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# UN expert commends Morocco's international leadership on migration but urges immediate action on domestic racial inequality

Morocco: Call for urgent action on inequality

21 December 2018

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### French

RABAT / GENEVA (21 December 2018) – A UN expert said today Morocco must take urgent action to ensure its constitutional commitments to racial equality and combatting racial discrimination extend to all Moroccans, and to migrants and refugees, in keeping with its international human rights obligations.

“Morocco has strong constitutional provisions that prohibit and combat

all forms of discrimination, promote equality before the law, protect gender equality and guarantee the rights of non-citizens,” the Special Rapporteur on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Ms. E. Tendayi Achiume, **said at the conclusion of her mission** to the country.

She urged Morocco to adopt a comprehensive anti-racial discrimination legislative framework. She also commended the Kingdom’s constitutional recognition of Amazigh as an official language, but expressed concern that Morocco still had not adopted legislation to implement this provision.

The Special Rapporteur noted that the predominance of Arabic and French in the absence of adequate Amazigh language facilities – including sworn, certified interpreters – remains a barrier to equal and effective access to justice for Amazigh speakers. “Morocco must adopt and implement the necessary domestic law to achieve full official status to Amazigh language as a matter of urgency,” Ms. Achiume said.

Amazigh communities, especially in rural regions, endured grave socio-economic marginalisation and some people among them faced discrimination, including when they try to settle in more urban areas.

Groups reported persisting, structural marginalisation and discrimination against Amazigh communities, in regions with limited infrastructure and state support for basic needs, including water, sanitation, and adequate healthcare facilities.

On migrants and refugees, she praised the human rights-based approach that Morocco has largely adopted. “For example, the Moroccan Constitution provides that foreigners under Moroccan jurisdiction are entitled to enjoy the same fundamental freedoms granted to Moroccan citizens,” the independent expert said.

She also welcomed the recent decision to reject European Union attempts to locate offshore asylum processing or “regional disembarkation” centres in the country, and Morocco’s rejection of the warehousing of migrants in immigration detention facilities.

However, this year especially, pressure to prevent migration from Africa to Europe appeared to be driving severe restrictions on freedom of movement, and serious human rights violations against regular and irregular migrants, especially black, sub-Saharan Africans. For example, forced evictions in August 2018 in neighbourhoods in Tangier with predominantly black sub-Saharan migrants resulted in the destruction of property and migrant displacement, including of regular migrants, pregnant women, and children.

“I spoke to some of these people, who now reside under utterly inhumane conditions in a forest, with no sanitation or shelter, despite freezing winter temperatures. I express grave concern that these evictions violated the human rights of many migrants, some of whom reported that notwithstanding legal or asylum seeker status, the colour of their skin put them in grave danger,” Ms Achiume said. She urged Morocco to remain firm with a migration policy rooted in human rights, and to reject Europe’s escalating attempts to regionally contain Africans to the African continent.

“I commend Morocco for the remarkable steps it has taken to ensure that Moroccan Jews have the full means to enjoy their rights to freedom of belief and association and other human rights. Similar rights and protection should be given to other religious minorities who report facing public restrictions on their rights to freedom of belief and association,” she added.

A detailed report of her findings will be presented to the UN Human Rights Council in July 2019.

ENDS

*Ms E. Tendayi Achiume (Zambia) was appointed by the Human Rights Council as **Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance** in September 2017. Ms. Achiume is currently a law professor at the University of California,*

*Los Angeles (UCLA) School of Law. and a research associate of the*

African Center for Migration and Society (ACMS), at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa.

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UN Human Rights, Country Page – **Morocco**

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