

## MEDIA ADVISORY

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## Rabat, Morocco:

*International Conference to Reflect on Transitional Justice, Human Rights, and Lessons Learned from the Moroccan Truth-seeking Experience*

### WHAT:

Transitional justice experts will gather with national civil society groups, victims advocates, government representatives, former members of Morocco's Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER), and local and international press to reflect on Morocco's truth-seeking experience at a three-day conference 14-16 July.

Held at the Golden Tulip Farah Hotel in Rabat, the conference—"Examining Transitional Justice in Morocco in Light of the Experience of the IER"—is expected to generate significant debate around questions of justice, reparations, and democracy following more than two years of intensive investigations and public hearings conducted by the IER on past human rights violations in Morocco.

Bringing together a diverse group of actors, the conference aims to elicit meaningful critique and feedback; provide a preliminary assessment of the IER's impact; ensure that victims groups and civil society have a voice in national debates around Morocco's truth-seeking process; and assist in the implementation of recommendations made by the IER in their Final Report to King Mohammed VI. The Report's recommendations are comprised of a series of measures geared towards advancing a culture of human rights and democracy in Morocco.

This event will mark the first organized public discussion of the IER's successes, shortcomings, and ongoing challenges in the post-Commission era. A self-reflective and collaborative step, the discussions that will take place over the next few days integrally involve human rights and victims groups. Their participation is considered crucial to ensuring both the successful implementation of the Commission's recommendations and to furthering the transitional justice processes aimed at uncovering the truth and advancing justice in Morocco.

The conference will feature panel discussions with former commissioners; representatives from key Moroccan human rights organizations; various government ministers and leaders of Morocco's main political parties; and staff members from the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), including Alex Boraine, founding president and chairperson of the ICTJ's board, and former deputy chairperson of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The event is being co-hosted by the Moroccan Centre for the Study of Human Rights and Democracy (CEDHD) and the ICTJ, with substantial support from the governments of Switzerland and Denmark, and the Friedrich-Ebert Institute.

### BACKGROUND:

From the 1950s to the 1990s, thousands of Moroccans were illegally detained, imprisoned, tortured, or forcibly 'disappeared' by state actors. In April 2004, King Mohammed VI formally established the first truth-seeking body in the Middle East and North Africa region: a 17-member Commission charged with investigating this era and providing compensation to victims and their families. A human rights activist and leader who spent 17 years as a political prisoner in one of Morocco's secret detention centers, Mr. Driss Benzekri, was appointed Commission President by the King.

Over 18 months, the Commission received more than 22,000 applications for consideration and held victim-centered, public hearings televised throughout the country. The IER presented its final report to the Royal Palace on November 30th, 2005. Two weeks later, the King mandated the public dissemination of the several hundred-page report, marking a crucial moment in Moroccan history. Determining the responsibilities of state and other actors for the abuses and outlining an extensive reparations plan for victims and their families, the report produced concrete recommendations—which included substantial institutional and legislative reforms—providing Morocco with a momentous opportunity to advance victims' rights and prevent future abuses.

Since December 2003, the ICTJ has worked closely with the IER, providing ongoing technical assistance and advice, and has also actively engaged with Moroccan human rights organizations, the media, and victims groups, stressing their role in monitoring the Commission and assisting victims.

## **WHO, WHEN & WHERE:**

### ***Friday July 14, 2006***

- 9:00-9:50: Introductory Remarks
- 10:15-12:15: "Transitional Justice in Morocco: Political Actors and the IER."
- 12:15-1:15: Open discussion
- 2:30-4:30: "Dealing with Serious Violations of Human Rights in Light of the IER Experience: The Human Rights Community Speaks"
- 4:50-6:30: Open discussion

### ***Saturday July 15, 2006***

- 9:00-10:40: "The IER and its Interactions with Civil Society."
- 11:00- 12:30: Open discussion
- 2:30-4:10: "The IER's Approach to Questions of Justice, Reparations, and Victims' Needs."
- 4:30-6:00: Open discussion

### ***Sunday July 16, 2006***

- 9:00-10:40: "International NGOs and Transitional Justice in Light of the IER Experience."
- 11:00-12:30: Open discussion
- 2:30-4:30: "Evaluating the Transitional Justice Process in Morocco: Reflections from Scholars and Researchers."
- 4:50-6:20: Open discussion

*Note: All events take place at the Golden Tulip Hotel Farah in Rabat, Morocco. Individuals who wish to attend should RSVP by contacting the organizers listed below. **National and international press do not require invitations and are strongly encouraged to attend.***

## **Media Contacts:**

*For information about the conference, to RSVP, or to arrange interviews with participants, please contact:*

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