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# Using a Human Rights Discourse in Rallying for the Freedom of Hirak's Political Prisoners in Morocco

Soraya El Kahaloui, Fayrouz Yousfi

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## Abstract

In 2016, the Rif witnessed popular and political mobilisations. After more than six months of rally, the Moroccan State's crackdown on the protest has led to the arrests of over 450 protesters and activists. Following this authoritarian backlash, Moroccan political activists and rights groups had to adjust their human rights activism under this restrictive and repressive regime. This article aims at in-depth analysing through participatory observation and interviews how these groups are reclaiming human rights as a politics of resistance. Through the Committee in Solidarity with Hirak's Political Prisoners in Casablanca and international rights groups, this article will analyse the involvement of political activists and international rights groups within an authoritarian and repressive regime. This article argues that the use of human rights discourse was a common ground for different political and human rights actors to serve the struggle for the liberation of the Hirak's political prisoners.

## Introduction

The death of Mohcine Fikri - a fish vendor crushed in a garbage truck on the 28th of October 2016 while he was trying to retrieve his merchandise after it was confiscated by local authorities - sparked the launch of the 'Hirak', movement in Arabic, the Rif region's struggle for social justice, political and economic rights. Since then the northern region of Morocco, where the Rif is located, has witnessed a heightened and historical level of struggle. Despite state crackdown and maneuvers to discredit the Hirak, the movement was able to build political consciousness and bring several thousands<sup>1</sup> of people to the streets in contestation with the Moroccan state and its apparatus.

The popular movement was met with violent repression from the Moroccan state, which crushed the Hirak and silenced the people of the Rif. A pillar tactic of the state's repression was mass imprisonment, including of Hirak activists. By May 2017, hundreds of people were arrested, out of which 53 including Hirak leaders were transferred from al-Hoceima to Casablanca. Consequently, and conscious of the difficulties faced by detainees' families, a Committee for the Support of Political Prisoners (CSPP) was formed on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017. A few months after their

arrest, Human Rights Watch (HRW) started mobilizing its resources to closely document the unjustified arrests and violent repression of protests in the Rif region.

In this paper, we analyse the re-integration of human rights discourse as part of political and social mobilizations in the context of the post 2011 Moroccan state, "democratic transition," and increasing criminalization of social movements. Through participatory observation, this article will shed light on how human rights discourse is reclaimed as a politics of resistance and thoroughly examine the roles and the involvement of political activists and international rights groups within an authoritarian and repressive regime. We do this through looking at the utilization of human rights discourse by two different groups involved in the struggle for the release of political prisoners incarcerated in the regime's authoritarian jails. The focus on CSPP and HRW is not an insignificant choice, both of the authors were involved in these two organisations. El Kahlaoui Soraya was a member of the CSPP, and Yousfi Fayrouz was working for HRW as a research assistant from February 2018 until December 2018; closely monitoring and covering "Hirak".

First, we will briefly outline the policies and strategies of the rule of King Mohammed VI when he ascended to the throne in July 1999. We will then give a brief overview of the emergence of the 'Hirak' in the northern region of Morocco. Finally, we will conduct a comparative analysis of how human rights discourse is appropriated by different actors to serve their goals.

### **Social Inequalities and 'Human Rights Washing'**

The accession to the throne of King Mohammed VI was marked by two political messages. The "new" King wants to be a democrat who cares for the welfare of his people. Thus, in the early 2000s, democratic liberalization was accompanied by the making of a royal figure who is close to the people. Mohammed VI, nicknamed at the beginning of the throne "king of the poor", often indulged in the spectacle of charity among a crowd of indigents. On national television, the authoritarian figure of Hassan II was replaced by the figure of a young king breaking with the past, distributing *harira* (i.e. Moroccan soup) to the underprivileged during Ramadan, offering wheelchairs to the disabled, inaugurating a panoply of social projects. In short, King Mohammed VI repositioned his political figure by appropriating the social question. Thus, he not only gave political openness to historical opponents but also engaged in "social reconciliation" with the people<sup>2</sup>. A reconciliation that is set in the context of many revolts which reflect the deepening crisis of neoliberalism and authoritarianism.

The establishment of the new political marketing of the 2000s has earned King Mohammed VI much praise for his so-called democratic transition initiative. Of course, this royal enterprise did not remain confined to a (re) shaping of the image of the king. For the king to be king, it was necessary to initiate changes to begin the "democratic transition". During the heydays of "good governance", enacted at the beginning of the 2000s, Moroccan state reform offered interesting observations regarding the mechanisms of political reconfigurations within an authoritarian context. An example is the two main reforms of 2003: the reform of the Labour Code and the

reform of the personal status code (*Moudawana*) transformed to the Family Code, which is relatively favourable to feminist demands. Furthermore, the reign of Mohammed VI also witnessed the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (IER) to repair the state crimes of the "years of lead" (in reference to lead bullets fired against civilians. It was period under King Hassan II from the early 1960s until the 1990s marked by state violence, reinforcement of terror and repression against political dissidents and militants<sup>3</sup>).

These changes in the regime and new institutional arrangements took place in the structural context of social precariousness and insecurity encountered by many Moroccan citizens and resulted in the heightening social and political struggle. Indeed, the years 2000s were marked by the multiplication of forms of social protest, the human rights movements, the feminist, the Islamist or the alter-globalist movements, to the challenges brought by social demands often framed by the associative movement<sup>4</sup>. Thus, as Myriam Catusse and Frédéric Vairel clarify:

"despite the authoritarianism of the Moroccan regime, public action cannot be reduced to top-down processes that the Royal Palace would be all about Once the sole initiator, the arbitrator and the project manager (...) at the confines of institutional politics and informal politics, it appears that the autonomy of the Moroccan state vis-à-vis the social forces is all relative "

During the uprisings that spread across the Middle East and North African region in 2011, the Moroccan state distinguished itself as a country undergoing a "peaceful transition". Built as a transitional model, Morocco has been able to demonstrate to international bodies its ability to "manage the crisis", by democratizing the country from above: constitutional change and first free election putting the main opposition party in power - the Party Justice and Development (PJD)<sup>5</sup>. However, behind this democratic facade there was widening and deepening inequality. The welfare state has not been strengthened, as rightly noted by Myriam Catusse, the reforms have privileged the discharge of the state from actors or private institutions<sup>6</sup>. Indeed, after the 1980s, the Moroccan neoliberal state embraced privatisation as the panacea for the deteriorated economic situation, making it its main feature<sup>7</sup>. The policies were then turned towards 'enabling' markets relation, removing trade barriers and decreasing government spending through the release of state-owned companies into the private sector<sup>8</sup>. Economic restructuring in Morocco and other Arab states was dominated by the idea that the process of development and growth improvement could not be achieved without a strong private sector. Indeed, the International Financial Institutions-led policies highlight the importance of the invisible hand of the market to guarantee a more efficient state and better growth<sup>9</sup>.

Hence, the Moroccan state never articulated social issues of poverty and inequality as political in nature, which would involve structural and institutional reforms of the state<sup>10</sup>. In fact, since 2011, Morocco has been in a state of upheaval. From the February 20 movement, which emerged during the 2011 uprisings and was the main organiser of mass mobilisation, to the birth of the Hirak of the Rif in 2017, many mobilizations have sprung up all over the territory, putting a strain on state's social and economic development policies with the claim of a right to resources and public services for local communities. Nevertheless, and despite the political ambition of these projects, Morocco still suffers from large disparities in wealth and inequalities<sup>11</sup> of development between the

territories<sup>12</sup>, despite the efforts made by the Moroccan government in the past, particularly with the launch of large programs such as the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH)<sup>13</sup> or the Cities Without Slums Program (VSB)<sup>14</sup>. The implementation of the strategy of the mega-project, while contributing to an official reduction in the poverty rate (from 15.3% in 2001 to 4.8% in 2014), resulted in the creation of development niches which do not benefit local development and which have even sometimes accentuated territorial imbalances on a national scale.

Thus, while these major development projects do not lead to the development of a comprehensive national development strategy that could create an equilibrium between marginalized territories<sup>15</sup> and the metropolitan area, they also create conflicts between local communities and the state<sup>16</sup>. To this end, since 2016, the proliferation of major social movements such as 'Hirak' or other movements in the country demanding social justice and the right to access resources, have come to put in crisis the state's development policy and have shown the contradictions of the politics of mega projects. Water stress, overexploitation of mining and fishing resources, but also land tension partly due to the accelerated urbanization of Morocco, generate an upsurge in social mobilization that oppose state marginalisation of populations.

### **A Security-Oriented Approach to the Hirak's Margins' Movement**

It is in this context that in April 2017 the Hirak of the Rif emerged. Rising to an unprecedented wave of indignation, the city of Al Hoceima, from which Mohcine Fikri comes from, became the scene of strong mobilizations, which quickly spread throughout the country. Numerous rallies were organized throughout Morocco to pay tribute to his memory and denounce the growing social inequalities in the country. However, despite the magnitude of the first mobilizations, the dispute seemed, at first sight, to have been quickly stifled. Indeed, the media, inspired by the organization of the Conference of Parties (COP) 22 which took place in Marrakech in November 2016, had then diverted their eyes from the Rif.

Yet during that time, the Hirak was silently organizing<sup>17</sup>. It must be said that in terms of contestation, this is not the first time the Rif revolted against state's marginalisation, and for good reason. Already in the colonial era, the Rif region was known for its particular resistance to French and Spanish colonisation, and for its mass participation in the liberation struggle at the time of independence. It was during this historical period that the famous figure of Abdelkrim El Khattabi (1882-1963), an independent dissident who later became an opponent of the Moroccan monarchy, whose interests he believed were too closely linked to the colonial power, emerged. Sentenced to exile to Egypt, Abdelkrim El Khattabi repeatedly articulated the need to decolonize Morocco and achieve real independence for the Maghreb region. El Khattabi died in 1963 in Cairo, but his words continue to resonate in the Rif, the stronghold of resistance to the authoritarianism of King Hassan II. In 1984, at the height of the lead years, King Hassan II delivered a very harsh speech directed to his opponents, calling, in particular, the people of the Rif "scum" - *awbach*: "The Awbachs: Nador, Tetouan, Al Hoceima and Ksar El Kebir. The unemployed *Awbach* are those who live off

smuggling and theft,"<sup>18</sup> he said. This sentence marked the beginning of long years of repression and economic marginalization of the Rif region.

Today, more than 30 years later, the Rifains still remember their history of struggle and the years of repression. Certainly, the political and economic context has changed. At the beginning of his reign, Mohammed VI began a process of reconciliation with the region of the Rif and many investments were made. But these investments have not been sufficient, and the wealth has not "trickled down" to the local population of the Rif. And for good reason, following the neoliberal path, Morocco is engaged in a development focused on foreign investment and privatization, which constitute two paths of development that contribute to increasing inequalities and depriving the local population of their right to resources<sup>19</sup>. Thus, the Rif, a region contiguous to the Mediterranean Sea, sees almost all of its fishing resources exploited by large foreign companies. The artisanal fishing activity has now almost disappeared. As a result, local fish has become inaccessible to the population. In return, no alternative employment opportunities were created, pushing the youth unemployment rate to a record high.

On the 26th of May 2017, as a turning point in the crackdown against the 'Hirak' and its activists, the Moroccan authorities arrested Nasser Zefzafi, after he interrupted a prayer ceremony at a mosque in al-Hoceima to protest the state's manipulation of religion and the preacher's anti-Hirak propaganda. During the Hirak upheaval, Nasser Zefzafi, originally from al-Hoceima, was 39 years old and unemployed as revealed in an interview with Le Monde "Simple Rifain of modest origin, who suffers from state's policy of abandonment of the State"<sup>20</sup>.

The arrest of the Hirak leader spawned an unprecedented wave of arrests against Hirak activists, bloggers, journalists and protesters. Indeed, between May the 26th and 31st 2017, in just 7 days, Moroccan authorities arrested more than 71 people from the Rif region. According to Amnesty International<sup>21</sup> and Human Rights Watch<sup>22</sup>, over 400 people, including minors and women, were arrested during this one-off wave of arrests. Thus, in a context of rising repression against the 'Hirak', more than 50 political prisoners, among them the leaders of Hirak, were transferred to the Oukacha prison in Casablanca awaiting a mass trial.

According to a Human Rights Watch's report<sup>23</sup>, a group of activists were put in a helicopter blindfolded; some of the activists told their lawyers that during the journey, police forces threatened to throw them from the helicopter if they did not cooperate. Once in Casablanca, the activists were sent to the headquarters of the National Criminal Police Brigade for interrogation. As reported by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, during this wave of arrests, the political prisoners were beaten, threatened with rape and subjugated to police violence. Moreover, Nasser Zefzafi was placed in solitary confinement for over a year in an empty wing of Ain Sbaa Prison 1 in Casablanca, with only half an hour, twice a day, access to the promenade yard. This is considered by the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of detainees (Mandela rules) as torture or other ill-treatment.

The trial of 53 'Hirak' activists who were transferred to Casablanca started on September 2017, four months after their arrest. Their trial was under the spotlight as many international organisations, rights groups, international and national media outlets, European parliamentarians,

Moroccan civil society members and political representatives attended the court sessions. As I have noticed during through my observation of the trial, the courtroom witnessed a heavy presence of police forces and the 53 Hirak political prisoners were held in a glass cage, a degrading practice that undermines the presumption of innocence.

For about nine months, the judge and the prosecution questioned the prisoners about their political opinions and beliefs, the reasons behind their participation in protests, their engagement in political groups and attendance of political meetings. Most of the evidence presented and held against the leaders during the trial were Facebook posts, articles written by some of the arrested journalists, and videos and photos of them at demonstrations. Facebook posts brought as evidence against the prisoners included critiques of the state's discriminatory developmental policies and the Rif's marginalization; denouncements of state oppression, militarisation and the arrest of activists; or calls for the people of the Rif to participate in the protests.

Protesting against the unfairness of the trial and the court's political bias, the 53 activists boycotted the courtroom and asked their lawyers to refuse to plead. In June 2017, the tribunal of the first instance in Casablanca upheld heavy sentences against the prisoners; all 53 political prisoners were handed down a sentence of 1 to 20 years of imprisonment and fines. The charges against them included harming the state's internal security, criminal arson, rebellion, attacking police officers while performing their duty, damaging public property, and staging unauthorised protests.

The heavy and brutal state repression of the 'Hirak' marked a turning point for the Moroccan political scene. Different political parties and civil society actors started mobilizing and demanding the immediate release of all political activists arrested during the Rif uprising and the end of the militarisation of the region. Moreover, this unprecedented wave of arrests led to the emergence of an international solidarity movement with the Hirak's political prisoners and demands for justice. In the sections that follow, we turn to examine two examples of solidarity mobilisation; the case of the Committee for the Support of Political Prisoners (CSPP) in Casablanca and the role that Human Rights Watch played in this case.

### **Documenting the Abuse in an Authoritarian Context**

As an international non-governmental organization, Human Rights Watch (HRW) monitors the violation and advocates for the implementation of human rights. Through their research and monitoring of human rights violation, the organisation calls upon the state, government and policy makers to uphold human rights. This work led the Moroccan state to officially suspend the organisation's activity in Morocco in 2015. The ban had an adverse impact on HRW's ability to carry out official work in Morocco. Growing state attacks on political activists and human rights advocates limited the organization's work of producing reports and analyses on the state of human rights in the country, while abandoning their advocacy work at the domestic level.

As a HRW's advocacy director stated "Three elements must be present in order to investigate a case; obvious human rights violation, accessibility of data and media coverage. The Hirak's case checked all these boxes". Hence, in May 2017 during the wave of arrests, HRW sought to

document and ensure that the rights of the political prisoners were respected. According to HRW's advocacy director "it is the first time that the Moroccan state massively arrest protesters, activists and journalists in just few days". He added that "these are unprecedented arrest since the 20 February movement [2011's protest movement that Morocco witnessed]".

Accordingly, HRW worked closely with the detainees' lawyers to ensure that they were not forced, coerced or deceived to sign self-incriminatory minutes of the hearing during their interrogations and that they were not subjected to police violence. From the beginning of the arrest campaign until the trial of the Hirak's activists, HRW produced seven reports documenting and strongly condemning the arrests of Hirak activists, their subjugation to police violence<sup>24</sup> and the use of violence to force the activists to sign self-incriminatory police minutes. These report also documented and denounced the illegitimate conviction of activists and journalists, and the court's disregard of police torture against Hirak activists.

HRW closely followed the arrest of Hirak political prisoners. The first report on Hirak was issued in September 2017<sup>25</sup>. It documented the use of police violence during the arrests and called upon the Moroccan state to open an investigation on torture. Almost a year later, HRW published another detailed report about the trial of the 53 Hirak activists jailed in Casablanca. The report states that "the appeals court needs to examine and discard any tainted confessions and ensure that no one is convicted except for real crimes." This report was based on reviewing "court sections of the trial judgment, 41 forensic reports, including 19 by National Human Rights Council -appointed doctors and 22 commissioned by the Casablanca first instance court, attended 17 of the 86 trial sessions, examined 55 court documents, and interviewed 10 defence lawyers and six relatives of the imprisoned activists."

In Morocco, as a result of rights groups' engagement to cover and closely monitor these violations, we have noticed that human rights struggle, and more particularly the struggle for political prisoners, is re-emerging as a collective national struggle. In this sense, HRW's work in Morocco is part of a broader legalist approach where human rights have appeared as a worldwide *lingua franca* for justice. This legal architecture is based on a set of international human rights conventions and declarations, and was followed by the emergence of international institutions, with policy making and monitoring bodies. On that matter, all of these reforms are encouraged by international civil society actors driving new standards, carrying out fact-finding missions, and encouraging victims to use international mechanisms. In a context where there is a global attack on human rights especially with the return of authoritarianism, human rights discourse and mobilization are constantly being suppressed.

The rights' group commitment in the case of the 'Hirak' political prisoners has also helped the Hirak movement to gain international support. Indeed, through the covering and monitoring of the trial, the publication of multiple reports and pressers, HRW mediated the regime's ongoing human rights violations, including its violations of international law and conventions and non-respect for fair trials. Furthermore, for the families of the victims, the support of established international organizations contributed to the legitimization of the struggle of their sons. Indeed, the reports published by the organization are used within EU and UN commissions to publicize about the

ongoing human rights violations. Not to mention, local human rights organizations and civil society actors use these publications to support their claim for a politic of resistance and advocating for the respect of human rights. These publications are used as tools serving to de-legitimize the regime and the state on multiple international platforms. The notoriety and reputation of HRW helped lawyers to advocate their case during the court, particularly when the organization published any reports about claims of police violence or unjust trials. Indeed, lawyers of Hirak political activists are using these publications within the court to justify their case and force the court to take positions on the use of forces and the political bias of the court system.

### **Unifying the Opposition Political Scene for the Release of Political Prisoners**

According to the coordinator of the CSPP, the Committee in Casablanca is an independent collective which brings together representatives of many political organisations, unions, and associations, who stand against the criminalisation of social movements. The Committee has two main objectives: first, working towards the immediate liberation of all the Hirak's political prisoners, second, morally and logically supporting the 53 political prisoners of Hirak who were transferred to Casablanca and their families.

Since the beginning, we observed that the CSPP was in contact both with the families of Hirak political prisoners and their defence lawyers in order to understand the prisoners' needs. In the first weeks, the CSPP took charge of welcoming the families to Casablanca, launching a solidarity effort that meant the detainees and their families had the necessary logistical and moral support. At the same time, the prisoners' families formed their own committee, in order to coordinate their demands to improve the detention conditions of the political prisoners. The Hirak Prisoners' Families Committee facilitated communication with the families and achieved a number of their demands, including the improvement of Hirak detainees' conditions. In addition, they managed to coordinate family visits, including the organisation of a weekly collective visit, which meant that the families can travel from al-Hoceima to Casablanca together.

On top of the logistical actions, the committee launched a series of solidarity actions with the Hirak's detainees' families, at both the national and international level. On a national level, the committee organized several demonstrations and rallies in different cities of the country. CSPP launched campaigns such as "Moroccans Out Against Political Imprisonment" and the "Moroccan Women Against Political Detention" and held a demonstration for the freeing of Silya Ziani (a former Hirak political prisoners) jointly organized with other committees in Rabat. The second campaign was launched in August 2017 called 'Art in Action: Culture in the service of the liberation of Political Prisoners of Hirak'. During this campaign, the CSPP produced 'Free Kulchi' ('Free Everyone') t-shirts and also organised a festival on the 5th of August, bringing together various artists demanding the release of Hirak's political prisoners.

On the international level, the CSPP has continuously been raising awareness regarding the plight and conditions of the Hirak's political prisoners, notably via launching an international call-out which has been signed notably by figures such as Noam Chomsky, Ken Loach and Arundhati Roy.

Today, the CSPP continues to carry out actions, reaffirming the need to create a united front able to pressure the Moroccan state to free all of the Hirak's political prisoners.

The experience of the CSPP, which was not the only organization active in solidarity with the Hirak's political prisoners, is nonetheless particularly interesting due to one essential point - its strategy of deliberately mobilizing forces which were outside of those usually involved in the question of human rights in Morocco. Indeed, as one of the CSPP's members asserted:

"the constitution of the CSPP did not consist in a regrouping of political organizations, or associations engaged on the question of the humans right, as it could be the case in the frame of other organized collectives in support of activists imprisoned in the ranks of the movement of February 20 in 2011 for example."

The member added that "the specificity of this support committee has been to create a certain fringe of independence from the partisan organization by accepting from among its members partisans or independents from all sides".

Thus, in respect of the forms of spontaneous organization of the 'Hirak' of the Rif, the organizational modality of the Committee wants to be nonpartisan. The CSPP has brought together activists from the Islamist movement (Adl Wa Ihsane) as well as different movements of the left, and that of the Amazigh movement. With a total of no more than a dozen people, the CSPP managed to engage in a union that went beyond conflicts between different groups. Moreover, the CSPP managed to unite different political forces around one demand: the release of Hirak's political prisoners.

As we witnessed, the organizational form of the Committee and the communication mainly focused on the use of human rights discourse allowed the Committee - while 'Hirak' political prisoners were still in Casablanca - to unite the political opposition scene around one message that considered the political imprisonment of "Hirak" activists to constitute a serious violation and attack of every citizen's fundamental rights. Here, it seems particularly interesting to underline that in particular circumstances, notably those of increasing securitization and repression, the use of human rights discourse which is in particular centred on the right to demonstrate, or the right to freedom of expression, makes it possible to form a united front that breaks the fragmentation so entrenched on the scene.

In Morocco, and in this specific case, it is the union between Islamist and the progressive blocs that has particularly marked a turning point in the modalities of collective action of the Moroccan opposition scene. It is by describing itself mainly as a citizen group and focusing these actions on the support of the families of political prisoners that the Committee managed to gain sympathy with a whole fringe of the active civil society of Casablanca. Thus, because the first actions neither entail a political message nor were they marked by a particular political ideology, the Committee was able to create a coherent narrative around the "human" or "social" aspect which hides behind a case as "political" as the Hirak. This choice was not insignificant, as the former coordinator of the CSPP said: "the choice was initially marked by a conscious desire of the founders to inscribe the Committee in the organizational logic of "Hirak", a movement which described itself as "popular" that is to say not partisan."

This choice, therefore, shaped the sense of trust that could be built with the families of the prisoners. It is only after this first "social" period of work, which consisted mainly of improving detention conditions for political prisoners and the logistical support provided to their families (including their weekly visit), that the CSPP was able to politicize these actions by organizing rallies. But here again, particular attention needs to be paid to never "politicizing" the CSPP in the partisan sense of the term, meaning support for the political prisoners of Rif and Hirak. On the one hand, because the political prisoners themselves remained very suspicious of traditional political organizations, notably due to the potential risk of co-optation of the movement. On the other hand, because the cohesion of the Committee depended on the balance between activists coming from different political horizons; this equilibrium could only be sustained through the use of a human rights discourse. Thus, while the use of human rights discourse makes it possible in an authoritarian context to form a tool of resistance to defend the rights of citizens who mobilize for their dignity and social justice, it is also important to note that the human rights discourse can also allow, in some particular situations, the constitution of unitary fronts with an aim of supporting causes that undermine freedom's violation by authoritarian regimes.

## Conclusion

Through an analysis of the two types of organizations mobilized around the issue of 'Hirak' of the Rif's political prisoners, these research findings show how the use of human rights discourse in Morocco was mobilized as a tool of resistance to counter the security offensive of the authoritarian Moroccan state. In particular, what seems interesting in the analysis of the two cases studied is to see how the use of human rights can be mobilized to bring about different political and human rights actors to demand the release of the political prisoners. The example of the Committee for the Support of Political Prisoners (CSPP) shows that the universalist nature of the human rights discourse has helped to create a unitary front around the issue of the release of political prisoners, allowing the rallying of activists from sometimes radically opposed political edges. On the other hand, the reporting work carried out by an organization such as HRW on human rights abuses not only made it possible to offer international media coverage of the case of Hirak political prisoners, but also succeeded in shaming the regime for its clear and obvious human rights violation. Thus, it seems important that the use of human rights can be used by different local organizations from different political backgrounds to support a political cause in which fundamental rights have been violated by an authoritarian state.

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