

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

Suzana Grego
Director of Communications
TEL +1 917 438 9331
E-MAIL sgrego@ictj.org



20 Exchange Place 33rd fl.
New York, NY 10005
tel +1 917 438 9300
fax +1 212 509 6036
www.ictj.org

Morocco's Truth Commission Experience: *One More Step toward Truth and Justice*

NEW YORK, November 10, 2005—At the end of this month, the Moroccan Equity and Reconciliation Commission (Instance Équité et Réconciliation or IER) will be handing its final report to King Mohammed VI and formally ending its mandate. The Commission's final report and the processes it recommends provide Morocco with a tremendous opportunity to advance victims' rights, prevent future abuses, and strengthen the rule of law.

In its 33-page report, "Transitional Justice in Morocco: A Progress Report," (<http://www.ictj.org/downloads/ICTJ.Morocco.pdf>) the ICTJ traces the historical process, dating back to the early 1990's, that led to the formation of the IER in early 2004, and places its work within that larger context. The report also relates how the truth-telling process has unfolded since the IER began its work—including through unprecedented televised public hearings—and presents it as the most comprehensive investigation to date of the 1956-1999 era of violations in Morocco.

"The first truth commission to be established and the first to hold public hearings in the Middle East, the IER has made great strides and has the potential to have enduring impact, both locally and regionally," said Mark Freeman, Senior Project Manager in charge of the ICTJ's Morocco program and a co-author of the report. "At the same time, Morocco still has a long way to go in the areas of justice and reform. Whether it can advance in these areas will depend in large part on the extent to which civil society, the government, and the international community are willing to continue to take concrete steps to address the past."

The 17-member Commission was established by the King in April 2004 and has since then compiled a massive archive of information on victims, violations, and perpetrators, potentially supplying not only a rich historical account of past abuses, but substantial evidence for future accountability and institutional reform efforts. It may also have broadened the thinking behind possible remedies for victims.

While not a comprehensive assessment of the IER's work, which must include the final report and its release, the ICTJ's report highlights some of the key fears and criticisms of this process—such as the continuing impunity enjoyed by perpetrators and limited consultations and outreach conducted by the Commission—that have been expressed by a number of victims and Moroccan civil society actors.

The occasion of the handover of the final report is an opportune time to undertake an overall assessment of the progress made toward achieving truth and justice in Morocco, both by the Commission and by preceding efforts, and to develop a coordinated and comprehensive approach to transitional justice. In this report, the ICTJ makes several recommendations meant to bolster and augment Morocco's truth-seeking experience in the coming months and years. These include recommendations on truth-seeking, accountability, vetting, institutional reforms, reparations, memorials, archives, and apologies.

IER Final Report

Like the final reports from most other truth commissions, the IER's report should outline the Commission's main findings on human rights violations, specifically enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions committed from the date of independence in 1956 until the establishment of an Independent Commission on Arbitration in 1999. The IER's primary objectives are establishing the nature and scale of the gross abuses committed; determining the responsibilities of state organs or other parties for the abuses; and compensating victims or their families for material and moral damage.

The ICTJ in Morocco

Since December 2003, the ICTJ has worked closely with the Moroccan Equity and Reconciliation Commission, encouraging a transparent and participatory process for establishing the IER's mandate and selecting the commissioners. Over 18 months, the Center facilitated visits by truth commission experts and practitioners from countries including Ghana, Guatemala, Peru, Sierra Leone, and South Africa, who shared their truth-seeking experiences and provided constructive criticisms and technical assistance to the Commission. The Center has also provided the Commission with ongoing assistance in areas such as the conduct of public hearings, providing comparative analyses on reparations, and advising on communications and outreach strategies. The ICTJ has also worked closely with Moroccan human rights organizations, media and victims' groups stressing their role in monitoring the IER and assisting victims.

About the ICTJ

The International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) assists countries pursuing accountability for past mass atrocity or human rights abuse. The Center works in societies emerging from repressive rule or armed conflict, as well as in established democracies where historical injustices or systemic abuse remain unresolved.

In order to promote justice, peace, and reconciliation, government officials and nongovernmental advocates are likely to consider a variety of transitional justice approaches including both judicial and nonjudicial responses to human rights crimes. The ICTJ assists in the development of integrated, comprehensive, and localized approaches to transitional justice comprising five key elements: prosecuting perpetrators,

documenting and acknowledging violations through nonjudicial means such as truth commissions, reforming abusive institutions, providing reparations to victims, and facilitating reconciliation processes.

The Center is committed to building local capacity and generally strengthening the emerging field of transitional justice, and works closely with organizations and experts around the world to do so. By working in the field through local languages, the ICTJ provides comparative information, legal and policy analysis, documentation, and strategic research to justice and truth-seeking institutions, nongovernmental organizations, governments and others.

For more information about the ICTJ, see www.ictj.org.

###