

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## Responses to Information Requests

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Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment please email [Basesdedonnees.DatabaseUnit@irb-cisr.gc.ca](mailto:Basesdedonnees.DatabaseUnit@irb-cisr.gc.ca).

1 March 2013

### MAR104296.FE

Morocco: The "February 20 Movement" (Mouvement du 20-Février), including its structure, leaders, objectives and activities; treatment of members of the movement by the government (2010-February 2013)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

#### 1. February 20 Movement

Sources state that the February 20 Movement was created in 2011 in Morocco (AllAfrica 17 Sept. 2012; RFI 20 Feb. 2012; AFP 9 Jan. 2013). According to Agence France-Presse (AFP), the movement was born [translation] "in the context of the Arab Spring" and it calls for "major political reform and greater social justice" (ibid.). In addition, the movement demands "greater democracy" (ibid. 20 Feb. 2012). According to Human Rights Watch, February 20 is a [Human Rights Watch English version] "youth-led pro-reform movement" (19 Feb. 2012).

Radio France internationale (RFI) and the AFP state that, in 2012, in Casablanca, about two thousand people celebrated the first year of the February 20 Movement and that, in Rabat, there were about a thousand (RFI 20 Feb. 2012; AFP 20 Feb. 2012). However, the Moroccan Ministry of the Interior stated that [translation] "the number of protestors did not surpass 150 in Casablanca and a thousand in the whole country" (ibid.).

*Jeune Afrique* states that the movement, [translation] "which has no identified leader," is on Facebook and that it "has not tried to form a legal or hierarchical structure" (20 June 2011). According to the article, [translation]

the union was formed around a summary platform ...: "We want a democratic Constitution, the end of impunity. We want a government that serves our interests and a Parliament that represents us" (*Jeune Afrique* 20 June 2011).

Information on the structure, leaders, objectives and activities of the movement could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

#### 2. "Long Live the People"

According to AllAfrica, one of the February 20 Movement slogans is [translation] "Long live the people" (17 Sept. 2012). Quoted on Rue89, a discussion site created by journalists in Paris (n.d.), activists of the February 20 Movement explained that "'long live the people' opposes 'long live the King'" (Rue89 3 Apr. 2012). According to Rue89, through this slogan, activists [translation] "are asking for dignity and expressing some refusal of sacredness" (ibid.). In addition, Rue89 points out that the slogan has [translation] "become emblematic of the fight for democracy in Morocco" (ibid.). Further information on the slogan could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

### 3. Treatment of Members of the Movement by the Government

Sources state that, according to the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (Association marocaine des droits humains), there were nearly 70 activists of the February 20 Movement in prison (AFP 9 Jan. 2013; *Jeune Afrique* 13 Sept. 2012). Yabiladi, a news site about Morocco, also stated that nearly 70 activists of the movement [translation] "were behind bars" (Yabiladi 10 Jan. 2013).

According to several sources, five activists [AFP says "six" (AFP 24 Aug. 2012)] of the February 20 Movement were detained after a [translation] "peaceful protest" on 22 July 2012 (*Jeune Afrique* 13 Sept. 2012; Yabiladi 10 Jan. 2013). Sources state that the activists indicated that they had been tortured by the police (ibid.; Yabiladi 10 Jan. 2013). In response to this, a Moroccan government official replied [translation] "that a doctor had established that these youths had not been subjected to any physical violence" (AFP 24 Aug. 2012). According to an article of 13 September 2012 by *Jeune Afrique*, the activists had been sentenced on 12 September 2012 to eight to ten months in prison by the Casablanca Court for participating in [translation] "an unauthorized protest." They were also each fined 3,000 dirhams (MAD) [about C\$361 (XE 18 Feb. 2013a)] (*Jeune Afrique* 13 Sept. 2012). According to the AFP, in January 2013, a Casablanca court of appeal reduced these sentences to six months in prison, and the activists were each fined 7,500 MAD [about C\$905 (XE 18 Feb. 2013b)] (AFP 9 Jan. 2013).

According to AFP, a famous rapper and February 20 Movement activist was charged in 2012 [translation] "with insulting a public official in the course of his duties and a corporation" in a video on the YouTube social network, in which Moroccan police officers appear in the background of the young rapper's song" (AFP 16 Apr. 2012). During his trial, the rapper allegedly stated [translation] "that he had not posted the video and that, on YouTube, 'anyone can post anything'" (ibid.). The Canadian Press (4 Apr. 2012) and *Le Monde* (1 Sept. 2012) also state that the rapper was charged with posting a song on the Internet. According to *Le Monde*, on 27 July 2012, [translation] "the Casablanca Court of Appeal confirmed the term of imprisonment of one year" imposed on the rapper (1 Sept. 2012).

Further information on the treatment of members of the movement by the government could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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### Additional Sources Consulted

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International; Association marocaine des droits humains; Factiva; France 24; Freedom House; *Le Grand Soir*; *Huffington Post*; Les Afriques; Maghreb Emergent; Minority Rights Group International; *La Nouvelle Tribune*; *Political Handbook of the World*; Reporters sans frontières; Reuters; United Nations – Human Rights Council, Integrated Regional Information Networks, United Nations Development Program, Refworld; United States – Department of State.

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