 of the United Nations Convention against Torture, not to send back any person to a country in which that person might be subjected to bad treatment, and thus consider that the refoulement, in such conditions, of migrants and asylum seekers to the Algerian frontier, constitutes a violation of that principle;
- Demand that the Moroccan authorities make public the list of the persons arrested, and immediately release them;
- stress the link between, on the one hand, the hardening of Moroccan policy in the management of migratory flows and border controls and, on the other hand, the growing pressure by the EU on Morocco to cooperate in the fight against irregular migration towards its borders;
- deplore the fact that the current policy in the framework of cooperation between the EU and Morocco does not include the protection of the rights of migrants and refugees among its priorities for action and denounce the human rights violations committed in the name of the protection of EU borders;
- demand the immediate revision of the migration and asylum chapter of the EU-Morocco action plan, adopted in the framework of the neighbourhood policy, and insist that the security approach is not the appropriate response to the phenomenon of migration;
- recall in addition the undertakings of all the partners of the Euromed cooperation in the matter of the respect of human rights, including those of migrants, and insist that all those migrating, even irregularly, are entitled to enjoy fundamental rights which it is imperative to respect.

## **First signatories**

**MOROCCO** : Association Marocaine des Droits Humains (AMDH), Fédération nationale d'appui aux réformes initiatives locales(FNARIL), Forum Marocain pour la Vérité et la justice(FVJ), Syndicat Fédération démocratique du Travail, Forum des alternatives Maroc (FMAS), Observatoire Marocain des Prisons, Mountada Essaada, Association ADALA, Groupe Antiraciste d'accompagnement et de Défense des Etrangers et Migrants (GADEM), Association Amis et Familles des victimes de l'immigration clandestine (AFVIC), Association Beni Znassen pour la Culture, le Développement et la Solidarité, Réseau des Associations de quartiers de Casablanca( RESAC), L'ARCOM, Pateras de la Vida, Association homme et environnement

**Germany**: Fluechtlingsrat Hamburg

**Benin** : Association Interafricaine Promotion Défense des Réfugiés, Demandeurs d'asile

**Cameroun** : association d' Aide aux Familles et Victimes des Migrations Clandestines (AFVMC), Association des Réfugiés Sans Frontières (ARSF) au Cameroun

**Spain** : APDHA

**France** : Association des Travailleurs Maghrebins en France (ATMF), Cimade, GISTI, Immigration Développement Démocratie (IDD), Ipan

**Italy** : ARCI, SdL Intercategoriale,

**International networks**: Migreurop, Réseau Euro méditerranéen pour les droits de l'homme (REMDH)

**Individuals** : Fatima Bellaou, Driss Oumahand, Mohamed Samhari, Lhoussina Ikastaoun, Ben Hammou, Anne Balanghien, Placide Nzeza, Abdelfatah Zine, Myriem Khrouz

## **Message from the association ABCDS, Oujda, 26 October 2007**

Dear friends and colleagues

The authorities carried out an attack on the Oudja campus very early this morning, around 4.30am. This operation came two months after the large brutal operation of 27 July, aiming to dislodge the Subsaharans who had taken refuge on the campus.

The roundup of 23 December 2006 was only one episode in a series of massive refoulements of migrants. Other roundups followed them, and the last has just taken place in Rabat, two days after the end of Sarkozy's visit to Morocco.

The ABCDS strongly deplores and denounces these abuses against migrants in Morocco, against their dignity and their fundamental rights.

In solidarity, Hicham BARAKA, President of the ABCDS - Oujda

## **Message from the Collectif des Réfugiés au Maroc**

The Collectif des Réfugiés au Maroc has just learnt with regret about the brutal arrests by the Moroccan police which took place during the night of 25-26 October in Rabat.

The Collectif des Réfugiés au Maroc is concerned about such methods which foretell nothing but harm.

It calls for support for all the victims of these brutal arrests and to show the firmest support for all our arrested friends.

We strongly condemn the acts of police violence committed against the Subsaharan refugees, asylum seekers and migrants during this roundup at Takkadoum, and are profoundly shocked by these inhuman actions of the Moroccan authorities against the people who have fled persecution, war, injustice and extreme poverty in their home countries.

The Collectif des Réfugiés au Maroc firmly denounces these arbitrary arrests which do not comply with international laws. Paulin Kuanzambi, Vice-President of the Collectif des Réfugiés au Maroc