

United Nations Human Rights Council, 23rd Session (27 May – 14 June 2013)

Item 4 General Debate

Monday 3 June 2013

Speaker: IHEU representative, Kacem El Ghazzali

Islamism and death threats in Morocco

Thank you Mr President.

In Morocco, the Higher Council of Religious Scholars, a government institution led by the King in his capacity as Commander of the Faithful, is the only body empowered to impose religious consultations (fatwas) under the Constitution.¹ It counts among its members the Minister of Islamic Affairs. In 2012,² this council issued a fatwa that Muslims who reject their faith “should be condemned to death”.

Despite the fact that human rights are reflected in the Moroccan constitution, atheists and freethinkers suffer discrimination, violation of their rights, arrest, and death threats if they speak out.

Some examples:

- Anyone who publicly denies his being a Muslim automatically loses his rights to inheritance.
- Anyone eating in public during Ramadan, is liable to arrest and prosecution under Article 222 of the Moroccan Penal Code which proscribes up to six months in prison for the offence.
- A Moroccan atheist, Imad Eddine Habib, is living under death threats and is currently in hiding from the police.³
- Ahmed Assid, a secular thinker and activist was a victim of incited attacks and death threats by salafist groups and the Moroccan authorities took no steps to protect Assid or punish those who call for murder of free thinkers.⁴

How can a non-believer living in Morocco raise his voice? Why are calls to murder apostates and free thinkers allowed when the Constitution is supposed to protect the human rights of everyone?

We urge the government of Morocco and King Mohammed VI as Commander of the Faithful, to rule as unlawful any fatwa emanating from the Council of Religious Scholars that would breach Morocco’s obligations under international law. Their failure to do so will send a strong message to the international community regarding Morocco’s commitment to Human Rights.

Thank you, Sir.

¹ http://www.sgg.gov.ma/constitution_2011_Fr.pdf

² <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iSMC9xu-qUfsH2otkPyk8Ghep5SA?docId=CNG.c7cbe3a1e07118689fd253a70602eb6.271>

³ <http://uncut.indexonensorship.org/2013/05/moroccan-atheist-imad-habib-hiding-from-police/>

⁴ <http://www.article19.org/resources.php/resource/3724/en/>