



Understanding The News

Advancing Rule Of Law In Morocco

(NAPSA)—Increasingly, developing nations in the Middle East are coming to see the emergence of stable and transparent legal institutions as a factor that goes hand in hand with economic, social and political development. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in the country of Morocco.

Recently, Morocco has been working to address a range of social and economic challenges in its southern provinces by launching a regional development initiative focusing on development there.

However, some groups have a different agenda—and resort to violence to achieve it. In one case, in 2010, some residents of the city of Laayoune established the Gdim Izik protest camp in the desert east of the city to demand better housing and job opportunities.

Local authorities ensured that the camp was safe, that there was free movement within it, and that it was stocked with water, medicine and emergency personnel. Officials also initiated a daily dialogue with representatives from the protest group to address their demands.

However, after several weeks of constructive discussions, violent militants attempted to hijack the protest to prevent a peaceful resolution. Ultimately, the government intervened, peacefully dismantling the camp and transporting protesters out of harm's way.

Carrying only nonlethal gear, Moroccan security forces entered the camp and were quickly faced with armed men, some in combat fatigues, wielding machetes, Molotov cocktails and other weapons. Clashes ensued, and militants threw explosives and stones at Moroccan police, set fire to buildings and cars, and attacked police officers. In the end, 11 policemen were killed and more than 70 were wounded. One



Currently, the Gdim Izik trial is under way in Rabat, demonstrating that the rule of law is an important part of the social fabric of Morocco.

civilian died, and four others were also injured in the violence.

The Moroccan Parliament concluded that the police had used only peaceful means to dismantle the Gdim Izik camp and halt the violence.

The U.N. also determined, from video at the scene and eyewitness accounts, that there was no evidence that security forces used lethal means.

In an attempt to secure justice for those killed—and their survivors—the event has now entered the legal phase. A trial has begun in the city of Rabat for the 24 defendants charged with inciting violence and murder.

As a testimony to the transparency of the judicial process in Morocco, international judges, lawyers, human rights activists, and reporters are observing the trial to ensure due process and justice for those charged.

This information is provided by Beckerman on behalf of the government of Morocco. Further information is available at the U.S. Department of Justice.