Moroccan government fears outbreak of mass protests

By Alejandro López

As millions of people march in Egyptian cities and protests continue in Tunisia after the ouster of former dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the Moroccan monarchy fears that it may be the next to face mass protests.

According to reports on Spanish public television, Moroccan troops are being sent towards major Moroccan cities, including Casablanca and Rabat, from their bases in the Western Sahara. The Moroccan ambassador in Madrid denounced this report.

Pro-government newspapers in Morocco also criticized statements by dissident journalist Abidja Jamai in French news magazine Le Nouvel Observateur. Jamai said that if protests broke out in Morocco, “the disparities in wealth are such that the rebellion will be much bloodier than in Tunisia.”

However, fears of mass social protest are being raised even by members of Morocco’s royal family. In an interview with the Spanish daily El País, Prince Mulay Hicham, the cousin of King Mohamed VI, warned: “Almost every authoritarian system will be affected by this wave of protest, institutions to work out a plan to address these. Many students are obviously unable to afford the cost of higher education. This worries me! Education, from pre-primary to higher education, is a right and not a privilege. Therefore, each and every Moroccan child should have access to affordable education.

For 2010/2011 financial year, UNAM received NS274 million and the Polytechnic received NS156 million. That demonstrates the commitment of taxpayers to education.

The market has expressed concern that in some areas we under-train, whereas there is an over-supply of graduates in some areas. Leaders at Institutions of Higher Learning, let’s work together and produce a skilled workforce.

National Council on Higher Education (NCHE)

During the course of 2010/2011, we will finalise the amendments of the Higher Education Legislation. The legislation is aimed at giving the NHCE new meaning and sound authority to deal with Higher Education matters.

We must ensure that NCHE is well resourced with the necessary human resources and finances to properly execute its mandate. At the moment NCHE is under resourced. It is starved!!

Crime, lack of transport for students at Tertiary Institutions

Incidences of crime against students are rife. Students are forced to walk at night. This poses real danger.

It is good omen that many Morocco will probably be no exception”.

Asks about similarities between Tunisia and Morocco, the prince explained: “The gap between social classes under Tertiary Institutions is in towns. The main campuses are based in the heart of the City of Windhoek. I invite Municipalities to consider introducing tailormade public transport for students. Yes, it is costly, but I say yes, it is doable. Many countries in the world have such systems in place and a comparative study could be conducted.

Ill-prepared products from Secondary schools to Tertiary institutions

This revelation calls for drastic and urgent interventions so that the products leaving secondary schools are well prepared to enter Tertiary education.

This surely calls for immediate transformation of our basic education system.

As with secondary level the highest failures rates at tertiary education are mainly due to Science subjects especially Mathematics and Commerce fields.

The way-forward in Financing Tertiary Education and the revamping of the National Student Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF)

There has been constant heart-aching outcry from students about the efficiency or ineffectiveness of the services rendered by NSFAF. I appeal to the leadership of Tertiary Institutions and Management of the Ministry to find a solution to this unending outcry.

Perpetual concerns with the Fund include the late payment to the various institutions, errors in supporting documents, double payments, over and underpayments, late referrals to students, wrong students numbers, at times payments do not match promises contained in the award letters and paperwork.

The budgetary allocation to the NSFAF in 2010/2011 financial year stands at NS224 million. This amount supports students studying at our tertiary institutions and those abroad. In 2010 a total of 15,025 students were supported as follows:

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- Polytechnic, 5644
- IUM, 477 students.

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Certificated courses.

Surely, as a nation we can do better for the Namibian child. We must guard against a system where access is one of the factors to attain access to tertiary education. The result is that only students who were supported by NSFAF in some countries. Drastic measures will be taken against those students misbehaving and tarnishing the good name of Namibia.

A study on the reform of Tertiary Education funding is under way.

The study will include a review and revamping of the Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF) and its support mechanism. This study is being conducted by the Ministry to find a solution to this unending outcry.

Polytechnic Request for name change

The Polytechnic has requested to be renamed the Namibia University of Science and Technology. This request has been taken before that this request is contemplated there should first be a comprehensive and holistic review of the entire Higher education system in Namibia. The Ministry will therefore finalize such a study during the course of this year.

Grades 10 and 12 Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate

The results for Grade 10 1993 the percentages of learners qualifying for admission to Grade 11 averaged between a minimum of 37.2% to a mere maximum of about 50%. The failure rates are more symptomatic of a greater problem that needs an immediate transformation of our education system.

Performance grade 10 in 2010

Surely, as a nation we can do better for the Namibian child. The above result is unacceptable. Where there is a will there is a way.

It is worrisome that since the 1993 percentage of learners qualifying for admission to Grade 11 have been between a minimum of 37.2% to a mere maximum of about 50%. The failure rates are more symptomatic of a greater problem that needs an immediate transformation of our education system.

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