

Hundreds arrested in crackdown on Rif movement in Morocco

Over 200 activists from the Rif region in far north of Morocco have been arrested since late May 2017, in an attempt by Morocco's authoritarian monarchy to crush a widespread protest movement demanding an end to repression and social justice. The detainees include Nasser Zefzafi, an unemployed activist who has played a key role in leading the protest movement, Mohamed Jalloul, a left-wing activist and former political prisoner and Salima Ziani, a student activist and musician who is known as "Silya". Four leading activists from the Al Hoceima branch of Morocco's largest union federation, the Union Marocaine du Travail were also arrested in the crackdown.

The detainees are facing serious charges and potentially years in jail if convicted. However, the movement of solidarity is growing across Morocco, with tens of thousands taking to the streets of the capital Rabat on 11 June in protest at the arrests.

This latest wave of repression follows months of mobilisation in the Rif region. After the killing of the young fish seller Mohsin Fikri in the city of Al Hoceima 28 October last year, by police and municipal officials who confiscated his wares and started up a rubbish truck when he climbed in to retrieve them, tens of thousands took to the streets in protest in 50 cities across the country.

They demanded justice for Mohsin and the prosecution of those responsible, not just the minor officials who the government offered up as scapegoats.

Mohsin Fikri's death revealed deep anger over a wide range of economic and political issues, in particular the economic marginalisation and political and cultural repression of the Rif region. The failure of the state to respond to this anger, has led to the explosion of a radical mass movement in which young people and women are playing a crucial role. This is also a revolt against the devastating effects of unemployment and the neoliberal policies of austerity and privatisation which the Moroccan state has pursued for decades.

The demands of the movement in the Rif include

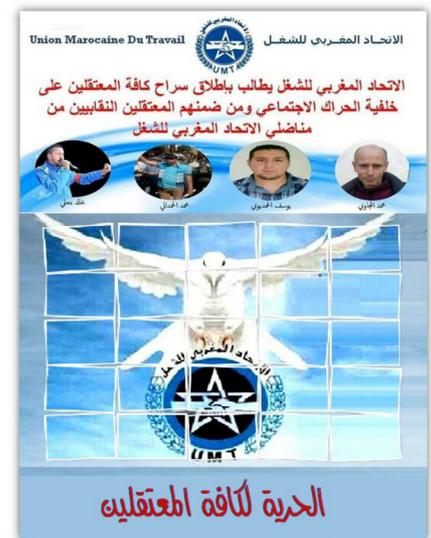
- The release of political detainees from the February 20 movement which mobilised tens of thousands during 2011 and led Morocco's participation in the



Above: Nasser Zefzafi is one of the leaders of the movement | Photo: via Facebook
Below right: The UMT union federation is campaigning for the prisoners | Photo: UMT



Silya has been arrested
Photo: Abid Photography



- Arab Revolutions
- The lifting of the military-style occupation of Al Hoceima by the Moroccan army and security forces.
 - Investment in a public university, schools and hospitals for the Rif region
 - The agricultural, fishing and forestry resources of the region should be used to benefit the region itself.
 - Provision of work for the unemployed as the level of graduate unemployment in the Rif is around 60 percent.

Take action

- **Sign the solidarity statement with the Rif prisoners online at www.menasolidaritynetwork.com/rifsolidarity**
- **Call on your trade union branch to pass a resolution calling for the immediate release of the Rif prisoners and all political detainees in Morocco**

www.menasolidaritynetwork.com

for news, updates and campaign resources. Twitter: @MENAsolidarity