كسر القوالب

Breaking the mold

#Breaking_The_Mold
Arab Civil Society Actors and their Quest to Influence Policy-Making

Country: **Morocco**

Another perspective on the Moroccan General Context

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The conflict over the form of the regime in Morocco was the subject of an intellectual and political debate between the monarchy and the national movement components since its independence in 1956. However, the level of the conflict as mentioned above rose after the two coup attempts led by part of the army (1971 and 1972), with the emergence of radical left-wing political parties against the monarchy, and the consequent fierce repression led by the regime and its conservative means, in which the simplest guarantees of a fair trial were absent.

The foregoing made some progressive elites lead a civil movement with political principles by establishing human rights, cultural, women's and trade union organizations. They tried to use civil approaches to plead/struggle to extract what could be extracted from public and individual rights and freedoms, especially after the prosecution of some leftist parties during the 1970s, the criminalization of affiliation to the National Union of Moroccan Students since 1981 and the trial of prominent trade unionists (1992), etc.

However, the twentieth century witnessed momentous changes in the regime's behavior towards its opponents, on the one hand, and with civil actors, on the other hand, due to the international, regional and local changes that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall and the bloody events that Algeria witnessed, known as Algerian Civil War. King Hassan II's illness and his reflection in preliminary step for an easy transition to the throne avoided Morocco the repercussions of the cruel economic crisis that followed the structural adjustment program (SAP) after the International Monetary Fund's agreement. That resulted in the outbreak of union and popular protests that were met with violent repression, most notably what happened in Fes (1990).

The foregoing prompted the regime to adopt a set of reformative measures, including establishing the Advisory Council on Human Rights (1990), amending the Constitution (1992), creating a Ministry for Human Rights (1993), then issuing a comprehensive amnesty for political detainees (1994), amending the Constitution again (1996), on the one hand, and social dialogue with workers' representatives, which ended in the signing of a joint agreement (1996), between the government, the General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises, the General Union of Workers and the Democratic Confederation of Labor, on the other hand. However, the regime encouraged establishing what was known at the time as the organizations of the plains, mountains and valleys[1], to compete with the emerging civil organizations that occupied a significant place, in parallel with the changes in the public scene.

After the agreement with the national opposition, known as the consensual succession (1998), and the formation of the government from the components of the National Bloc led by Professor Abderrahmane Youssoufi, the performance of civic actors developed significantly, as the first organized national campaign against violence against women was launched (1998), by the sector in charge of women's affairs, at the time, in partnership with civil organizations.

However, the presentation of the plan of the national plan for women's integration in development (March 18, 1999), and the public debate that resulted from it, played a central role in the emergence of many associations with a clear civil vision, which defended this plan in the name of modernity's values and human rights as recognized in the international charters.

1 *(Muhammad Al-Ashhab. (2015) How were the Plains, Mountains and Valleys Associations established?)* http://www.alakhbar.press.ma

On the other hand, although it led to the emergence of other women's associations affiliated with the Islamist political parties, they opposed the same plan in the name of authenticity and the defense of Islamic law. With the succession of the throne (1999), King Mohammed VI adopted a set of measures to limit the repercussions of his father's period, such as the exemption of the powerful Interior Minister Idris Basri (1999), unwanted by the progressive forces, permission for the return of Abraham Serfaty (1999) and the establishment of the Independent Arbitration Commission (1999), to compensate victims of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance, and establish the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (2001) that addresses developing and maintaining the Amazigh language and culture, amending and simplifying laws related to the establishment of civil organizations (2002), issuing the Family Code (2003), which brought legislation in favor of women, and then creating the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (2004), to investigate past severe violations, and the launch of the National Initiative for Human Development (2005), through which the state sought to involve some associations in various stages, from proposing projects to the stage of completion, tracking and assessment[2]. This aimed at reducing the repercussions of neoliberal trends, after the government was engaged in liberalizing the economy, privatizing the productive public sectors, and prioritizing the control of macroeconomic balances, which led to negative results on the standard of living poor, even middle, social classes.

Based on the foregoing, it can be said that the legal and institutional reforms as mentioned above contributed to the emergence of many civil organizations, which subsequently had an opportunity to interact with the many public matters, which resulted from the changes in the general context, on the economic, social, cultural and political levels. The funding provided by state institutions and international organizations also contributed to the development of civil actors' roles, which allowed it to establish coalitions, direct petitions and memoranda, and organize protests to demand the decision-maker to meet their demands.

Among the manifestations of those as mentioned above was the increased number of organizations to more than 50 thousand organizations (2010), working in several domains, including the organization of protests and public gatherings, which reached more than 14 thousand and 400 demonstrations and public gatherings in different regions of the Kingdom (2009), according to the Minister of Interior at the time, and which was organized by several human rights, association, trade union and political figures[3].

However, the one who researched the reformative steps that Morocco witnessed at the beginning of the third millennium will conclude that they were carefully examined and limited and did not result from the government. Among the manifestations was the sudden removal of Prime Minister Abderrahmane Youssoufi (2002), the leftist leader, who contributed to the transition of the throne, although his party won the first place in the legislative elections, against what was known at the time as the democratic methodology and the restriction on the freedom of the press that appeared with the beginning of Muhammad VI's regime and the promulgation of the Terrorism Act (2003).

2 - (Moulay Abdel Samad Saber (2016). Development of civil society's relationship with the state, conflict and limiting or interaction and partnership: Moroccan civil society as an example) https://www.mominoun.com
3 - (2010. The number of associations in Morocco exceeds 50 thousand). https://www.hespress.com

BREAKING THE MOLD PROJECT

In mid-2018, the "Civil Society Actors and Policymaking in the Arab World" program at IFI, with the support of Open Society Foundations, launched the second round of its extended research project "Arab Civil Society Actors and their Quest to Influence Policy-Making". This project mapped and analyzed the attempts of Arab civil society, in all its orientations, structures, and differences, to influence public policy across a variety of domains. This research produced 92 case studies outlining the role of civil society in impacting political, social, economic, gender, educational, health-related, and environmental policies in ten Arab countries: Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen, and the Arab Gulf.

Over two dozen researchers and research groups from the above countries participated in this project, which was conducted over a year and a half. The results were reviewed by an advisory committee for methodology to ensure alignment with the project's goals, and were presented by the researchers in various themed sessions over the course of the two days.

THE CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS AND POLICY-MAKING PROGRAM

at the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at AUB, examines the role that civil society actors play in shaping and making policy. Specifically, the program focuses on the following aspects: how civil society actors organize themselves into advocacy coalitions; how policy networks are formed to influence policy processes and outcomes; and how policy research institutes contribute their research into policy. The program also explores the media's expanding role, which some claim has catalyzed the Uprisings throughout the region.

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