

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 embassy in Madrid denounced this report.

Pro-government newspapers in Morocco also criticized statements by dissident journalist Abubakr 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 Namibian child should have access to affordable education.

For 2010/2011 financial year, UNAM received N\$274 million and the Polytechnic received N\$156 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 NHCHE 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 strangulated!!

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".

Asked about similarities between Tunisia and Morocco, the prince explained: "The gap between social classes under-

Tertiary Institutions are in towns. The main campuses are based in the heart of the City of Windhoek. I invite Municipalities to consider introducing tailor-made 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 consistent heart-aching outcry from students about the efficiency or inefficiency 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 refunds to stu-

mines the legitimacy of political and economic system." He added that Morocco's political establishment itself is badly split: "If most social agents recognize the monarchy, they are,

dents, wrong students numbers, at times payments do not match promises contained in the award letters and much paperwork.

The budgetary allocation to the NSFAF in 2010/2011 financial year stands at N\$224 million. This amount supports students studying at our tertiary institutions and those abroad. In 2010 a total of 15825 students were supported as follows:

UNAM, 3792, Polytechnic, 5644, and IUM, 477 students. Fixed quotas of 4807 for *VTCs*, *NIMT & Education Colleges Students* were also supported. Students at foreign institutions included. SADC 599, Zimbabwe 161 (special programmes), Algeria 81, Russia 105, China 25, Czech 21, Turkey 2, Greece 1 and Cuba 110.

The Ministry unfortunately is receiving news of bad behavior by some of the students 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).

Specific attention is *inter alia* to develop a transparent award process, instituting a Selection Committee to include regional representations to ensure that equitable access of rural based versus urban based students is implemented.

Polytechnic request for

nevertheless, dissatisfied with the strong concentration of power in the hands of the Executive."

Rabat is trying to prevent an explosion of popular anger, by claiming that it will guarantee the stability of prices for basic products. The minister of Communications and spokesman of the government, Jalid Nasiri, declared that the stability of prices will be guaranteed through the Compensation Fund, a fund through which Morocco intervenes in the markets to lower prices of products such as flour, sugar, butane gas or gasoline.

The Moroccan government's fears are also shown by the huge police deployments it has organized against the small protests that have already broken out.

On Sunday night, hundreds of people participated in demonstrations in Fez and Tangier called by the anti-globalization group ATTAC (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens), in solidarity with protests in Egypt. They shouted, "Mubarak, Mubarak, Saudi Arabia awaits you"—in reference to the asylum Saudi Arabia gave Ben Ali.

On Monday a demonstration called by the Moroccan Association for Human Rights gathered 100 to 150 people in front

name change

The Polytechnic has requested to be renamed the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

A decision has been taken that before this request is contemplated there should first be a comprehensive and holistic review of the entire Higher education system. 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 since 1993 invite the nation as a whole to pause and seriously ponder. The situation is too serious! We must think and speak as a nation. We should avoid pointing fingers, apportioning blame but be a united nation with one goal: continuous betterment of our education system.

Failure rates, dropouts and repetition

We should admit that there are some disconnects and misfits in our education system. I am convinced that, we can only succeed if Pre-school is linked to Pre-primary, Primary, Secondary, Vocational and Higher education.

It's our duty to find solutions to the high rate of dropouts, repetition rates and failure rates. This haunts the nation since 1993. I call the nation not to be divided on this.

We spend too much money on repetition, drop-outs and failures. We must adjust where the problem is. We cannot afford to send children in the

of the Egyptian Embassy in Rabat. The protestors shouted "Mubarak go away" and "democracy for the Arab people." The small demonstration was surrounded by a huge police deployment.

The same day 40 teachers tried to immolate themselves in front of the Ministry of Education in Rabat, in protest of their sacking in 2008. According to Hafid Libi, leader of the National Coordination of the Non-Integrated Voluntary Teachers, these teachers had not received "any help whatsoever, and the state has not kept their promise of providing permanent jobs." Though police intervened to stop the burning, women were hospitalized with serious injuries.

The self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi last December in Tunisia began the wave of protests now shaking the Arab world.

Social conditions in Morocco are explosive. The country has emerged as a major source of cheap labor for European multinationals. Workers who are employed are highly exploited, while unemployment stands at 9 to 10 percent—though the real figure is thought to be far higher—and youth unemployment is officially around 20 percent.

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streets year in and year out. I direct that the Management of the Ministry work with Directors of Education and school principals and readmit the Grade 10. Where there is a will there is a way.

It is worrisome that since 1993 the percentages of learners qualifying for admission from Grade 10 to 11 have been between a minimum of 37.2% to a mere maximum of about 50%. The failure rates are mere symptoms of a greater problem that a nation should tackle.

Performance of Grade 10 in 2010

Surely, as a nation we can do better for the Namibian child. Let us accept that there are hurdles and difficulties. Let's face these head-on!!

This situation calls for all of us as a nation to stand up and embark upon a holistic transformation of our education system. Yes, there are no miracles, magic, overnight remedies and quick fixes to a mammoth task such as education. Structural adjustment is necessary but of course not easy. I am mindful that it will be resisted by some.

Experiences globally indicate that it takes about six years to adequately transform an education system. I propose that we give ourselves a target of four years.

There are some schools that performed exceptionally well in 2010. Congratulations! Out of 33,570 full time Grade 10 candidates, 17,187 have qualified to proceed to Grade 11. Our common pain is that

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Education

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with passion and vigor. We only have 19 years to 2030. The engine for us to reach Vision 2030 is Education. If Education fails, Vision 2030 will not be realized. Education is a key to unlock doors. It levels the playing fields in the wellbeing of humankind.

I am inviting all of us to enter that future on an informed basis as citizens. A future, where our worth, honor, dignity and respect is guaranteed.

This morning I would like to address several education issues.

Tertiary education:

Challenges faced by students at Tertiary Institutions

Tertiary education is faced by its unique challenges that deserve deliberate focus and attention. I am interested to listen to students voices. It is their future! I welcome the students and youth organizations amongst us today. I am interested to listen to the voices of leaders in Education.

The enrollments at both UNAM and the Polytechnic have phenomenally increased within the last five years. In 2006, UNAM had an enrolment of 8863 students and increased to 12 300 students in 2010. The Polytechnic had 7396 students in 2006 which increased to 11 531 in 2010.

Of prime concern is the limited classroom, library and hostel spaces and shortage of laboratory equipment, computers and text-books. I invite tertiary