

Fès Festival of Amazigh Culture

11-12-13 May 2018

On the theme: "Amazigh culture and the future of democracy in North Africa"

Introduction

The Fès-Sais Association, the South-North Center and the Spirit of Fes Foundation, in partnership with Fès-Meknes and the BMCE Bank Foundation, are organizing the 14th edition of the International Festival of Amazigh Culture on 11-12-13 May 2018 in Fès on the theme "Amazigh culture and the future democracy in North Africa ".

The festival falls within the framework of the royal directives concerning the promotion of Amazigh culture and Moroccan culture in general. The purpose of this initiative is to focus on the relationship between the material and intangible Amazigh heritage of North African cultures, the role of Amazigh culture in the process of democratization in the region and the maintenance of peace, and develop coherent strategies to promote dialogue, social cohesion and democratic culture.

The festival aims to emphasize the historical, social and cultural importance of the interplay of cultures and their impact on development and democracy. It includes two main activities:

- The International Forum on Amazigh Culture and the Future of Democracy in North African Countries "
- A music festival for song and poetry.

The festival seeks to highlight the positive impact of multiculturalism on social and cultural development and to think about ways to promote a culture of dialogue, democracy, solidarity and tolerance.

In addition to the forum, the festival will include major demonstrations of the Amazigh and popular song through its poets and artists from various parts of the Kingdom and from abroad, to revive the literary heritage and artistic world.

Besides the song and poetry, the festival will also include several exhibitions:

- Books Exhibition

- Traditional Products Exhibition
- Art Exhibition
- Amazigh carpet

The International Forum

Preamble

The North African region is characterized by its cultural diversity, and Amazigh is an important component of the national identity that belongs to the Islamic cultural identity because the Amazigh population is mostly Muslim. In the history of the Maghreb, Islam has been a tool for the emergence of a new civilization in which the Amazigh culture has become assimilated to the greatness of Islam, and Arabic and the Amazigh language have always coexisted.

In response to the demands of the Moroccan Amazigh cultural movement, the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture was instituted on October 17, 2001. Amazigh was recognized as an official language in the amended constitution in 2011. This was a pioneering decision in the region to promote the Amazigh cultural heritage.

In Algeria, after a struggle of more than half a century, the Amazigh population obtained that their language be recognized as an official language in 2016.

On the other hand, French in the Maghreb, although spoken fluently, has no official status and is taught in schools as a foreign language.

In Tunisia, the last census of 2014 gives a figure of 30,371 inhabitants in the Amazigh-speaking areas in the south. It should be noted that the largest number of Berber speakers is in the region of Greater Tunis. But the new constitution does not recognize the Amazigh language. The Amazigh identity consciousness, even if it remains strong in Tunisia, is not visible from the outside. Language studies of Amazigh dialects in Tunisia are almost non-existent. To remedy this void, urgent work is needed to engage in a process of reappropriation of the Amazigh identity.

The same is the case in Mauritania. The Amazigh language is on the way of extinction. The linguistic and cultural presence of Amazigh speakers is undeniable but fragile in Mauritania.

In Libya, the Amazigh language is experiencing a revitalization after the so-called Arab Spring, and parents are now giving Amazigh names to their children, unlike during the Qaddafi period, when the use of the Amazigh language was prohibited.

In Egypt, Amazigh is spoken in Siwa, an oasis located 560 km west of Cairo and close to the Egyptian-Libyan border, in the middle of the desert. It has 25,000

inhabitants, and is the easternmost point of Amazigh population and the only one in Egypt, which gives the place a special singularity.

We cannot fail to link the discussion about Amazigh culture with the democratic process that the region is slowly experiencing. There is a connection between Amazigh emancipation and the social movement to consolidate democratic culture. The Amazigh Movement contributes to democratic change and the development of the capacity of citizens to create new types of cooperation and to participate actively in economic, social and cultural development, democracy, and citizenship through continuous cultural dialogue, research, and creativity.

Thus, multiculturalism can be considered a rich resource that can be used to involve everyone in the development process. It is understood that the integration of the Amazigh language and culture will help to establish equal opportunities for all citizens in such basic areas as education, justice, employment, and economy.

In this context, the recognition of the Amazigh language as an official national language is acknowledgment of linguistic and cultural pluralism, and the promotion of the Amazigh culture is a contribution to the consolidation of democracy, the establishment of a rule of law and a barrier to all forms of authoritarianism and exclusion.

The advancement of Amazigh language and culture can also contribute to the modernization of society, the dissemination of a culture of democracy, multiculturalism, citizenship, equality and dialogue against attempts at backwardness and regression. There is no democracy without dialogue and without freedom of expression and creativity. We also need to move on to face global challenges, including the challenge of globalization, economic, social, and technological challenges.

The forum will be an opportunity to reflect on all these challenges and to urge all actors to raise the level of democratic awareness, "eradicate illiteracy, promote the various components of national culture with a comprehensive openness to modernity, and build a society of knowledge and communication," as stated in King Mohammed VI's speech on the opening of the first year of the legislative term Seventh session of Parliament.

Forum Objectives

The purpose of this forum is to discuss the importance of dealing with the issues related to the right to cultural, religious and political differences in North Africa. This is especially important in terms of promoting the culture of difference and diversity. It is the values of tolerance and coexistence which foster the process of building a democratic society, not the values of negation, exclusion, and extremism.

The objectives of the Forum are also to highlight the cultural and civilizational diversity of North Africa, which has multicultural roots and common values such as community spirit (vs. individualism), hospitality, the importance of family ties, and the search for balance between tradition and modernity. These values are deeply rooted

among all peoples of the region, regardless of nationality, culture, language, or religion. This positive legacy is strong, and remains the best bulwark against any form of extremism and tyranny.

Forum Themes

Amazigh Cultural Movement: Outcomes and Prospects

Amazigh Culture and Islamic Movement: Any Relationship?

Amazigh Culture and Youth Movement

- Amazigh culture and women's movement
- Amazigh culture and democracy after the "Arab Spring"
- Amazigh culture and the culture of human rights
- The future of multiculturalism and democracy in North Africa

The Forum will provide an opportunity for experts, researchers and civil society actors to discuss issues related to peace, dialogue, tolerance and cultural diversity and their role in the consolidation of democracy and social development.

For further information, please contact the forum's director, Dr. Moha Ennaji:

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Important dates:

- 30 January 2018: Deadline for sending abstracts
- 17 February: Date of notification of accepted abstracts
- 11-13 May 2018: The Forum is held in Fès
- August 30th deadline for sending the revised papers