The “February 20” movement is the Moroccan extension of the Arab spring. Since February 20, 2011, the movement has campaigned for establishing democracy in Morocco and has conducted weekly demonstrations, calling for a significant reform of the monarchy.

This guide is intended for international journalists who want to get a sense of what the “February 20” pro-democracy movement in Morocco stands for, its organization, goals and demands. The content of this guide is freely reproducible.

Following the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, Moroccan young activists, some of them bloggers, others keen users of social networking websites such as Facebook, called for a day of action and demonstration to ask for reforms. The protest took place on Sunday, February 20, 2011.

The initial call to demonstrate was associated with the following list of demands:
● A democratic Constitution expressing popular sovereignty;
● The dissolution of the parliament, the dismissal of the current government and the establishment of a transitional administration, which primary goal will be to initiate reforms;
● An independent judiciary under a strict separation of powers;
● The trial of all individuals involved in the mismanagement and the squandering of public funds;
● The recognition of Amazigh as an official language, besides the Arabic language;
● The release of all political prisoners and prisoners of opinion and the trial of all those responsible for arbitrary arrests and cases of "disappearances" and torture;
● A better quality of, and access to social welfare services (health, education, housing), especially for the poorest.

The date of February 20, 2011, marked the founding of the movement. On that day, and by the own admission of the Minister of Interior, demonstrations took place in 53 cities and towns across Morocco. Nearly 200,000 people (average estimate) took to the streets and marched for democracy.
It was a success for the movement and a day when a wall of fear has fallen. Online, thousands of Moroccans who were not associated with the movement in its inception--for fear of a crackdown or due to the misinformation campaign conducted by the government--started joining in.

The movement was born on the Internet. It has no central organization and no formal leaders. On the ground, each city has a local “coordination” (committee) that sets the dates and details of local events. Committees are led by young activists, most of whom have no political affiliation. The “February 20” movement also relies on the support of several political parties, unions and associations including:

- The Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH, civil society);
- The Unified Socialist party (PSU, leftist party);
- Annahj Addimocriti (The Democratic Path, leftist party);
- The party of the Democratic and Socialist Vanguard (PADS, leftist party);
- Al Adl Wal Ihsan (Islamist);
- Ittihadis of February 20 (a current within the youth section of the USFP, the socialist party participating in the coalition government);
- The Moroccan Organization for Human Rights (OMDH, civil society);
- ATTAC (civil society);
- Al-Mounadil-a (leftist organization);
- The Collective of Amazigh Associations (civil society);
- The National Union of Students of Morocco (UNEM, students’ union);
- Some sections of the Moroccan Labour Union (UMT, workers’ union) and the Democratic Labour Confederation (CDT, workers’ union).

These organizations are actively supporting the movement and taking part in events organized by “February 20.” They have thus far accepted to abide by the marching orders set by the local committees of “February 20” movement.

Other Moroccan political organizations, more close to the monarchy, have not expressed support for the movement and have sometimes described it as "a danger", accusing it of "plotting against the stability of the kingdom."

Local committees of the movement exist in different cities and towns across the country and are independent of each other. They all subscribe to the initial demands of “February 20” Movement, with
particular emphasis on certain topics, depending on the cultural, social or economic inclination of each committee (je propose “context” au lieu de “inclination of each committee”). The issue of the Amazigh language is given more premiunence for example in the region of Agadir, while social demands come first in low income communities.

After the successful day of action of February 20, 2011, King Mohammed VI addressed the nation on March 9, promising “a comprehensive constitutional review.” He also announced the appointment of an “Constitutional Reform Advisory Commission” which is to present its proposals to the King in June before the draft is submitted to a popular referendum later this year probably in July.

The “February 20” movement considers that the royal approach does not allow for a real democratic change. The Constitutional Reform Advisory Commission is in fact composed of experts whose independence vis-à-vis the monarchy is not assured, all members being discretionary appointed by the King. The Commission did meet representatives of political parties and the civil society, but nothing guarantees that the memoranda presented by the civil society and the opposition parties can be taken on board. Finally, the constitutional text will be submitted for a final validation by the royal cabinet before it being subjected to a referendum. There are reasons to believe that the regime will use the state-run media discriminatorily (TV, radio, news agency, etc.) to promote the text and campaign for its adoption.

In these circumstances, the “February 20” movement, considers that the approach is fundamentally flawed and expresses its rejection of a Constitution it describes as "granted".

Earlier this year, the movement declined an invitation to appear before the Constittional Commision because it considered it illegitimate, dependent on the royal palace and unrepresentative of popular sovereignty.

Since February 20, demonstrations involving tens of thousands of people were held almost every Sunday throughout the kingdom. A considerable effort of preparation and promotion helped the protests reach a peak on March 20 and April 24, with up to 800,000 people taking to the streets. In every protest, slogans called for the abolition of Article 19 of the Moroccan Constitution, which enshrines the King’s divine right for unlimited powers. They also called for the nationalization of the royal holding company ONA-SNI, which has a stranglehold on the Moroccan economy with benefits
that reached up to 8% of the national GDP this year. They also called for the abolition of the notion of sacredness that the King of Morocco enjoys.

The slogans have particularly called for the resignation of two officials who symbolize, from the standpoint of protesters, corruption and abuse of power in Morocco: Mohamed Mounir Majidi, the private secretary of King Mohammed VI and manager of the vast royal holding company ONA /SNI, and Fouad Ali El Himma, personal friend of the King and founder, in 2008, of a political party, which, with the help and support of the State and the justice system, became the largest party in the kingdom.

The slogans also called for the resignation of the current Prime Minister, Abbas El Fassi, which family name is often referred to during protests as a symbol of nepotism and corruption.
The slogans also called for social justice, a fair share of wealth, and for the end of the privileges and annuities the clients of the monarchy enjoy.

The slogans also asked for the end of torture and the trial of those responsible of abuses and violations of human rights, since the accession to the throne of Mohammed VI in 1999.
Finally, slogans have called for the lifting of censorship on the press and for the end of the harassment that independent media is subjected to.

The State approach to the protests was inconsistent. It first allowed the demonstrations to take place, then, on March 13, only 4 days after the King addressed the nation promising change, police violently cracked down on demonstrators in Casablanca.
This repressive approach was abandoned for a brief period. Then, on May 15, 22 and 29, police behavior seemed to confirm that the State’s strategy was shifting toward more violence against protesters.

On that day, the movement’s committee in Rabat called for a sit-in next to an alleged secret detention center in Temara (in the outskirts of Rabat). According to human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the facility has been used for the last 10 years as a clandestine center of detention, mainly of Islamist militants suspected of terrorism. Police blocked the march and violently dispersed the demonstrators using truncheons and chasing protesters in the streets of Rabat. 16 members of the movement were hospitalized following the crackdown.

After February 20, March 20 and April 24, Sunday, May 22 was set to be the fourth national day of mass, nonviolent demonstration. But the repression witnessed in Rabat a week earlier, was repeated. The demonstrations were violently dispersed by the police in Rabat, Casablanca, Tangier, Agadir and elsewhere, leaving dozens injured and many arrested.
Police violence was unleashed again against protesters a week later, on May 29, when police in plain clothes and in anti-riot gears attacked protesters with truncheons and chased them in the streets using motorbikes.

Under the pretext of preventing "unauthorized demonstrations" from taking place (none of the demonstrations conducted so far had been authorized), the government seems determined to use force to disrupt any anti-government protests, while allowing a small group of government supporters to march in front of the parliament. In response, local committees of the “February 20” movement said they would continue calling for weekly, nonviolent demonstrations every Sunday.

Kamal El Omari (February 20 activist from the city of Safi) died Thursday, 02/05/2011 due to blows and injuries he received at the head Sunday, 29.05.2011 in the town of Safi at sidelines events of 20 February. These injuries have been worn to him by the forces of "security" who were seven to beat him.

The “February 20” movement has no centralized structure and operates through its local independent committees. Each committee publishes its own press releases and reports, primarily on Facebook:


Mamfakinch (which means: we won’t give up) is a collective composed of Moroccan activists and bloggers who support the pro-democracy movement of “February 20." The group administers two websites, with daily updates and analysis on the situation in and challenges facing Morocco today.

- http://24.mamfakinch.com/ is a blog updated around the clock with the latest information from different local “February 20” committees. It also covers major events via its regular liveblogs and through its network of correspondents and activists present on the ground, in various cities and towns across the kingdom.
• http://www.mamfakinch.com/ is a web magazine dedicated to analysis and comments on “February 20” specifically and Morocco more generally.

The Mamfakinch team is composed of several online activists who speak French and English, in addition to Arabic and Tamazight (Berber). Mamfakinch is at the disposal of international journalists to answer their questions and put them in touch with local activists and committees affiliated with the “February 20” movement.

Mamfakinch!
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