

**Sailing for Safe Abortion Access:  
The Emergence of a Conscious Social Nonmovement in Morocco**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is a case study of a direct action ship campaign and initiation of a safe abortion hotline that occurred in Morocco in October, 2012. An international non-governmental organization, Women on Waves, whose headquarters are in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, collaborated with a local Moroccan collective, Mouvement Alternatif pour les Libertés Individuelles (MALI), for this project. Women on Waves and MALI operate under the principle that a woman's right to access a safe abortion is a fundamental human right. Based on the theory of Asef Bayat and James Scott, I illustrate that medical abortion, in the particular political and cultural context of contemporary Morocco, can fit into the model of a social nonmovement. According to Bayat, a social nonmovement, defined as the contentious actions of atomized individuals, has the possibility for a pivotal moment of transformation into a social movement, conceptualized in a Western, hegemonic discourse as something collective, visible, and organized. In an inverse sequence of this model, a social movement would have the capacity to incite and inform social nonmovement. This model, a social movement to a social nonmovement, has yet to be articulated or empirically demonstrated. Additionally, I conclude that the social nonmovement as the consequence and not the precursor of social movement is a different entity that I call "conscious social nonmovement". Extensive field research, participant-observation, and scholarly reflection enable me to analyze the direct action in Morocco as the practical application of this new theoretical trajectory.

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## **I. Overview**

This project is a sociological analysis of a case study about a direct action for safe abortion access in contemporary Morocco completed in a collaborative effort by an international non-governmental organization, Women on Waves, and a local Moroccan collective, Mouvement Alternatif pour les Libertés Individuelles (MALI). Women on Waves promotes safe abortion access where it is illegal and/or highly restricted by working with local partners in a particular country. The local partners invite the Women on Waves to travel to their country as a strategy to provide safe abortions in international waters. Since 2001, Women on Waves has completed five sea voyages, with the most recent one, and the focus of this thesis, in Morocco. Abortion is an issue of public health that is relevant on a global scale. Every incident of morbidity and mortality as a result of unsafe abortion methods is a tragedy as these injuries and deaths are preventable when there is access to medicines that have been sanctioned by the World Health Organization (WHO). I provide a history and overview of Women on Waves as an organization that is both an international advocate and actor for women's health and human rights.

Since this thesis is focused on one particular event, the geographical, political, and social conditions of the event are integral to understanding its development and impact. Therefore, I situate Morocco's nuances within the diverse conglomeration of Arab-majority states that is known as the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Key to conceptualizing contemporary Morocco in this region is to acknowledge the recent revolutions that have occurred in some of these North African states as well as the mass protests, met with increased repression and violence, in others. Working within the authoritarian framework, focused on societies of the

MENA region, sociologist Asef Bayat (2010) investigates the ways in which ordinary people resist and subvert governmental constraints that infringe upon basic human rights. After defining the theory of social nonmovements, which is central to Bayat's work (2010), I argue that medical abortion in the context of contemporary Morocco should be considered a behavioral practice that can fit into the paradigm of a social nonmovement. In Bayat's theory of social nonmovements (2010), he argues that the atomized actions of individuals have the possibility to coalesce and transform into an active, unified, and collective social movement. I assert that an inverse sequence can occur in which a visible social movement can incite a social nonmovement, using medical abortion as the contentious practice in question.

Next, I describe the evolution of the safe abortion hotline in Morocco since its launch during the ship campaign in October, 2012 by MALI and Women on Waves. Finally, in the discussion section, I explore how the nonmovement of medical abortion as a consequence of movement adheres to, but also deviates from the core criteria of what Bayat (2010) considers to be a social nonmovement. The practice of medical abortion as a social nonmovement that is the result of a social movement is a characteristically different type of nonmovement in comparison to the one that is the precursor to social movement. When the start and finish line of a social movement trajectory is reversed, it does not mean that these processes occur in an equal and opposite fashion. This project has the intention to bring a new theoretical construction of resistance into the sociological imagination in order to illuminate the particular conditions where subversive acts in support of human rights can succeed under authoritarianism.



## **II. Introduction**

### *Women on Waves: The International Actor*

Maternal mortality as a result of unsafe abortion is an issue of public health in a global context. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), unsafe abortion contributes to 13% of maternal mortality worldwide (Åhman & Shah, 2008). Many countries have laws that prohibit safe and affordable abortion access. A woman who attempts to have an abortion in these restrictive settings may use dangerous methods that can result in morbidity or an untimely and preventable death. In 2003, there were 42 million abortions worldwide, 22 million that were safe and 20 million that were unsafe. In 2008, there were 21.6 million unsafe abortions globally, most of which occurred in developing countries, contributing to 47,000 maternal fatalities (Åhman & Shah, 2008). The Guttmacher Institute for Sexual and Reproductive Health has claimed that 70,000 maternal deaths from unsafe abortion occur each year (Singh, Wulf, Hussain, Bankole & Sedgh, 2009). These figures are both estimates that are likely lower than the actual number of maternal mortalities, as it is difficult to gather accurate statistics on a subject that is legally prohibited and severely stigmatized in certain countries. Unsafe abortion is not a problem of the past. Rather, it is a global issue of public health and human rights that threatens the physical and psychological health of women in the present day.

Founded in 1999 by Rebecca Gomperts, MD, MPP, Women on Waves is an international non-governmental organization that provides safe abortion and reproductive health services to women all over the world. Employing a direct action method, Women on Waves sails to countries where abortion is illegal in order to provide safe abortion access. In international waters, twelve miles out to sea, the laws that govern a ship are those of the country in which it is registered. Therefore, operating at sea on a Dutch ship, Women on Waves can legally administer

the abortion pill to women from these other countries. Women board the ship at a harbor in their native country, sail twelve miles to international waters, and then receive Mifepristone (RU-486). The ship sails back to the host country upon which the woman exits the ship and the abortion process (since medical abortion is the same as a spontaneous miscarriage) will complete itself on land. Since 2001, Women on Waves has sailed to Ireland (2001), Poland (2003), Portugal (2004), Spain (2008), and most recently, Morocco (2012). These ship campaigns are the organization's mechanism to create public awareness and gain attention from ruling political parties in specific countries where advancements in access to reproductive health are sought. The direct action method of the ship campaign is not intended to be a practical solution to a long-term problem. The ship campaigns can help a few women, but their tangible power is largely symbolic while the act of strategy itself is harnessed to create political discussion and controversy. Women on Waves has also initiated safe abortion hotlines in Ecuador, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Pakistan, Indonesia, Kenya, and Morocco, and has trained grassroots women's organizations in several southeastern African countries.

In addition to the direct action campaign of the ship, the mission of Women on Waves is to work in collaboration with local women's groups within restrictive countries to provide trainings about safe abortion and other reproductive health topics. It operates under the fundamental principle that reproductive rights are, in fact, human rights. While the organization has worked extensively in European and Latin American countries, it is now expanding its focus to the MENA region. In order to do this, Women on Waves collaborates with grassroots women groups and activists in the MENA region to educate and empower women by providing them with the knowledge to make informed decisions about their own bodies. However, unlike the

work that Women on Waves has successfully completed in the past, the MENA region presents new legal and cultural challenges from which their partnerships must develop.

*Contemporary Morocco During Revolutionary Times in North Africa*

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, unsafe abortion is the cause of approximately 11% of maternal deaths (Dabash & Roudi-Fahimi, 2008). In Morocco, approximately 600 to 800 abortions are performed daily (“Association marocaine de,”). Doctors and/or medical professionals perform 500-600 of these procedures for a very high price, since it is an illegal act. However, 150-200 of the total procedures are not performed by medical professionals who may employ dangerous methods that can cause permanent injury and/or death (“Association marocaine de,”). This daily projection of 600 to 800 abortions is a conservative estimate of how many abortions actually occur because this procedure is illegal in Morocco and it therefore difficult to obtain precise statistics. Abortion is only permitted to preserve the woman’s health and spousal authorization is mandatory (“Morocco, abortion policy,”). The WHO defines health to be both physical and mental (“Who definition of,”), so that preserving a woman’s health should encompass more than consideration of her physical vitality. However, abortion in Morocco is prohibited by the country’s penal code<sup>1</sup> and it is difficult to acquire legal approval for a case in which a woman’s life is not in immediate danger.

The public health issue of unsafe abortion in Morocco is relevant and important to research because of the most recent political uprisings and transformations in the MENA region. The 2011 revolutions in Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, combined with ongoing protests in other Arab states, have demonstrated to the world that an immense mobilization of citizens fighting for democracy and basic human rights can successfully dismantle authoritarian regimes. The MENA

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for an explanation of the Moroccan penal code.

can no longer be classified as an “exceptionalist” region of durable authoritarianism in which transitions to democracy cannot occur. While this struggle was targeted for the political, social, and economic freedoms of all citizens, the rights and status of female citizens in these societies cannot be ignored. Women in the MENA region suffer injustices that are supported by official legal documents, cultural frameworks, and the interpretation of religious scripture<sup>2</sup>. Mainstream Western media outlets frequently portray women in this region as helpless victims to their husbands, brothers, and the state. However, this is an essentialist perspective cast upon a vast geographical location comprised of many different states, each with their own unique colonial legacies and trajectories to national independence that have determined the systems of present-day governance.

Morocco is governed by a constitutional monarchy, in which King Muhammed IV now rules. Muhammed’s father, Hassan II, was the king before him. The king is referred to as “commander of the faithful” (Maghraoui & Zerhouni, 2011, p.576-7) as it is he who is ultimately responsible for all major decisions of the country. The Western media represents Morocco as a “democratic” monarchy, in which freedom of expression and freedom of association are protected by the constitution. While these freedoms are granted by the Moroccan constitution, in practice they have been numerously violated when citizens have tried to vocalize criticism of the King and/or the government. Although Morocco is relatively stable in comparison to some of its neighboring nations, it would be presumptuous to claim that transparent political processes and respect of human rights for all people are consistently practiced. A governmental parliament exists, but it is the King who still has complete control over final decisions and the ability to veto

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<sup>2</sup> This is surely not to mean that women in other parts of the world also do not suffer from injustices that are supported by discriminatory laws, cultural ideologies, and the interpretation of religious scripture.

decisions for which he does not approve. Perhaps the most despised by citizens for their well-known corruption are the *makhzen*. This word refers to all government personnel and the armed forces who use coercion to control the state, thereby enabling the King to maintain and exercise his supreme power (Maghraoui & Zerhouni, 2011, 577).

While in 2011 Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt had revolutions in which the people ousted their long-reigning dictators and are now working towards the difficult transition to democratic governance, this extent of an uprising did not occur in Morocco. King Muhammed VI was not overthrown. However, massive protests did occur along with police brutality to try and repress these dissidents. The citizens of these protests were largely part of the February 20<sup>th</sup> Movement, a broad-based coalition comprised mainly of students and young people who were frustrated by the endless corruption of the *makhzen*, lack of economic opportunity, and repression of political opposition. They initiated their first mass protest in multiple Moroccan cities on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011 (“The february 20,” 2011).

In response to these mass protests, the King issued a referendum to the constitution in 2011 to limit his executive powers as an attempt to respond to the demands of the February 20<sup>th</sup> Movement demands. However, the movement was not satisfied by the referendum because the changes were seen as superficial since Mohammad VI still possesses ultimate power (“Morocco reforms to,” 2011). Among Western media outlets, the February 20<sup>th</sup> Movement has not received the same amount of publicity as mass protests in other MENA countries, perhaps because this movement did not lead to the ousting of the country’s leader (such as in Egypt and Tunisia). The under-reported activity of this movement perpetuates the reputation of “stability” that Western countries believe is central to this North Africa kingdom’s identity.

The MENA region, as an expansive geographic locality, presents legal and cultural contexts that are enormous barriers for activists attempting to defend women's rights. Speaking out in an authoritarian regime to vehemently oppose the repression of women is a daring act that presents higher risk of arrest, torture, and death than in other parts of the world where radical feminists have triumphed in the past. Many women advocating for women's rights in the MENA region and in the country of Morocco are not complacent nor are they silent. For many years, organizations within Moroccan civil society have enabled collectives of female activists to share ideas, strategize, and lobby for political and social change. Organizations in Morocco that are dedicated to elevate the status of women in Moroccan society have existed for many years. Due largely to the pressure of civil society organizations fighting for women's rights, King Muhammad VI revised the Moroccan Family Code, called the *Mudawana*, with the approval of parliament. Many Moroccan women and men as well as external observers perceive King Mohammed VI as an advocate for women who has concretely advanced women's rights. According to Ennaji, improvements to the *Mudawana* include restricting polygamy and raising the legal age of marriage for girls from age 15 to 18 (2006, p.127). However, women's rights in Morocco in practice are far from equal to the rights that men possess.

#### *MALI: The Local Actor*

For each ship campaign, the Women on Waves ship does not simply arrive at the target country. This would be a neo-colonist and ill-informed strategy, ignorant of nuances to the local context. Conversely, a local group (or groups) within the country invites the Women on Waves to help them promote a message of access and legalization for safe abortion. A long process of planning and collaboration must take place in order for the project to be successful. Recognizing the need for safe abortion access in Morocco, Women on Waves formed a partnership with a

local Moroccan collective, the Mouvement Alternatif pour les Libertés Individuelles (MALI) to initiate a ship campaign to raise awareness about this issue that threatens the health of women. These two groups subsequently launched a safe abortion hotline for women in Morocco.

Moving beyond the traditional framework that is defined by the relationship between a medical professional and a woman desiring an abortion, Women on Waves and MALI assert that a woman has the mental and physical capacity to induce her own abortion. Aside from a medical emergency situation, a medical professional is not needed for the abortion procedure because a woman's right to govern her own physicality allows her the freedom to make and follow through with a termination of her pregnancy when she has the correct information about how exactly to do this safely. Drawing on Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and the dissemination of information ("The universal declaration,"), Women on Waves seeks to provide women with the tools necessary to complete their own abortion even when particular local and/or national law may prohibit access.

Therefore, the goal of the ship campaign, a direct action method, which took place from October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012 – October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012, was ultimately to launch a safe abortion hotline for women in Morocco as a means to disseminate information about the safety and availability of a medicine called Misoprostol. Misoprostol, which can be used to induce a safe abortion at home up until 12 weeks of gestation, is available in Morocco over the counter in a pharmacy without a prescription under the brand name Artotec. Misoprostol is on the World Health Organization's List of Essential Medicines (*Who model list*, 2011) and has been tested extensively to prove its safe and effective usage for the induction of abortion. Misoprostol can also be used to treat rheumatoid arthritis and to prevent gastric ulcers, which is why it is so readily and legally available in pharmacies in Morocco.

Women on Waves and MALI identified that women did not know about the availability of Artotec and how to use it safely and effectively to terminate a pregnancy. As a result, Women on Waves and MALI planned a direction action to provide women with the knowledge needed to take control of their own bodies. Additionally, the international media attention garnered from this ship campaign was meant to put the issue of unsafe abortion on the political agenda of the Moroccan government to create discussion about liberalizing the currently restrictive law.

It would be inaccurate to say that MALI is part of the nationally recognized women's movement in Morocco. This is because the formally sanctioned women's movement is comprised of formal non-governmental and civil society organizations. These groups, led largely by women who belong to the middle and upper-middle class, have agendas that must be deemed appropriate by the moral compass of their funders<sup>3</sup>. With respect to formal civil society in Morocco, Ennaji writes, "The lack of economic autonomy means that civil society groups and their organizations continue to be vulnerable to political pressure from the ruling elite" (2006, p.129). Thus, these non-governmental and civil society organizations focused on women's rights are not independent actors; they are bound and constrained by the monarchy if they wish to remain functional, as one of their largest funders is King Mohammed VI himself. Therefore, the Commander of the Faithful must find the platform of these organizations to be appropriate and worth monetary assistance to pursue. Women's organizations in Morocco emphasize domestic violence, sex trafficking, and helping women to develop economic skills of sustainability. They also promote development to teach women how to engage in the public and political sphere. While all of these topics are undeniably important for the women's empowerment within a

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<sup>3</sup> The notion that formal non-governmental and civil society organizations have to abide by the moral compass of their funders is not a phenomenon unique to Morocco.



patriarchal society, the issue of maternal morbidity and mortality as a result of unsafe abortion is not on their agenda.

The ideology of Women on Waves is that access to a safe abortion is a fundamental human right of all women. They advocate for the self-determination of women, regardless of the restrictive legal and social barriers that may be present. Women on Waves trusts women and believes that a woman has the mental and physical capacity to make her own choice to terminate her pregnancy and that she additionally has the capacity to carry out this procedure on her own terms through the act of a medical abortion. Therefore, the approach of empowering women, and not simply addressing them as the “victims”, counters the institutional logic of the mainstream women’s movement in Morocco. This movement does work to support women, but does so through emphasizing them more as dependent victims than as independent agents. It seeks to empower women economically and politically, but the issue of a woman’s control over her own physicality becomes complicated by social norms of conservatism and religion.

For example, Association Solidarité Feminine (ASF), is a well-known Moroccan NGO based in Casablanca. It serves as a safe haven for single mothers who are homeless and stigmatized for their out-of-wedlock motherhood. The organization provides these women with support and teaches them skills to become economically self-sufficient. However, if a pregnant woman, disowned by her family, was to arrive at ASF, abortion would never be the answer. Instead, the woman would be encouraged to have the child and to learn how to support it. In a 2009 interview, Aicha Ech-Channa, the founder and president of this organization stated, “The King and other members of the Royal Family have been supportive, in ways that are both open and private. They have given money to help build ASF, and have given their important moral support. This made a big difference, since the King has so much support, as both a religious and

political leader ("Discussions with aicha,"). This comment illustrates how certain NGOs are able to garner support of the ruling elite. Certainly, the work of Ms. Ech-Channa is vital for social change: she advocates for the recognition and rights of children who are born out of marriage. A child born out of wedlock is an extremely shameful occurrence through a traditional Moroccan perspective. However, while the mission and work of ASF is admirable, it is also limiting. It does not offer or provide a woman with a full range of choices. Therefore, finding a partner with whom to collaborate for the ship campaign was a daunting and difficult task.

MALI is a Moroccan collective well-known for their dissident activities and struggle for a democratic and secular society. They are comprised of individuals who believe in equal rights for LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) people and believe religion to be a tool of oppression. In 2009, they gained notoriety for an action during the month of Ramadan. To protest the strict religiosity of their society, they decided to have a public picnic during the holiday in which eating in public is forbidden by Article 222 of the penal code ("Morocco: End police," 2009). Their opposition, the police, were ready and intercepted the picnic before it occurred. However, news of the action was widely disseminated. MALI now primarily operates through a closed group on Facebook, currently with 3,772 members, as of April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2013. This collective can certainly be categorized as a "marginal" actor: a group on the fringes of in their own context, advocating for freedom of choice and equality through direct-action strategies that are criticized by the majority of Moroccan society. They have the reputation of young rebels, devoid of moral compass and respect for their native country. Many see them as provocateurs: masters of performance politics and scandal who complain loudly but have not achieved any concrete legal change. However, others see them as courageous young individuals who are

striving to create a democratic society in which the government protects the rights of all individuals, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, religion, or race.

### *Research Question*

The MENA region is an expansive locale comprised of many states that have had a long history of durable authoritarianism preceding their independence from European colonizers. This authoritarianism, whose shape and severity is certainly unique to each country, has been internationally recognized as violating the social, political, and economic freedoms of citizens. Nevertheless, radical activists have mobilized to fight for social, political, economic, and sexual emancipation of all people, including women, even within the oppressive restraints of authoritarian contexts. Some women's liberation movements in Western democratic states have the ability to openly protest because freedom of expression and freedom of association are written in legal doctrines that are enforced by the state. However, women's rights activists in the MENA region may be risking their own lives if their movements take shape in this visible and collective form under authoritarian regimes.

Sociologist Asef Bayat (2010) has written about the model of what he calls "social nonmovements". This sociological theory is defined by "...the collective actions of noncollective actors" (Bayat, 2010, p.14). Social nonmovement are the various actions that individuals take in their everyday lives to attain personal freedoms while living in a society that prohibits basic human rights. While these contentious practices occur invisibly and in isolation, Bayat (2010) asserts that at a moment when political opportunity arises, the atomized individuals of social nonmovements have the capacity to quickly join each other and transform into a visible collective. He also emphasizes that social nonmovement is highly contextual as its existence depends on necessary political, social, and economic conditions.

The ship campaign was a direct action by Women on Waves and MA.L.I. It was a very public social movement: a transnational collective of committed individuals dedicated to bring choice to women in Morocco, even when the national law prohibits it. The ultimate goal of the action was based on the human rights principle of freedom of expression and information. The information about how women in Morocco could induce a safe abortion themselves was widely disseminated. Since the hotline's creation, hundreds of women in Morocco have called the safe abortion hotline and some have successfully induced their own safe abortion. The women who engage in this act are not visible. They are not on the forefront of international media or even activists themselves. They are ordinary women living in Morocco who now have the information needed to control their physical bodies.

While in Bayat's theory (2010), social nonmovement may transform into social movement, I have constructed an inverse model: social movement to social nonmovement. This is a new theoretical process that must be explored. I therefore examine the direct action in Morocco as a case study of a social movement that has the capacity to provoke social nonmovement in the particular political and cultural context of Morocco. This led me to the research question: can the trajectory of a social movement into a social nonmovement incite widespread and pervasive social transformation?

### **III. The Significance of Social Nonmovements**

Where there is oppression, there is often resistance. Nevertheless, the mechanisms for identifying opposition through social movement must be adapted based upon socio-political context. In order to be able to think more inclusively about resistance in the authoritarian context of some Middle East and North African states, Bayat (2010) presents the definition of social nonmovements:

nonmovements refers to the collective actions of noncollective actors; they embody shared practices of large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger social change, even though these practices are rarely guided by an ideology or recognizable leaderships or organizations. The term movement implies that social nonmovements enjoy significant, consequential elements of social movements; yet they constitute distinct entities (p. 14).

Social nonmovement is not a visible collective of actors: it is the fragmented action of many different actors at the same time, who are unknown to one another. This phenomenon emerges when the practice of everyday survival becomes augmented by a repeated radical actions. It is not a theory of what should happen for the betterment of a given society, but it is rather how an individual sustains a lived experience of dignity in a societal context that prohibits basic rights. According to Bayat (2010), there are four components necessary to categorize a practice as a nonmovement. To start, nonmovements are “action-oriented, rather than ideologically driven...” (p.19). It is not an abstracted theory of behavior but it is instead the way in which an individual actually behaves. Next, “...actors directly practice what they claim, despite government sanctions...” (p. 19). Nonmovement is thus not about articulating grievances, but performing the very action that will ameliorate these grievances. The third dimension of nonmovement is that it must constitute an action that falls within “...*ordinary* practices of everyday life” (p. 20). The final component is that nonmovements are not performed by only a few individuals but they are “...carried out by millions of people who albeit remain *fragmented*” (p. 20). Bayat (2010) asserts that the enormity of nonmovements is critical. If such a huge number of individuals engage in contentious action on a regular basis, then a space is opened for that specific action to eventually gain recognition and legitimacy (p. 20).

What constitutes a social movement is also defined through specific indicators. It is an active collective of individual actors who are brought together by the need to bring about certain change, whether that change is social, political, or economic (or any combination of these). A social movement is traditionally perceived as something tangible, visible, and public. However,

it must be acknowledged that this type of organized dissent is not the only shape that activism may take. Bayat (2010) writes, "...certain distinct and unconventional forms of agency and activism have emerged in the region [the Middle East and North Africa] that do not get adequate attention, because they do not fit our prevailing categories and conceptual imaginations" (p.3). He calls attention the important point that there is hegemonic framework of resistance. In democratic societies, there is the ability for social movement to be openly oppositional and ferociously dissident. However, when a state has an absence of democratic governance, it can be extraordinarily difficult and dangerous for dissident actors to collectively mobilize. However, just because social movements may be few and far between in authoritarian regimes, this does not mean that non-violent civil resistance for change do not exist.

Integral to social movement is the notion of political opportunity. Social movements rely on a moment in which there is a political opening to articulate grievances. Bayat (2010) elaborates, "It [organized activism] requires a political opportunity – when political authorities and the mechanisms of control are undermined by, for instance, a political or economic crisis, international pressure, or infighting within ruling elites" (p.9). However, with social nonmovements, it is not about waiting for a political opportunity, but is about creating that very opportunity. In the traditional social movement, there is the concept of the active network: the modes of communication, whether by meetings, phone calls, or internet communication, that facilitate collective mobility. Conversely, in social nonmovement, there is a passive network that can be conceptualized as a kind of dormant active network. Essentially, there are many individuals engaging in the same type of civil disobedience but they are not communicating with each other about this shared behavior. Instead, there is a mutual awareness that they are both engaging in a particular behavior. Bayat (2010) writes that passive networks, "...refer to

instantaneous communications between atomized individuals, which are established by tacit recognition of their commonalities directly in public spaces or indirectly through mass media... female strangers neglecting dress codes in public spaces would internalize their shared identities in the streets by simply observing one another..." (p. 22). Here, Bayat (2010) illustrates the role of the passive network when women violate the dress code in Iran. Women were not conspiring together, but they would individually push back their hijabs and reveal their hair. Women were doing this by themselves, and then getting arrested alone. Since so many women were engaging in this practice in the public sphere, they would see one another. The element of shared space therefore enables the passive network to emerge. Without a shared space, it would be impossible for the non-collective actors to recognize that there are other actors engaging in the same contentious practice as themselves. The passive network is essential because at the moment of a larger threat to the disobedient practice, it can transition into the active network. Bayat (2010) writes, "Passive network implies that individuals may be mobilized to act collectively without active or deliberately constructed networks" (p.63). In Bayat's model (2010), the passive network of the social nonmovement is the evolutionary precursor to the active network of the social movement. These figures were first printed in his 1997 book *Street politics: Poor people's movements in Iran* (p.18).

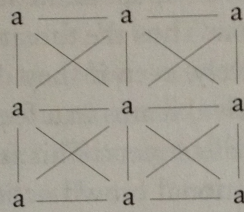


FIGURE 1.3

Active network: Individuals with similar positions brought together deliberately—association with an active network

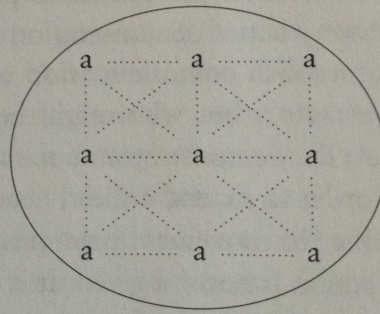


FIGURE 1.4

Passive network: Atomized individuals with similar positions brought together through space

Bayat (2010) terms the social nonmovement of the urban dispossessed “quiet encroachment” (p. 14). According to him, quiet encroachment is the “...noncollective but prolonged direct actions of dispersed individuals and families to acquire the basic necessities of their lives (land for shelter, urban collective consumption or urban services, informal work, business opportunities, and public space) in a quiet and unassuming illegal fashion” (2010, p. 45). Quiet encroachment is the method that the poor employ for basic survival; taking action against the state and the wealthy and not against their counterparts who have similarly low socio-economic status (Bayat, 2010, p.56). The resistance of urban marginals is driven by necessity and not by political consciousness. However, at the moment when the authorities recognize and thereby threaten the continuation of these actions, the decentralized actors realize the political contention that is implicit with their practice and form a collective to their claims (Bayat, 2010, p.60).



Anthropologist James C. Scott spent two years in the Malaysian village that he calls Sedaka between the years of 1978 to 1980. During this time, he completed the fieldwork for his manuscript *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, which explores the informal channels in which peasants rebel to attain power in a system that is fraught with structural inequalities. Scott's work in this book (1985), although about three decades before Bayat's articulation of "social nonmovements" (2010) has essentially laid the foundation for this theoretical construction. The concept of social nonmovements, the everyday rebellion by subordinate classes, connects the struggles of peasants in the mid 1980s in a rural Malaysian village with the disenfranchised groups (the urban dispossessed and women) of the MENA region in the current day. Scott (1985), like Bayat (2010), points to the fact that social scientists were simply looking in the wrong places for peasant rebellion: formal organizations and visible movements, accentuated by overall collective action (xv). Once again (or once before) the Western hegemonic discourse of what counts as social movement, that which can be seen and heard, limited the study of the mechanisms by which peasants resist domination. Scott (1985) writes that this resistance consists of:

... the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rents and interest from them. Most forms of this struggle stop well short of outright collective defiance... They [forms of class struggle] require little or no coordination or planning; they make use of implicit understandings and informal networks; they often represent a form of individual self-help; they typically avoid any direct, confrontation with authority (xvi).

This description paints a picture of peasant action that is dispersed, disorganized, individual, and largely insidious. It is not action as is conceptualized by discourse of movement theory as conceptualized by the Northern hemisphere, but rather illustrates the immense value and effectiveness of what Bayat (2010) appropriately labels the "nonmovement". Perhaps the term nonmovement is misleading because it is not that movement does not exist but that the movement is primarily invisible, beneath the surface of the state, beyond the grasp of formal

civil society, and the property of those who are continually put at social disadvantages by higher powers. Scott (1985) writes,

Everyday forms of resistance make no headlines. But just as million of anthozoan polyps create, willy-nilly, a coral reef, so do the multiple acts of peasant insubordination and evasion create political and economic barrier reefs of their own... to pursue this simile, the ship of state runs aground on such reefs, attention is usually directed to the shipwreck itself and not to the vast aggregation of petty acts that made it possible. For these reasons alone, it seems important to understand this quiet and anonymous welter of peasant action (xvii).

Using the imagery of the ship that hits a barrier reef, Scott (1985) eloquently explains that it is necessary to understand the constant, repetitive acts that peasants engaged in to build this obstruction for the “ship” of the state. Revolutions do not come out of thin air and coral reefs do not just appear in the ocean. Scott (1985) and Bayat (2010) both force attention not to the moment of large-scale transformation or destruction, but instead to the many precursors that have the potential to incite the most visible moment of collective dissent.

It is important to understand why what Scott calls “*everyday forms of resistance*” (1985, p. 36) and what Bayat calls the “quiet encroachment of the ordinary” (2010, p.14) are excluded from the mainstream narrative of social movement theory. Scott (1985) writes, “By virtue of their institutional invisibility, activities on anything less than a massive scale are, if they are noticed at all, rarely accorded any social significance” (p. 35). Therefore, because they are not seen, these subtle acts of rebellion are not heard or recorded. They remain outside the story of social transformation and revolution. Scott (1985) and Bayat (2010), however, demonstrate that this peripheral narrative of resistance is a legitimate form that opposition can take. It is the study of the antecedents to social movements that is the social nonmovement; the unassuming acts that occur external to formal political and economic institutions that have the capacity to chip away at the very foundation of institutional social structures.

### *Medical Abortion as a Social Nonmovement*

Bayat (2010) and Scott (1985) both articulate the theory of social nonmovement: the actions that individuals take in their everyday lives to attain basic freedoms that the government prohibits. It is not a traceable or visible collective that execute these contentious actions but instead dispersed individuals. In this sociological model of what might be also referred to as invisible resistance, particular practices in context fall into this framework. For Bayat (2010), the urban dispossessed stealing power from the municipalities and women in Iran pushing back the required hijab are two examples of what falls into the category of social nonmovement. Both of these actions are not extraordinary; they are ordinary practices that are only considered rebellious because of the particular context in which they occur.

Medical abortion, within the particular social and political context of contemporary Morocco, can also be conceptualized within the paradigm of social nonmovement. In Morocco, abortion is mostly illegal and restricted by the government, unless it is to save the life of a woman. Medical abortion, a procedure induced with pills, is an alternative possibility within the Moroccan locale because of the fact that Artotec is readily available over the counter in a pharmacy, without a prescription. A woman does not need the supervision of a physician or medical professional to induce her own abortion with Artotec pills if she has the correct medical instructions about the number of pills to take and the time intervals in which to take them. A woman can complete a medical abortion on her own effectively and safely up to 12 weeks gestation (World Health Organization, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, 2012).

Now, let us examine if medical abortion in Morocco has the potential to fit the criteria for social nonmovement as defined by Bayat (2010). First, medical abortion is certainly action-oriented and not ideologically driven: it is an act performed by a woman on her own body.

Second, medical abortion is also a direct practice, despite government sanctions as abortion is severely restricted by the Moroccan penal code. Third, medical abortion could also surely be considered an ordinary practice of everyday life. While many reproductive health and sexual health advocates strongly articulate that with comprehensive sexual education and better access to contraceptives millions of abortions could be prevented. This is undoubtedly true, and I do not mean at all to diminish the importance of comprehensive sexual education and access to contraceptives. However, this framework also heavily contributes to the stigma of abortion as a practice that should ultimately be abolished if the correct measures are taken. What should be eradicated is the enormity of maternal morbidity and mortality that are a direct result of when women do not have the access needed to safe abortion methods.

The reality of the world in which we live is that many countries do not and will not have, in the near future, institutionalized comprehensive sexual education and/or access to affordable contraception. The termination of pregnancy, therefore, needs to be acknowledged as a critical aspect of overall family planning. In this way, abortion can be normalized with the practices of stealing electrical power or pushing back the hijab. This is by not meant to be a crude parallel that trivializes the decision of a woman to terminate her pregnancy. Instead, placing “do-it-yourself” medical abortion in a category with other contentious practices of social nonmovement is meant to illustrate that abortion is not an exceptional occurrence and that it should be included in the discussion of exercising personal rights over the physical body.

Lastly, integral to social nonmovement is that it is a practice that must occur in large numbers, much more than just a few individuals. At this point in time, it is not evident that millions of women engage in the practice of medical abortion in Morocco. However, there is great potential for this to occur as the knowledge about the availability of Artotec begins to flow

and accumulates greater awareness. The element of the passive network would be present if women were to see each other simultaneously purchasing Artotec in pharmacies. A woman might go inside and purchase the medication while another woman waits to purchase the same package of pills. The women would not discuss why they are purchasing the pills, but there would be silent acknowledgement. The shared location of the pharmacy, a public space, allows for the passive network to exist and grow.

### *The Transnational Public Sphere*

The concept of the “transnational public sphere” (J. Guidry, M. Kennedy & M. Zald (Eds.), 2000) must be included in the exploration of the Women on Waves and MALI action. The transnational public sphere is defined as: “...a space in which both residents of distinct places (states or localities) and members of transnational entities (organizations or firms) elaborate discourses and practices whose consumption moves beyond national boundaries” (J. Guidry, M. Kennedy & M. Zald (Eds.), 2000, p.6-7). The Women on Waves and MALI ship campaign was an event that illustrates how the transnational public sphere can be immensely utilized to advance human rights in a local context by bringing it to the immediate attention of a global audience. MALI exists in the local Moroccan context. Women on Waves exists in the Dutch, but more so, international realm and has the resources to bring MALI and their message of human rights violations into the spotlight of the international media. The fact that Women on Waves and MALI engaged in this collaborative action for safe abortion demonstrates how an international NGO working with a local group has the ability to bring a story of the periphery into the mainstream narrative with coverage from *The New York Times*, *CNN*, *BBC*, and *Al Jazeera*, among many other mainstream, prominent news outlets. It is also relevant to consider

that the physical space of this action had a team on land, in Morocco, and at sea, as the two captains remained on the yacht.

The symbol of a ship is a powerful one: it signifies mobility and freedom. When the locality on land fails to provide women with a safe option for access to abortion, the ship that can sail into international waters, surpassing this obstacle. In this way, the vessel becomes the space that embodies the transnational public sphere. The vessel is a space in which the laws can change, while the local context remains static. In Morocco, the ship was unable to sail back and forth to international waters, as it had in prior campaigns. However, the ship had every legal right to sail, under both national and international law. The point is that the ship itself is a transnational public sphere because it can travel to different local contexts, bringing their violation of human rights into international waters, for a global audience to see.

#### **IV. Eventful Change**

On Friday September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Women on Waves issued a press release titled “Abortion Ship Will Visit Morocco Next Week” (“Abortion ship will,” 2012a). It stated that MALI invited the ship of Women on Waves to Morocco, which could provide medical abortions (until 6.5 weeks of pregnancy<sup>4</sup>) in international waters, under Dutch law. The release cites the number of abortions that occur in Morocco daily (600 to 800) and the WHO statistic that 13% of maternal mortality worldwide is a result of unsafe abortion. It also frames abortion an issue of social justice, claiming that wealthy women have access to safe abortion services while it is women of lower SES (Socioeconomic Status) who may suffer the consequences of unsafe procedures. In

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<sup>4</sup> For an explanation of this time limit please see sections “Contraception and Progress” and “History of Women on Waves” from: Ellis-Kahana, Julia, "The Perfect Storm: How Pro-Abortion Activists in the Netherlands Incite Social Change From International Waters" (2011). *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*. Paper 1154. [http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp\\_collection/1154](http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/1154)

addition to the ship's visit, MALI wants abortion to be legalized in Morocco and a hyperlink is provided whereby people can sign the petition that asks for the repeal of articles 449-458 of the penal code that severely restrict and punish abortion<sup>5</sup>. It states that another press release will be sent on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012 that will reveal the place, date, and time of arrival of the ship. There is a contact number listed for both Ibtissame Betty Lachgar (co-founder of MALI) and Rebecca Gomperts.

On Wednesday October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012 Women on Waves issued a press release titled "Abortion ship will arrive in Smir, Morocco on Thursday October 4<sup>th</sup> at 13.00 AM" ("Abortion ship will," 2012b). This release explains that Misoprostol is a medicine that can be used to induce a safe abortion up until 12 weeks of pregnancy. This medicine, on the WHO's list of Essential Medicines, is available and sold under the brandname Artotec in Morocco. The statement also cites the WHO's recommended protocol for inducing an abortion with Misoprostol: "4 tablets of misoprostol (200 mcg) administered under the tongue. Up to three repeat doses of 800 µg can be administered at intervals of at least 3 hours, but for no longer than 12 hours" ("Abortion ship will," 2012b). This release repeats that MALI has invited Women on Waves to support the fight to legalize abortion in Morocco, with a hyperlink to sign the petition. However, this document is the first one that also introduces the second component of the action: to disseminate information about the accessibility and use of Artotec. Women on Waves justifies the exposure of this information as protected by Article 25 of the Moroccan Constitution<sup>6</sup>. The release closes by stating that Dutch parliament member, Liesbeth van Tongeren of the Green Party, will be present for the ship's arrival. Contact numbers for MALI

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<sup>5</sup> For more information about the penal code in Morocco see Appendix A.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix A for the detailed legal rationale.

and Women on Waves are listed. Additionally, the number for the safe abortion hotline is now revealed: 0633234333.

Early on the morning of Thursday, October 4<sup>th</sup> 2012, the scheduled date of arrival for the ship of Women on Waves, the Moroccan authorities place Marina Smir on lockdown. The entire port is sealed: no ships can enter or exit. Shortly after the discovery of Moroccan warships that assembled in the harbor and increased security forces, Women on Waves issues the third press release, titled “Moroccan Authorities Close Down Harbor of Smir” (“Moroccan authorities close,” 2012). It includes a picture of Moroccan police that create a human wall blocking off access to part of the harbor. It states, “Despite this obstacle and the presence of intensive Moroccan police security, Women on Waves will not allow this to prohibit dissemination about the availability of safe medical abortion for Moroccan women” (“Moroccan authorities close,” 2012). The hotline number and the Artotec protocol are featured in this announcement. Upon the realization that there is currently no way for the ship to enter Marina Smir, the organization concludes with “Women on Waves is currently working on alternative strategy” (“Moroccan authorities close,” 2012). Contact numbers for MALI, Women on Waves, and the safe abortion hotline are listed.

On the morning of October 4<sup>th</sup>, a manifestation of 200-300 anti-abortion protestors gathered at the harbor. Dr. Gomperts went directly into the angry crowd and attempted to hand out papers that contained the safe abortion hotline information. As long-time Women on Waves filmmaker, Diana Whitten, captured this scene, the crowd, primarily composed of men, closed in on Dr. Gomperts, screaming that she is a murderer and assassin. Security hired by Women on Waves and the Moroccan police intervene and escort Dr. Gomperts out of the manifestation for her own safety.



*Dr. Gomperts inside of the anti-abortion manifestation:*



("Maroc: manifestations anti-avortement," Maroc: manifestations anti-avortement au port de Marina Smir)

The next statement from Women on Waves came in the form of a post on their website and not as an official press release. Keeping the attention of the media with notion that they were working on a different plan, the organization finally revealed that their ship was, in fact, already within the harbor ("Abortion ship forced," 2012). The ground team of Women on Waves and MALI along with Liesbeth van Tongeren led journalists through the back door of a hotel to try and gain access to the ship. The Moroccan police intercepted the attempt to reach the ship. However, the two female captains then raised the flag, sounded their horn, and sailed around the closed port. Immediately after, Moroccan police boarded the ship, and aggressively searched it without giving reason. The captains were told that they had to leave; Moroccan marine ships then escorted ship out of the port. The ship broke no laws and no incriminating evidence was found

on board. No abortions were performed at sea. At this time, however, the hotline has already received hundreds of calls from women and interested media. Therefore, Women on Waves and MALI celebrate the ship's sail as instrumental in the plan to disseminate the information about Artotec.

Women on Waves issued their next statement in the same format as a post on their website. It is titled, "Abortion Ship as Trojan Horse in Harbor Launched the Safe Abortion Hotline in Morocco" ("Abortion ship as," 2012). It describes that one aim of the campaign was to put the issue of unsafe abortion on the political agenda of Morocco in order to start a discussion for legalization. At the same time, Women on Waves acknowledges that the ship is not a practical solution to a pervasive and long-term problem of unsafe abortion. Therefore, the safe abortion hotline has been launched as a sustainable and practical solution. The pre-recorded message in Arabic provides the protocol for how a woman can induce an abortion herself with Artotec. Women on Waves explains that the "Trojan Horse" tactic developed as a response after the campaign to Portugal in 2004 when the ship was blocked from entering the harbor by warships. The tactic was then employed in the next ship campaign to Valencia, Spain in 2008. It is an extremely effective strategy to undermine the naval blockades of a particular country. The unveiling the availability of Artotec in Morocco was the real Trojan Horse because armed with the correct medical protocol, women can obtain a safe abortion before there is a change to the law.

This statement also notes that according to local sources, the government was responsible for presence of the anti-manifestation. When the Moroccan authorities boarded and searched the ship, they confiscated the banners. The captains asked for the campaign's lawyer to be present but the police denied this request. However, before being escorted from the harbor by the navy,

the ship's sail, with hotline number visible on a banner, created a spectacle about which international and national media reported. In forcing the ship to vacate the harbor without just cause, the Moroccan authorities violated the freedom of expression that is supposed to be protected by their constitution. When the Women on Waves ship was prohibited by the warships of Portugal, the case was taken to the European Court of Human Rights. This judiciary authority ruled that Portugal had in fact violated the freedom of expression of Women on Waves. There is no such parallel court for the Middle East and North Africa region. However, this statement closes with saying that Women on Waves and MALI will press charges against the Moroccan government<sup>7</sup>.

*Ship sails in the closed before being escorted away by Moroccan authorities:*



(Jan Visser, Abortion ship in smir harbor)

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<sup>7</sup> No charges were ever pressed.

The fourth and final press release for the Morocco campaign was an invitation to a press conference scheduled for October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012 in Rabat, Morocco (“Invitation for press,” 2012). Here, Women on Waves and MALI invited the press to ask any and all questions and to explain the role that the Moroccan authorities played. They stated that a video message from the two captains, detailing their treatment by these authorities, would be presented. The time was set for 15.00 o'clock at the location of the Moroccan Association of Human Rights (l'AMDH), Siège Central : Av. Hassan II, Rue Aguensous, Imm 6, Appt 1, Rabat. The Dutch government has ruled that Women on Waves can legally provide medical abortions in international waters up to 6.5 weeks of pregnancy. In international waters, the Moroccan penal code is not applicable; Dutch law takes precedence on board a Dutch ship. In addition to violating their own Constitution, the Moroccan authorities “...violated the international convention on the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS) that allows free passage of ships” (“Invitation for press,” 2012). This press release concludes with a discussion of how the ship launched the safe abortion hotline and also restates the WHO’s recommended medical protocol for the procedure.

Women on Waves also posted a piece on their website titled “Press Conference in Rabat, 8-10-2012” that highlights what happened on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012 and lists in detail the different laws that the Moroccan authorities violated (“Press conference in,” 2012). At the press conference on October 8th, Dr. Chafik Chraibi, the president of the Association Marocaine de Lutte Contre L’avortement Clandestin (AMLAC; The Moroccan Association for the Fight Against Clandestine Abortion) voiced his furious sentiment towards Women on Waves and MALI.

*Dr. Chraibi at the press conference:*



(EL Atifi, Dr Chraibi Critique la Compagne du MALI & Women on waves)

Dr. Chraibi, an obstetrician/gynecologist, has been working for the legalization of abortion in Morocco for the past seven years through his organization AMLAC. He felt that the ship campaign of Women on Waves and MALI was disrespectful, provocative, and reversed all of his efforts to lobby for legal change through formal political channels. Women on Waves writes, “A lot of people have asked us why we worked with MALI and not with for example AMLAC or other women’s NGO’s. Women on waves always work with youth groups that are very courageous and putting everything at risk to actually do something to change society and not just talk about it” (“Press conference in,” 2012). This statement can be seen as a response to the fact that Dr. Chraibi does not perform abortions himself, nor will he refer patients to a doctor in Morocco who is willing to do the procedure. He denies that Artotec can induce a safe abortion even though this fact this has been proven by the WHO.

*Women on Waves and MALI at press conference:*



("mali&wow," mali&wow)

On Tuesday, October 9<sup>th</sup> 2012, Women on Waves and MALI discovered that the hotline number, registered through the company Inwi, was no longer in service. The number was out of service for approximately three weeks starting from this date before being reactivated. The Moroccan government is suspected of disabling the hotline.

## **V. Social Nonmovement as the Consequence**

In Bayat's theory of social nonmovements (2010), there is the potential for a transformation to occur. There is a distinct moment in which the social nonmovement may

become a social movement in the most traditional, Western and hegemonic fashion. The passive network of atomized individuals coalesces into an active network; the disjointed entities become a formalized collective and mobilize to voice grievances. While nonmovements have the capacity to chip away slowly at the causes of state and institutional limitations, the movement is the powerful entity that can overthrow the oppressive system itself.

I assert that it is also possible for an inverse sequence of this model to occur in which a social movement transforms into a social nonmovement, using the action of Women on Waves and MALI to illustrate how this theory can be operationalized. The ship campaign that subsequently launched the safe abortion hotline in Morocco was a provocative direct action. The direct action takes the form of traditional social movement: a visible and organized mobilization of a collective of individuals (Women on Waves and MALI). The movement purposely worked within the transnational public sphere as a mechanism for legal justification of the action and for maximal visibility by international media outlets. The goal was to create as big of a splash as possible in order to disseminate information about the availability and correct medical protocol of Artotec for women to know how to induce their own medical abortions safely. This action is unique in that while it pushed the liberalization of the restrictive penal code, it also realized that this institutional change would not come about with the urgency by which women's mortality depended on it. As a result, arguably the most important and central feature of the campaign was to provide the correct information to incite an extra-institutional transformation: the off-label usage of an available medicine in Morocco for safe abortion performed by women themselves.

I will call the medical protocol for Artotec the Self-Empowerment Code (SEC). It is a specific set of instructions that gives a woman the knowledge to carry out her own termination of pregnancy safely and effectively. The SEC is not meant to overthrow the King or to dismantle

the ruling Justice and Development Party (PJD). It is not like Gene Sharp's famous *From Dictatorship to Democracy* (1993) which is an explicit directive for how to start a revolution through non-violent collective mobilization, but rather, it can be conceptualized as how to start your *own* revolution. The SEC is a set of guidelines for the individual: not for a collective. It is a directive, however, that is not at all contingent upon institutional transformation. The act of abortion is an act that is fundamentally about the human right for an individual to make choices regarding bodily integrity. It is an act that will forever be politicized and placed within religious discourse in the public sphere. It is an incredibly intimate and personal decision that a woman makes about her body. But in the time between the decision and the act, her body is stripped from her, placed within the public sphere for debate. The SEC is about the reclaiming of the body for the individual who makes the decision to terminate a pregnancy. It is about appropriating the act as an occurrence in an individual's life that they can control.

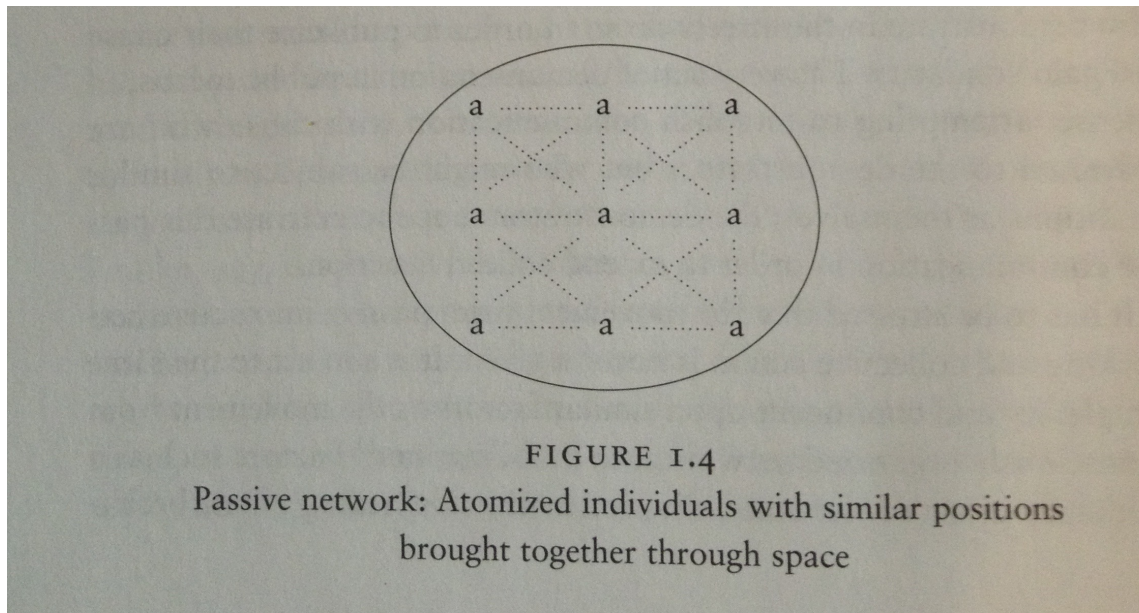
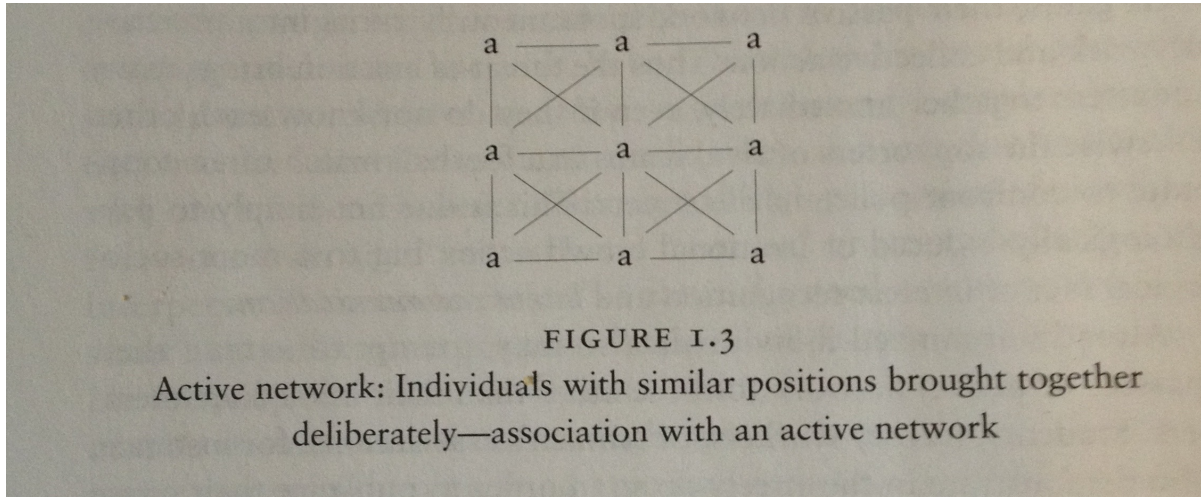
According to Bayat (2010), something is a social nonmovement when it is action-oriented, a direct practice in spite of government sanction, a practice of ordinary life, and a practice that is widespread as millions of people engage in it. A woman inducing her own abortion with Artotec pills in the context of contemporary Morocco, therefore, has the potential to perfectly fit within this specified criterion. In Morocco, abortion is a practice severely restricted by the penal code. A woman's act of inducing her own abortion is an act that an individual takes to attain freedom and dignity in everyday life. The Moroccan women who procure their own abortions are not part of a formal collective. Instead, they are atomized individuals engaging in an isolated behavior. Many advocates for comprehensive sexual education argue that with the implementation of this for youth and access to contraceptives, abortion is a practice that should become obsolete. However, I argue that this is not a pragmatic



approach: abortion is reality of the world in which we live. Females who engage in sexual intercourse, even when using protection, sometimes become pregnant. And sometimes, it is the case that they do not want to carry that pregnancy to term for a variety of reasons. Stigmatizing abortion as a practice that should be abolished is an extreme detriment to the mental and physical health of women in Morocco and in every country of the world. Instead, abortion should be recognized as an acceptable procedure along with other medical interventions.

Therefore, the campaign of Women on Waves and MALI to widely disseminate the SEC in Morocco presents a case of study for a new theoretical model in which a social movement incites a social nonmovement. The women who are performing abortions themselves with Artotec are not necessarily activists; they are ordinary women who are striving for independence and autonomy in a context where the government forbids this freedom. These women are anything but a collective; they are atomized individuals engaging in the same practice simultaneously without coordinated communication. Furthermore, Bayat's concept of the passive network (2010) is also present. Hypothetically, a woman may purchase the medication while another woman simultaneously waits to purchase the same package of pills. They would not talk about what they are both doing, but there would be a silent acknowledgement of their mutual intentions made possible by the physical space of their shared locality.

New Theoretical Trajectory:



Source of above Figures:  
Asef Bayat, Street Politics: Poor People's Movements in Iran. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, p.18

## **VI. Assessing Impact**

### *The Hotline*

The Moroccan safe abortion hotline is run through a Moroccan company called Inwi. It is not a live-hotline but is an automated answering machine with a pre-recorded message that includes information about how a woman can perform a safe medical abortion herself. Originally the recorded message in Arabic of the Moroccan dialect (Darija) was 50 seconds long and stated the full the medical protocol for using Artotec. However, due to a technical problem with Inwi, only a twenty second recording could be uploaded as of late December 2012. The recording therefore had to be revised into a much shorter message that does not state the full protocol but tells women what Artotec is and to visit “[www.ijhad.com](http://www.ijhad.com)” for more information. Women on Waves purchased this domain name and it refers a user to the Women on Waves site in Arabic. Ijhad is the Arabic word for abortion. The full medical protocol for using Artotec and a comprehensive list of questions and answers about the procedure is available there.

The hotline receives approximately twenty calls per week from women as of February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013. A new Facebook page providing safe abortion information for Morocco was launched on this date. About half of the callers out of these twenty leave a message. A MALI activist then calls them back to provide further assistance. There are several different cellular phones that are used for returning calls. MALI activists do not use their personal cellular phone numbers as a security measure. Prior to the launch of the Facebook page, between November 2012 and December 2012, approximately twelve women called the hotline per week and about six would leave a message. Men sometimes call the hotline but it is primarily women who call for safe abortion information. Sometimes men have left voicemails of gratitude for the information that is provided.

During the seven days of the ship campaign, between October 3<sup>rd</sup> and October 9<sup>th</sup> of 2012, the hotline received hundreds of calls. However, these calls were not just from women, but also from journalists and other media news outlets. Immediately following the ship campaign, on October 9<sup>th</sup> 2012, the hotline number stopped working. The Moroccan government is the suspected culprit for the hotline's disconnect. Subsequently, the number was out of service for approximately three weeks. The MALI activists believe that this time lapse in the hotline's availability was detrimental to its success when it was finally reconnected about one month later. It is plausible that many women tried to call the hotline number in this three-week post-campaign window of time and were unable to receive any information. The re-activation of the hotline occurred after Dr. Gomperts put in multiple claims to the Inwi service.

At the end of December 2012, the safe abortion hotline stopped functioning once again. However, unlike the first time, it is believed that this was a technical issue in which the Moroccan government did not play an active role. On the Inwi website, a problem also emerged when trying to re-upload the 50 second long voice recorded memo. The site would upload a message that was twenty seconds or less. Therefore, a new and shorter message had to be recorded and uploaded. Again, the hotline was unfortunately out of service for about four weeks.

### *The Evaluation*

On January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013, MALI activists, Dr. Gomperts, and myself held a meeting to evaluate the ship campaign action and launch of the safe abortion hotline. The main problem identified was a lack of trust by the public that Artotec works safely because of its sparse promotion from local media. It is also noted that it would have been helpful if the pre-recorded message had included that women were free to leave a message on the answering machine. One of the MALI activists stressed that *both* the safe use of Artotec and legalization

needed to be used when articulating the pro-choice argument to the Moroccan media. There was also the critique was that Morocco does not need the assistance of an international NGO to address the issue of abortion, which is not a priority of the Moroccan women's movement at this moment. This critique is not new for Women on Waves: as an NGO external to a particular context that works with local partners to be misconstrued as a neo-colonist enterprise, exporting "Western and liberal ideals of feminism". These sentiments were confirmed when post-campaign, MALI activists approached a local Moroccan women's NGO in the hope to create a collaborative effort to promote safe abortion. This particular NGO felt that abortion is not a priority for women in Morocco, that abortion is *haram* (forbidden and taboo), and that MALI had made a poor decision to work with an outside, international NGO.

According to one of the MALI activists, there were mixed feelings within the February 20<sup>th</sup> movement about the action of Women on Waves and MALI. This fractured opinion of this pro-democracy, anti-monarch collective came as somewhat of a surprise to me. Although it is known that this movement does not necessarily have an extremely unified ideology that informs their protest, I had thought that the February 20<sup>th</sup> movement would have definitely supported the ship campaign. Instead, one of the major players in the movement, and some others, felt that the action was too provocative.

During the meeting, the activists also expressed that the action's coverage in the local media differed immensely from coverage by the international media. According to one activist, the local media's official story was that the ship never arrived. It was also reported that the small yacht that did sail around the closed port of Marina Smir was actually a cheap publicity stunt by the NGO because the "actual" ship was unable to enter the sealed port. This inaccurate reporting could have been a partial result of pictures of the large vessel (used in Ireland, Poland, and

Portugal), which was provided for different media sources. Although the small yacht was the intended vessel for the action since the beginning, Women on Waves wanted to create the perception that the large vessel was sailing from the Netherlands to Morocco.

This was part of the plan in order to see how the Moroccan government would react to the visit. Marina Smir was placed on lock down the morning of October 4<sup>th</sup>, the ship's scheduled arrival time, with naval warships swarming the usually tourist-filled Mediterranean harbor. The Dutch NGO simply had to keep the attention of journalists before revealing that the Trojan horse of abortion activism (the small yacht) was in fact already inside the port. Purposefully ignoring this development of the unfolding story, local media conveyed that Women on Waves and MALI collaboration was a failure, as the massive abortion ship could not reach the port so that the dinky yacht was employed as a last-minute effort to attract any attention.

The positive experience of the MALI activists was that their families and friends supported many of them after they found out that they were involved with the campaign.

### *Public Perception of MALI*

Previous to my most recent trip to Rabat in January, I was aware that the majority of citizens living in contemporary Morocco do not agree with MALI's views about safe abortion and LGBTQ rights. While MALI gained great notoriety in Morocco after their public action against Ramadan in 2009, this was certainly not all-positive acclaim. This action deeply offended some Moroccan citizens who believed that it was a crime against public morality. It is not a gross generalization to say that Morocco is a socially conservative and largely religious society. While members of the younger generation may consider themselves to be liberal, some are still not as left-leaning as MALI members who adamantly state their belief in religious and sexual freedom, envisioning a secular and egalitarian society in which the people, and not the King, have the

ultimate power. Therefore, in many respects, MALI's beliefs are not even the minority voice in this totalitarian state, but they are the voice in the furthest periphery and do not have widespread local context support.

In the summer of 2012, I conducted interviews about the perception of female virginity in Morocco. Two of my interviewees were young Moroccan women whom I believed to be progressive and liberal. When I casually asked about MALI, since this was not the main focus of our interview, they each expressed strong criticisms of the group. While they both agreed with MALI's message about the importance of human rights in Morocco, they disagreed with the method of their actions, which they categorized as provocative, offensive, and not productive for social change. It seemed to me that in the minds of these young women, MALI went beyond the standard of non-conformity and instead adopted a distinct attitude of disrespect towards a more conservative way of life.

In January 2013, I talked with two other Moroccan natives about the public perception of MALI. These individuals are both acquaintances of mine; they are educated men, both married and in their 30s. One of them works as a program coordinator at the Center for Cross-Cultural Learning (CCCL) in Rabat. The second man is a teacher in Rabat who previously taught as a professor of Arabic language in United States. The program coordinator at the CCCL expressed similar views to the young women, except he was more expressive in his disgust for MALI. He believes MALI to be a group of spoiled young people who complain about the social situation in Morocco, but ignore the most pertinent issue, which he thinks is the lack of education. According to the program coordinator, unsafe abortion is not a relevant issue in Morocco because there are

doctors who will perform the procedure safely<sup>8</sup>. Next, the teacher told me that he personally agrees with MALI's human rights agenda. He also took the time to explain to me how he believes they are viewed more widely by Moroccan society. Accordingly, MALI is perceived as "dirty hipsters" who drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes. They loudly complain about being oppressed but do not act in a constructive or coherent manner to change or end this said oppression.

The above opinions of these four individuals surely are not representative of how all Moroccans feel. It would be a gross methodological mistake to extrapolate anecdotal encounters to an entire country's population. Nevertheless, their beliefs are important pieces of evidence that do support the notion that MALI is a collective whose voice remains distant from the mainstream pulse of their local context. While the meaning of their message may be relatable to some, it appears as though their style of action, daring and direct, is what detracts from a wholesome and positive public image.

## **VII. Discussion**

In order to test my prediction that the direct action of Women on Waves and MALI demonstrates a scenario in which a social movement has instigated a social nonmovement, I compare the current situation in Morocco, post-ship campaign in October, to Bayat's criteria (2010). According to Bayat (2010), there are four pieces that comprise the logic of social nonmovements. The first component is that the practice is a direct action that is not ideologically dependent. Medical abortion in contemporary Morocco adheres to that because women can have diverse beliefs about abortion while all the while engaging in the same act. The point is that women can each have their own ideological beliefs or justification for the act of abortion but

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<sup>8</sup> During my conversation with him, I wanted to get an unadulterated understanding of his beliefs. Therefore, I did not challenge his statements with facts about maternal mortality as a result of unsafe abortion in Morocco and the MENA region.



nevertheless they are each engaging in the same act. Therefore, their personal convictions or lack of convictions for this isolated action are largely irrelevant. Second, a social nonmovement is about direct practice, regardless of the government's laws. It is not about protesting the existing restrictions but it is about defying them entirely. Here, also, medical abortion in Morocco fits this description. Abortion is prohibited by the penal code. Instead of petitioning for repeal of the penal code and an immense liberation of the law, medical abortion performed by women themselves is a case of individuals not claiming a right, but acting on it.

Third, Bayat (2010) describes that the actors of nonmovements do not participate in formal modes of mobilization such as protesting, attending meetings, and/or lobbying. These practices would instead characterize the methods of social movement. Alternatively, then, nonmovements involve “*ordinary practices of everyday life*” (p.20). Bayat (2010) notes that, in the Middle East, these kinds of nonmovements take the form of young people dressing as they want and the urban poor stealing power for running water or heat from the authorities. Medical abortion performed by women in Morocco is concurrently an ordinary practice of daily life. A woman who wants to terminate her pregnancy by the use of Artotec is not joining a protest or meeting up with other women who wish to engage in the same action. It is a very personal act in which she goes to a pharmacy (or has someone else go for her), purchase the medication, and complete this act in the privacy of her home. It is not something that is a striking interference to her daily activities or functioning. It is a procedure invoked by the woman and completed by her own person without creating a public spectacle or scandal. The woman does not have to be an politically active at all. The only requirement is that she has to be pregnant when she does not want to be. I do not mean to discuss medical abortion as if it is a flippant practice. Medical abortion is not something that occurs without consideration and care. The logic is instead to de-

stigmatize it as an enigmatic exception and to accept it as a reality. Abortion is, in fact, a widely practiced and commonplace procedure. When it is de-medicalized as something that a woman can perform herself without the oversight of a doctor and/or medical professional, this embeds the act even more as something that be a commonplace occurrence.

The final component is that social nonmovement must occur in large numbers. By large numbers, Bayat (2010) means that nonmovement must be composed of millions of atomized individuals who participate in the same behavior. Due to the enormity of the collection of non-collective actors, the nonmovement has the power to begin chipping away and destabilizing the overarching cultural, political, or legal hegemony. It is through the pervasiveness of a particular nonmovement on a massive scale that the certain defiant behavior achieves traction. By “traction” I mean that the practice of many individuals, although dissident in the context, can move closer to normalcy and acceptance, thereby deeply challenging whatever structures have made the act so contentious in the first place. The critical mass element is also crucial for another reason. In Bayat’s sequence (2010), there can be a clear moment of transition in the atomized individuals of a social nonmovement, join forces to create a visible collective. In this model, the critical mass would be essential for the mobilization stage. If there is not a mass to mobilize, then the movement cannot generate the necessary momentum.

Approximately six months have passed since the ship campaign in October. During this time period, I have carefully monitored the effect of the hotline. At the present time, I am not able to empirically show that women inducing medical abortion themselves is a practice that is occurring in extremely large numbers. Since the launch of the new Facebook page on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013, about twenty women call the hotline each week and about half leave a message and receive a follow-up call. However, this does not mean that each of these ten women successfully

complete her abortion because the hotline does not have a required follow-up. Additionally, there has been an increase in emails from women since the inception of the new Facebook page. Therefore, even if medical abortion were occurring in very large numbers at the moment, it would be impossible to trace this behavior from the hotline and/or Facebook page because there is no tracking system. Part of the lack of follow-up on the part of the hotline is because it is grounded in information dissemination for self-empowerment. Given the instructions about how to use Artotec, a woman may choose to carry out or not carry out the procedure. However, that choice is her alone, and the hotline, MALI and Women on Waves do not ask for further information because the project is not about being able to gather empirical data on the intervention, but it is fundamentally about creating the intervention and allowing individuals to use it as they want. This ideology, therefore, presented me with a challenge in that I have been empirically dead-ended by the very logic of the operation. There are no reliable statistics or numbers on the total number of women that have been affected since the campaign. I can only confirm and attest to the multiple personal stories of women that I have heard<sup>9</sup>. However, the number of calls combined even with these personal accounts certainly does not reach the critical mass that is essential to Bayat's configuration of social nonmovements (2010).

The failure of what is currently happening on the ground with medical abortion in Morocco to match Bayat's criteria of social nonmovement (2010) in entirety prompts two explanations. The first is one of a temporal nature. The time elapsed from the ship campaign to the current time has been about six months. Therefore, the SEC is still relatively new on the scene. It is logical that an information technology so new will take time to be absorbed by its target public (here, women in Morocco) especially when it is a highly contentious practice in

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<sup>9</sup> MALI activists who run the hotline have communicated these accounts to me.

context. It is known that 600-800 abortions occur in Morocco everyday while up to 200 of these total procedures are not performed by medical professionals (“Association marocaine de,”), which contributes to maternal morbidity and mortality. It should also be noted that between 600 to 800 abortions is even a conservative estimate since it is very difficult to gather accurate statistics on a practice that is illegal. This means that realistically, at the present time, there are probably even more than 800 abortions that take place every single day. Following this one can see that potentially unsafe abortion is already a social nonmovement in Morocco as it has the crucial fourth component of large numbers. At the current time, I cannot determine what number of these abortions are being performed by women themselves using Artotec. In a predictive model, I argue that it is only a matter of time before the number of 800 potentially unsafe abortions will transition into women using Artotec safely based on the information disseminated from the campaign. In this line of thought, the large numbers needed are already present but the question is how long the “turnover” rate will be for these women to be using Artotec instead of dangerous methods.

The second explanation for what I will call the “fourth criterion failure” argues that the current evidence is not actually a failure to fit as social nonmovement within Bayat’s conceptualization (2010), but instead, the results are a deviation that is produced by the new theoretical model itself. As I have mentioned, the critical mass is necessary for nonmovement that transitions to movement because of the need for large-scale mobilization. However, in my inverse construction of the model, the mobilization and direct action movement occur as the first step and the nonmovement is the subsequent stage. In the case study, which I examine as the tangible application of this trajectory, Women on Waves and MALI begin at the scene with a visible and organized protest. The ship campaign action is enhanced, its potency undoubtedly

multiplied by its placement and utilization of the transnational public sphere. That is, while the mobilization occurred on both local Moroccan territory and in its nearby waters, the role that Women on Waves asserted as an international NGO, known for its controversial oceanic tactic enabled the entire project to be placed within international media spotlight. This action incited and provoked a nonmovement of women in Morocco performing safe abortions on their own terms.

In this reverse ordering of Bayat's model (2010), it is therefore irrelevant whether the amount of women engaging in this process reaches a critical mass because the mobilization stage has already taken place. The large numbers are not needed to transform from the silent, passive network into an active and visible collective. The invisibility of the women performing safe abortion with Artotec does present an obstacle for empirically tracking its extent. That problem is, however, intrinsic to the quality of the nonmovement, for part of the definition of nonmovement is its invisibility in general. Therefore, it should not be a surprising obstacle that tracking what happens beneath the surface presents a real challenge. The overall point, however, is that as long as the practice of medical abortion begins to permeate and transform social realities for women, whether by empowering five women or five hundred, I believe that in Morocco it should, in both cases of small and/or large numbers, be considered a social nonmovement at the present time.

Nevertheless, it became evident from analyzing the "fourth criterion failure" that the sequence from movement to nonmovement as opposed to the original nonmovement to movement is not categorically identical. Another important variance between medical abortion as social nonmovement as the result of and not the cause of social movement, has also become apparent. When Bayat (2010) describes social nonmovement as the precursor to social

movement, he is explicit that the individuals who engage in these rebellious actions do so without political consciousness. The practices are merely a mechanism to survive with dignity (58). It is only when the ability to continue these practices becomes threatened by authorities, do the actors have a political consciousness embedded in their behaviors. In the reverse sequence, when social movement is the first stage, it was widely publicized and acknowledged that medical abortion violates the Moroccan law as it is enforced. Therefore, when women subsequently purchase for medical abortion, it becomes not simply an act to survive with dignity but something that is performed with a political consciousness against the repressive status quo. I propose then that this nonmovement should be referred to as a “conscious social nonmovement” to articulate that it is a variation of the original conception of a social nonmovement. The “conscious” part in this label draws inspiration from Marx’s distinction of when the working class transforms from a group of individuals with the same goal of combatting the capitalists into a “class for itself” (1963, p.173). It is only when the workers become a “class for itself” that a class consciousness emerges. For conscious social nonmovement, the same kind of awareness for political contention in the action becomes realized, but it is a transformation within the individual and not within a class. Thus, the individual of conscious social nonmovement is an “individual for him/herself” as opposed to an “individual in him/herself”.

Therefore, the number differential and the element of political consciousness in the Morocco case study of the nonmovement resulting from movement is a point of deviation from Bayat’s framework (2010). These differences, however, should not exclude medical abortion in Morocco, a contentious practice performed by noncollective actors, from being classified as a social nonmovement. Instead it should be recognized as a new kind of social nonmovement: the conscious social nonmovement.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

The Women on Waves and MALI direct action ship campaign for safe abortion occurred between October 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012. No abortions of Moroccan women were performed in international waters. However, this was not at all perceived as a failure of the campaign because the ship is never meant to be a practical solution to long-term and pervasive problem of unsafe abortion. Unsafe abortion in Morocco is an issue of social inequality because the reality is that despite its illegality, women of high socio-economic-status have enough money for a physician to perform this procedure safely in a private clinic. In contrast, women who suffer economic hardship do not have access to safe methods because they cannot afford the high price. Therefore, women of lower socio-economic-status are marginalized, unable to obtain safe services, and may therefore resort to dangerous and life-threatening alternatives. The collaborative efforts of Women on Waves and MALI are sustainable and continue to this day because of the launch of the safe abortion hotline that creates access for women where there seemingly is none.

Women who perform their own abortion by using the medication Artotec are engaging in an individualized action that is against government sanctions. Women on Waves and MALI mobilized for the ultimate purpose of disseminating the information that Artotec is available in Morocco over the counter of a pharmacy and that it can be purchased without a prescription for the equivalent of ten US dollars. The medical protocol itself I call the SEC (Self-Empowerment Code). During the campaign, the ship successfully reached territorial Moroccan waters because Women on Waves employed the extremely effective Trojan Horse tactic; the ship was already docked inside Marina Smir when the Moroccan authorities placed the harbor on lockdown and brought in navy warships to block the anticipated arrival of the ship. The emergence of the ship

and its victorious sail in the closed port before its unconstitutional search and deportation by Moroccan police made a very strong statement that the collaborative effort of Women on Waves and MALI could not be stopped. While the ship is both the tangible Trojan Horse and physical embodiment of the transnational public sphere, the SEC is the intangible version of the Trojan Horse. The SEC is a particular piece of knowledge about something that was already inside Morocco (Artotec) and Women and Waves and MALI use the moment of the ship campaign to reveal its existence and in-country availability which has the potential to transform the lives of women.

Medical abortion in the context of contemporary Morocco should be categorized as a conscious social nonmovement that has been incited by a social movement. Women on Waves and MALI, joined together for a campaign that falls into the Western, hegemonic construction of social movement. During the direct action, there was extreme visibility targeted on a specific issue that was augmented with powerful symbols: a ship and multiple banners. One of the banners had a telephone number for the safe abortion hotline that was launched at this same moment. Therefore, the combination of the ship's action and the inception of the safe abortion hotlines exemplify "social movement" in its classical form. Using a unique nautical method, the direct action had the intention to widely disseminate the SEC to women in Morocco. These target women are not activists or part of any organized collective. The SEC for them is a piece of knowledge that can guarantee freedom and dignity in a context of state control that prohibits the basic human right to a safe abortion.

In Bayat's theoretical model (2010), social nonmovement evolves and may eventually transform into a social movement. Using a nature metaphor then, his model can be understood in terms of a volcanic eruption. Volcanic eruptions do not just happen: there are forces beneath the



surface that are at work before any combustible force can be visibly identified. These interactions are invisible to a certain point until the energy can no longer be contained and there is an explosion. In the exact same manner, social revolutions do not appear out of thin air. There are social forces at work for long periods of time that start to erode oppressive hegemonies as the contentious behaviors that are practiced insidiously by isolated individuals begin to build momentum. When there is a political opportunity or opening, for example, the critical mass of atomized individuals engaging in certain dissident behaviors or one specific behavior have the ability to transform from a passive network to an active one: to mobilize and create visibility through the power of collective consciousness. In the proposed new theoretical model, an opposite process occurs. It begins with the incitement of political opportunity through direct action.

Imagine a boulder that is thrown into a body of water. The boulder is enormous, visible, and heavy. It plunges deep into the sea, creating a tumultuous splash that results in many small ripples radiating from the center-most point. These small ripples are the nonmovement: they are small, barely decipherable but nevertheless they are changing the flow of the water. The ripples disrupt the continuity of the ocean and transform the current in new directions. In the same way, the ship campaign is the boulder. It is a provocative and controversial force of gravity so great that its momentum incited a multitude of small ripples. The ripples therefore are the actions of individual women who now have the needed knowledge to reclaim their bodies. Their act of abortion here is an exercise of human freedom in an isolated space, only connected to the collective from where the information was made public: the ship campaign.

While the application of the new model, from social movement to conscious social nonmovement has been illustrated by this case study of contemporary Morocco in which there

are specific political and social conditions, the question emerges of whether this model could occur in other states. What conditions are necessary for the new model take shape and succeed? It is therefore necessary to identify what conditions enabled the model in the current case study. According to Bayat (2010), social nonmovements are characteristic for emerging under states of constraint because

...authoritarian regimes, despite their omnipresent image, preside over the state – ‘soft states’ – that lack capacity, consistency, and the machinery to impose full control, even though they may wish to. Consequently, there exist many escapes, spaces, and uncontrolled holes – zones of relative freedom – that can be filled and appropriated by ordinary actors (46).

Bayat (2010) is correct that authoritarian regimes are the exact pretense for social nonmovement. The repression of the government is in fact the very condition that necessitates this unconventional and dispersed form of non-violent and non-collective resistance. Therefore, under any authoritarian states, the practice of nonmovement is a possibility. However, a nonmovement’s transformation to movement or, in this case, a nonmovement’s emergence from movement cannot occur in any authoritarian state. Authoritarian regimes vary in severity of oppression and violence used against citizens. Morocco is a relatively moderate authoritarian state, appearing much closer to democracy when, for instance, it is compared with the current state of affairs in Iran or Syria. It is the type of Morocco’s authoritarianism that enabled the first part of the new model to occur: the creation of a political opportunity.

In an authoritarian regime that is much more severe, such as Iran, an act to incite the political opportunity, instead of waiting for one to occur by another means, is not a viable option. This can be most clearly seen by how the One Million Signatures campaign of Iran in 2006 was vehemently repressed by the state as all of its female leaders were imprisoned and no legislation was changed (Khorasani, 2009). Therefore, the new model requires the context of an authoritarian state, but one that is not so severe as to completely shut down the initial visible

mobilization. Even though the ship was escorted from the harbor, the fact that it was inside the harbor and sailed, created enough of an opening for the intended nonmovement to follow without the leaders of Women on Waves and/or MALI facing persecution or imprisonment.

### *The Freedom of Information*

The human right to the freedom of information and to the dissemination of information regardless of frontiers is a powerful force. When in the hands of those attempting to fight social injustice, this right can be transformative and effectively empower those who are disempowered by circumstance and state control. At the same time, however, this freedom allows access to be had by the state oppressors themselves. I have often encountered the question: If the Moroccan government becomes aware of how Artotec can be used, won't they ban its sale from pharmacies? The answer to this question is that a governmental ban on the sale of Artotec is a very real possibility although this has not happened at the present time. However, in Turkey, restrictive governmental action has in fact happened and provides a useful comparison. Turkey is one of only two countries in the MENA region (the other being Tunisia) in which abortion is legal. Interestingly though, in Turkey, misoprostol was also available in pharmacies, as in Morocco.

In May of 2012, Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) publicly declared abortion murder (Arsu, 2012). While there was much talk of banning abortion in the subsequent weeks, leading to a mass mobilization and protest of enraged Turkish women across major cities, the law was not changed. However, when there were rumors of the abortion law being restricted, Women on Waves did some interviews with left-leaning alternative media outlets to communicate that Misoprostol, sold under the brandname Arthrotec, was in fact available in pharmacies. Nearly two months later, the Turkish government removed

Arthrotec from all pharmacies and banned its sale ("Turkey bans medicines," 2012). Was Women on Waves responsible for the government's discovery of Arthrotec's use for abortion which led them to ban it? It is very possible that this was the case. And here, the danger of the freedom of information is apparent. In Morocco, in the six months since the campaign, the government has not removed Artotec, even though they surely could have by this point. Why has the Moroccan government been seemingly more tolerant than the Turkish one? The reasons for this disparity between governments are varied and not easily discernable. It seems that for the Moroccan government, the prohibition of medical abortion with Artotec is simply not the first priority on their list of violating human rights freedoms. Unfortunately, in Turkey, this violation seems to have been more of a pressing issue for which the government intervened.

#### *Recommendations For the Future*

At the meeting with MALI activists in January, new ideas were brainstormed to further disseminate the information about the use of Artotec. These included: organizing a conference or workshop for other Moroccan organizations and the February 20<sup>th</sup> Movement, printing stickers with Artotec instructions and the hotline number to be posted in public spaces (such as bathrooms) in all major cities, creating a Facebook page as an extension to the hotline where women can ask questions, reaching out to Moroccan newspapers and bloggers to publicize hotline information, producing a film with Artotec instructions and interviews with women who have used Artotec for YouTube. Additionally, research on the number of calls that the hotline receives should continue to be recorded, as well as the number of women who were called back, and when possible, the outcome of the procedure. A press conference at the end of 2013 should discuss this collected data and the anticipated success of the hotline. Between February and March, two MALI activists, both from Rabat, traveled to the Women on Waves headquarters in

Amsterdam to work on the implementation of these recommendations. During this time, there was mass printing of stickers with the instructions in Arabic describing how to do a safe abortion with Artotec. The two activists took all of these stickers back with them to Rabat to post in public spaces of major cities in Morocco. Additionally, this is when the Facebook page that is an extension of the hotline was created (February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013). It is a community page titled “Avortement Maroc: Plus d'informations, moins de risques” (Abortion Morocco: More Information, Less Risk) that has posted the image of the safe abortion sticker in Arabic and provides a link to the Women on Waves site.

This particular case study, for access to safe abortion in contemporary Morocco, informs a new trajectory grounded in the theory of social nonmovements. First, the conceptualization of social nonmovement enabled medical abortion as a practice to be categorized within this paradigm. However, the direct action of Women and Waves and MALI presented a challenge because the social transformation that the movement incited had yet to be realized in the existing literature. A complex process dictated by a set of situational conditions allowed for a powerful event to occur but the sociological critique of what exactly happened was absent. It was only through acknowledging and opening a dialogue between human rights activism and sociological theory that the product of the transformation, conscious social nonmovement, could be fully understood and articulated. While sociology traditionally provides the frameworks by which to understand social transformation, it is equally true that social transformation informs and expands this scholarly discipline. Activism on the ground and theory from afar must have a symbiotic relationship as a means to advance engaged sociological discourse.

## **Appendix A: Legal Rationale**

Women on Waves and MALI justify their actions with both national Moroccan law and international law for which Morocco is also subject. In the Moroccan penal code, Chapter VIII titled “Offences against the family order and public morality” includes articles 449 to 504 (“criminal code morocco ,” ). Articles 449 to 458 explain the law regarding abortion. Article 449 opens with stating that whoever procures a miscarriage for a woman will be punished with one to five years of imprisonment and a fine of 200 to 500 dirhams. If the woman dies, then the imprisonment duration is raised from ten to twenty years. Article 453 states that the penalties for abortion are exempt if it is necessary to preserve the health of the mother, has spousal authorization, and is thereby performed by a physician or surgeon. If there is no spouse, then the doctor needs to obtain written permission to carry out the procedure from the chief medical officer of the prefecture or province. Article 454 states that a woman who induces her own abortion is subject to between six months to two years in prison and a fine of between 200 and 500 dirhams. Article 455, however, caused the greatest strategic planning for the campaign as it states that any person who disseminates publicly information about abortion whether through books, writings, prints, advertisements, posters, drawing, images, or symbols will be punished with imprisonment of between two months and two years and has to pay a fine of 200 to 2,000 dirhams. Additionally, where abortion is procured as a result of any of the above mentioned tactics, the authors of the tactics are then subject to the penalties of Article 449 (“criminal code morocco, ”).

At the same time, however, the Moroccan Constitution has a subsection titled “Fundamental Freedom and Rights”. Article 25 of this section states: “The freedoms of thought, of opinion and of expression under all their forms[,] are guaranteed. The freedoms of creation, of

publication and of presentation [exposition] in literary and artistic matters and of scientific and technical research[,] are guaranteed” (“moroccan constitution english,” ). This article therefore allows for the dissemination of Artotec protocol because it is a set of medical instructions that have been scientifically researched and tested for safety and efficacy. Additionally, when the Moroccan authorities unjustly searched and deported the ship of Women on Waves from Marina Smir, it was a violation of freedom of expression that is supposed to be constitutionally protected. The Women on Waves ship was stationed in the harbor prior to October 4<sup>th</sup>, abiding by all regulation of a visiting vessel in the port.

Furthermore, the Moroccan Nationality Code states that international treaties that Morocco has ratified take precedence over internal national laws (“Press conference in,”). Morocco holds itself subject to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For legal justification, Women on Waves and MALI draw upon Article 13, 19, and 20 of the document (“The universal declaration,”). Article 13 guarantees the freedom of movement within the borders of a state and the freedom to leave and return to one’s country. This article applies if women were to have boarded the ship to sail to international waters. Article 19 guarantees the freedom of opinion and expression and the freedom to receive and impart information regardless of frontiers. This is the most crucial Article because it is the one that allows for the dissemination of the instructions for safe abortion using Artotec. Article 20 states that everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. Lastly, Women on Waves draws upon the United Nations Conventions of the Sea. Specifically Section 2, “Limits of the Territorial Sea”, Article 3 Breadth of the Territorial Sea, explains that the sovereignty of a state only extends 12 nautical miles as measured from the coastal baselines (“United nations convention,” ). The other critical part of this doctrine is Section 3, titled “Innocent Passage in the Territorial Sea” and Subsection

A, “Rules Applicable to All Ships”. Articles 17, 18, and 19 are listed below (“United nations convention,”).

### **Article 17**

#### *Right of innocent passage*

Subject to this Convention, ships of all States, whether coastal or land-locked, enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea.

### **Article 18**

#### *Meaning of passage*

1. Passage means navigation through the territorial sea for the purpose of:

(a) traversing that sea without entering internal waters or calling at a roadstead or port facility outside internal waters; or

(b) proceeding to or from internal waters or a call at such roadstead or port facility.

2. Passage shall be continuous and expeditious. However, passage includes stopping and anchoring, but only in so far as the same are incidental to ordinary navigation or are rendered necessary by force majeure or distress or for the purpose of rendering assistance to persons, ships or aircraft in danger or distress.

### **Article 19**

#### *Meaning of innocent passage*

1. Passage is innocent so long as it is not prejudicial to the peace, good order or security of the coastal State. Such passage shall take place in conformity with this Convention and with other rules of international law.

2. Passage of a foreign ship shall be considered to be prejudicial to the peace, good order or security of the coastal State if in the territorial sea it engages in any of the following activities:



- (a) any threat or use of force against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of the coastal State, or in any other manner in violation of the principles of international law embodied in the Charter of the United Nations;
- (b) any exercise or practice with weapons of any kind;
- (c) any act aimed at collecting information to the prejudice of the defence or security of the coastal State;
- (d) any act of propaganda aimed at affecting the defence or security of the coastal State;
- (e) the launching, landing or taking on board of any aircraft;
- (f) the launching, landing or taking on board of any military device;
- (g) the loading or unloading of any commodity, currency or person contrary to the customs, fiscal, immigration or sanitary laws and regulations of the coastal State;
- (h) any act of wilful and serious pollution contrary to this Convention;
- (i) any fishing activities;
- (j) the carrying out of research or survey activities;
- (k) any act aimed at interfering with any systems of communication or any other facilities or installations of the coastal State;
- (l) any other activity not having a direct bearing on passage.

## **Appendix B: Methods**

For complete disclosure and transparency, it is necessary to reveal that this research has been based on a participant-observation method. Even more so, however, I believe that my methods for this project have evolved into that of a collaborative ethnography in which I have never considered the information communicated to me by MALI activists as coming from my “subjects” but rather from my “partners”. It is undeniable that my role, as an individual who was part of the strategic planning of this action with MALI means has influenced my thoughts. I personally believe that abortion is a fundamental human right that should be accessible and affordable to all women, regardless of state-imposed prohibition. For me, abortion is about guaranteeing basic health, a word defined by the WHO as referring to both physical and mental well-being. This right should not be conflated or confused by religion and/or culture. However, my personal beliefs on this issue and my capacity to articulate them within a human rights framework have not always been something that I considered central to my identity, but are a result of the time that I have spent working for, and with, Women on Waves.

In fall semester of 2011, I was studying abroad in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. It was at this time that I began interning for Women on Waves at their headquarters office. During this two-month time period, I worked directly for Dr. Gomperts, the founder and director of the organization. It was also during this time that I first traveled to Rabat, Morocco as part of my study abroad program. When I was in Rabat, Dr. Gomperts informed of the possibility of a ship campaign to that country. I have worked very closely with Dr. Gomperts since October 2011, living in Amsterdam now for a total of approximately eight months. She has called me her assistant, researcher, and mentee. I have acted and worked extensively in all three of these roles.

In June 2012, Dr. Gomperts and I traveled to Morocco to meet with members of MALI to prepare for the action. I video-recorded our meetings and took many pictures. However, there were so many moments in which my recording was simply inappropriate and would have created a barrier in the genuine human interaction and trust building that was taking place. As I have mentioned before, I do not ever think of MALI members as my subjects for research; they are my partners, and they are also my teachers. They are young Moroccan citizens who are striving to create a more democratic reality for themselves and others through fighting for basic human rights. I have the utmost respect and admiration for their perseverance in the face of state repression and conservative critics. I also have the utmost gratitude to them for allowing opening up to me, sharing with me their personal lived experiences in their country.

It was with extreme regret and sadness that I was unable to be present for the action in Morocco between October 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of 2012. I participated the most that I could from my residence in Providence, Rhode Island tracking all international media, acting as the primary social media correspondent to communicate what was happening at all times, writing press releases during the action (such as when the warships appeared on the morning of October 4<sup>th</sup>), editing the English pieces of other members of Women on Waves, and also reporting as a guest blogger for Ms. Magazine which is a US online publication. I worked for seven days in four different time-zones (Los Angeles, Providence, Amsterdam, and Tetouan) maintaining a constant virtual presence for the team on email, Facebook, and Skype.

**Rabat, Morocco: December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012 – January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

Between December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012 and January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013, I returned to Morocco to meet with MALI activists and discuss what had been happening since the ship campaign in October. The purpose of this trip was also to explore if what I theorized to be happening, that medical abortion

had become a social nonmovement, was actually happening. During my time in Rabat, the capital of this North African kingdom, I met with all of the MALI activists who were present during the ship campaign. Additionally, I met with several of the activists who were not present during the campaign, but who had participated in the logistical and strategic preparation for the action.

The formal method of research consisted of an evaluation meeting with MALI and one semi-structured, recorded interview. However, the more informal method consisted of me spending hours talking with and asking questions of our activist collaborators, trying to understand from their own perspectives the impact of the ship campaign. Our conversations expanded beyond the topic of safe abortion as violation of this human right in Morocco is one among many personal liberties of the individual that is has been and is currently threatened by the power of the government and the monarch. Therefore, in our conversations, MALI activists spoke of the poor system of education, health services, and the growing power of the PJD (Justice and Development Party).

Perhaps, however, the most similar and pervasive grievance that I understood was their feeling of disconnect from the widely accepted lifestyle of the Moroccan society where they live. Many of the activists do not identify as heterosexual, and this is a point of inner-conflict for them in their relationship with their families and in their self-presentation in the public sphere. Additionally, the MALI activists are atheist and feel immense aggression to some Islamic traditions that are enforced in Moroccan culture. For example, one of the activists revealed to me that he never fasts during Ramadan, even though his father believes that he carries out this tradition as an expression of his belief. Another activist told me that her revelation of “non-belief” came as a result of fasting during Ramadan and suddenly realizing that no one was

actively stopping her from eating. The epiphany made her see that she alone could control her actions, and not a higher form of authority.

There is, however, a point of contention between the inner-freedom that is felt of the activists and what is possible in their everyday lives. Posting about their discovered freedom and sexual identities on Facebook provides the activists with a virtual space to declare their independence. But, outside of this cyberspace platform, to their families and employers, they must adhere to the expected conduct, or must face severe consequences. The secret police are active in Morocco, and they often lurk in cafes or other public spaces, attempting to overhear “suspicious” conversations. The secret police have the ability to put a Moroccan citizen’s name on a “blacklist” that would essentially destroy this citizen’s chance to work in any capacity in the public sector. Some of the MALI activists have legitimate fear about the ramifications of being placed on this black list.

### **Amsterdam, The Netherlands: January 2013**

Upon returning from Morocco, I spent seven days in Amsterdam. During this time, I conducted three semi-structured interviews. The first was with one of my colleagues at Women on Waves who was not present during the action in Morocco. The second interview was with Dr. Kleiverda, the gynecologist of Women on Waves. Dr. Kleiverda was present during the action in Morocco and has also been present and an instrumental player in every ship campaign since the maiden voyage to Ireland in 2001. My third interview was with Dr. Marlies Schellekens who is a practicing general physician who also performs abortions in the Netherlands. Dr. Schellekens was present during the Morocco campaign. This was her first ship campaign with Women on Waves. I first met Dr. Schellekens in October of 2011 when she was preparing for a trip to Bangladesh to work with one of Women on Wave’s local partners. Dr. Schellekens and I were in

constant communication during the action as she was responsible for updating the French version of the Women on Waves site.

### **Asef Byat**

Asef Bayat was at Brown University during the 2011-2012 academic year as the Aga Khan Visiting Professor in Islamic Humanities. He had an office at The Watson Institute for International Studies and gave a number of lectures on campus. I had the great pleasure of meeting and talking with him during the spring of 2012, during which time I read selections of his book *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. This was my first introduction to the theory of social nonmovements. Upon understanding this logic, I had an epiphany that medical abortion in authoritarian MENA states, such as Morocco (the ship campaign was already in the planning stage), completely adhered to the criteria of social nonmovement. I expressed this notion to Professor Bayat who agreed with my placement of this behavior into his model. It was during the action in Morocco itself that I formulated my new theoretical model of how movement can incite nonmovement.

### **Internal role as both Limitation and Liberation**

I have made explicitly clear that my role in this thesis has been both simultaneously an actor in a transnational network of human rights activism as well as a student of critical sociological theory that seeks to transform the traditional models that have been applied to contentious, direct action work in this field. While on the one hand, one could argue that I have gone too far, and become too immersed and connected to the people and the movement about which I have written, I argue that this perspective has been the key that has allowed me to understand what has developed and transpired from the inside, a position to which no one else has been granted this same, unlimited access. It is only from my role as both researcher of social

behavior and participant in that behavior that I have had the insight to formulate and subsequently articulate a new theoretical construction. Writing about a movement of which I consider myself a part, presents the difficult task of needing to constantly be self-reflexive and self-critical. I am not at all claiming that this body of work is objective, but rather that the subjectivity of it has transformed it from a piece of removed academic writing into a product of genuinely engaged and collaborative scholarship.

### **Appendix C: Morocco Safe Abortion Hotline original voice-recorded text (English translation)**

In Morocco, Misoprostol can be bought in pharmacies under the name of *Arthrotec*. *Arthrotec* is a medication composed of an external coating of Misoprostol and a hard center containing an anti-inflammatory, *Diclofenac*. To induce an abortion (or a miscarriage), a woman needs twelve tablets of *Arthrotec*. First, she must place four tablets under her tongue. She must not swallow them, rather let them dissolve under her tongue for a minimum of thirty minutes. Next, she must spit out the center of the tablets. After three hours, she must repeat the process with four new tablets, which she spits out after thirty minutes. Once again after three hours, she does the same thing for a third time with the four remaining tablets.

After a few hours, most women have cramps and start to bleed. The bleeding can be heavier than that of normal period and can last up to three weeks. After three weeks, the woman should take a pregnancy test to make sure that the abortion was effective.

The woman must go to the hospital as soon as possible to make sure that she does not have complications if:

1. She has a fever for more than 24 hours
2. Her bleeding is too heavy, meaning, enough to fill two maxi pads per hour for two hours, or if the bleeding is similar to a stream of water coming out of an open spigot without pressure.
3. In the case of persistent pain.

For more information, send an email to [info@womenonweb.org](mailto:info@womenonweb.org).

### **Appendix D: Morocco Safe Abortion Hotline current voice-recorded text (English translation)**

To do a safe abortion by herself, women need to use Artotec.  
for all the scientific information on its most effective and safe use, please go to [www.ijhad.com](http://www.ijhad.com)  
Artotec is available in the pharmacy for 100 dirham.  
If you do not have access to internet, please leave a message and we will call you back.



## Appendix E: Safe Abortion Instructions Sticker in Arabic

**الإجهاض الطبي الآمن : عملية الإجهاض عن طريق تناول الحبوب - حتى الأسبوع الثاني عشر من الحمل**

- 1- اشترى Artotec 50 في الصيدلية (100 درهم)
  - 2- وضعي 4 حبات تحت اللسان لمدة 30 دقيقة ثم ادقليهم
  - 3- انتظري 3 ساعات ثم وضعي 4 حبات من جديد تحت اللسان لمدة 30 دقيقة ثم ادقليهم
  - 4- انتظري 3 ساعات ثم وضعي 4 حبات الأخيرة تحت اللسان لمدة 30 دقيقة ثم ادقليهم
  - 5- من المحتمل أن تحسي بالوجع أو التبوريشة (الإرتجاج) أو ينزل منك الدم أو تحسي بالتقيئة (القيء)
- أو تصابي بالإسهال. إذا نزل منك الدم بشكل كبير بحيث تستعملين أكثر من 2 فوط صحية في الساعة لمدة تتجاوز ساعتين، إذا ارتفعت حرارتك (السخانة) و أحسست بوجع قوي استمر لعدة أيام، لا بد من استشارة الطبيب.
- 6- بعد 3 أسابيع، قومي بإجراء اختبار الحمل

مزيد من المعلومات مخاطر أقل  
رقم الهاتف 06.33.23.43.33  
[www.ijhad.com](http://www.ijhad.com)

## Appendix F: Screen Shot of Facebook page

facebook Search for people, places and things Julia Ellis-Kahana

**الإجهاض الطبي الآمن : عملية الإجهاض عن طريق تناول الحبوب - حتى الأسبوع الثاني عشر من الحمل**

- 1- اشترى Artotec 50 في الصيدلية (100 درهم)
- 2- وضعي 4 حبات تحت اللسان لمدة 30 دقيقة ثم ادقيلهم
- 3- انتظري 3 ساعات ثم وضعي 4 حبات من جديد تحت اللسان لمدة 30 دقيقة ثم ادقيلهم
- 4- انتظري 3 ساعات ثم وضعي 4 حبات الأخيرة تحت اللسان لمدة 30 دقيقة
- 5- من المحتمل أن تحسي بالوجع أو التبوريشة (الإرتجاف) أو ينزل منك بالتقية (القيء)

**Avortement Maroc : Plus d'informations, moins de risques.** 347 likes · 21 talking about this

Community  
Mettons fin aux pratiques clandestines et dangereuses en offrant des moyens d'avortement légaux, contrôlés et sanitaires afin de sauver la vie des femmes  
About - Suggest an Edit

Photos Welcome Likes Videos

Highlights

Post Photo / Video  
Write something...  
Share

11 Friends Like Avortement Maroc : Plus d'informations, moins de risques.

Recent Posts by Others See All

Othman El Khammali  
La connerie humaine n'a pas de frontière!...  
2 1 · March 3 at 11:20am

Jean-françois Denis  
Chute des ventes de pilules de 3e et 4e g...

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