

# Weekly highlights by L'ECONOMISTE

## Counterfeiting The parallel world



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### EDITORIAL

### Humiliation

Khalid BELYAZID

**I** SRAEL gets the weapons; Palestine gets the aid. This is the pattern drawn by America, followed by the so-called Western world. Morocco has done its part by sending substantial aid to Gaza and to the West Bank via the most efficient route, to the Palestinian Red Crescent. As for other countries, to deliver their aid, they airdrop bales, build a floating harbor, or send a hospital ship. Instead of competing in terms of logistical ingenuity, they had better organize a break in the supply chain ... of weapons to the invader. For everyone knows that Israel, with all its technological and military prowess (especially against unarmed civilians) does not have the means to bomb people for months on end.

To complete its genocide, Israel is organizing famine and unrest around the relief effort, denying all humanity to the Palestinians, whom it wants

to humiliate in the eyes of the world. Just as was the case yesterday with Europe's attitude towards the Nazis, when it became a giver of humanist lessons, but now looks the other way. The Jewish ghettos in particular suffered mass murder and humiliation. Forgetting this history, Israel destroys the means of life (houses, hospitals, water supply...), and tries to break all hope, and to force people into exile. Israel has been trying for 75 years, but to no avail. All it has done is reinforce the Palestinians' instinct for survival and resistance, and their resentment. It is this rage that breeds violence such as that of October 7, when members of Hamas by the hundreds had killed and taken hostages, pierced a cyber-secured border, an «iron dome» that «not a mouse can cross», and smashed the window of the «invincible» army. That is the only humiliation. □

## Weekly highlights

### Counterfeiting

# Formal versus informal economy: a losing battle?

**S**INCE the end of February, a series of major raids have been carried out on ready-to-wear stores everywhere. Launched in a number of towns and cities, the raids are targeting traders and retailers of counterfeit or genuine clothing items that have been diverted from legal production and marketing channels. Fraud and customs officers have just seized large quantities of these items. «In Casablanca, these types of stores are concentrated mainly in the Bourgogne, Maarif, downtown, Derb Omar, Mustafa El Maani, Bab Marrakech, Korea, Ain Chok, Derb Ghallef, and Sidi Maarouf districts», confirmed Mohamed El Fane, President of the Franchise Federation.

#### «Specialization in counterfeiting

In fact, for a long time now, a sort of «counterfeit specialization» has been emerging, per district, per zoning, or per type of product..., explains a member of the textile industry. In Casablanca, Korea has become an expert in espadrilles and sporting goods, while



Denim pants are by far the products most exposed to counterfeiting. Fake denim starts at 120 Dirhams (USD 12), rising to 180 or 200 Dirhams (USD 18 to 20), depending on brand and size... (Ph by F. Alnasser)

Derb Ghallef specializes in shoes, suits, and telephones... Bourgogne concentrates stores selling fake jeans, polo shirts, jackets... Sidi Maarouf is home to workshops and outlet stores specializing in the imitation of jeans, polo shirts, and jackets... Not to mention the home trade of importers of counterfeit ready-to-wear from Turkey (fake Ralph Laurent, Gant, Boss, Armani, Gucci...).

Less than a month ago, the authorities and Customs dismantled a counterfeiting network in Casablanca. According to our sources, the counterfeiters had been tracked down by customs via an account on TikTok. They were able to trace the network via videos posted on this social network, which led to the discovery of a factory producing large quantities of counterfeit clothing with labels from wellknown

brands. In the absence of invoices and proof of authenticity, large quantities of goods and machinery were seized. Most of the goods seized were counterfeit sportswear. These large-scale seizures were prompted by recurrent complaints from the franchise holders - through the Moroccan Franchise Federation, - and from the Chambers of Commerce, who denounced «the increase in unfair competition from counterfeit jeans, shirts, jackets, suits, shoes, sports goods, and other items». This phenomenon has accelerated the «descent into hell» of many franchises, which have gone out of business due to poor sales, headon competition from the informal sector and online commerce (e-commerce platforms), counterfeiting and imitations. This situation has had a direct impact on sales in structured stores, brand names and brands. It has even contributed to the bankruptcy and closure of many shops in several towns, confirmed Mohamed El Fane, President of the FMF. □

Amin RBOUB

### Social workers

# The Government wants to restore order

**T**HE Government is seeking to restore order to the social worker sector. The decree regulating this profession was adopted by the last Government Council. It is the brainchild of Awatif Hyyar, Minister of Solidarity, Social Integration, and Family Affairs. The piece of legislation aims to modernize the system for taking care of others, in application of Law 45.18. The legislation includes a number of provisions, including those relating to the procedures for obtaining and issuing accreditation to practice this profession. As a reminder, the number of social workers in the public and private sectors is estimated at almost 35,000, 57% of whom are women. According to the line ministry estimates, this figure is set to rise to 45,000 by 2025.

Law 45.18 on the organization of the social work profession refers to regulatory texts that specify the professional categories and branches



The number of social workers in the public and private sectors is estimated at almost 35,000, 57% of whom are women. By 2025, this figure is set to rise to 45,000, according to estimates by the ministry responsible

included in each field of social work. They also set out the conditions, procedures and list of certificates and diplomas required to apply for approval to practice the profession of social worker. The same applies to the procedures for granting authorization to foreign social workers wishing to

practice this profession in Morocco, reads the text's introductory note. The document outlines the standard status of professional associations representing social workers, in addition to the conditions and procedures for granting authorization to persons exercising a professional activity, on

the date the law comes into force.

This is why, in application of the provisions of this law, and in order to complete the system of care for others, the text was prepared using a participatory approach which was embodied in meetings with the various players involved in the study launched by the Ministry of Solidarity, Social Integration, and Family Affairs to determine the technical content needed to implement the articles of this law.

The decree includes general provisions and some relating to the procedures for obtaining accreditation. Other provisions relate to transitional measures for the issue of accreditation. It also identifies the professional categories and branches included in each field of social work. These include social assistance, animation, and social education. Added to this are family and social assistance professions, including social development management. A long list is appended to this decree. □

M.C.

## Increase in minimum wage and salaries...

## The «social» battle begins

**A**NOTHER round of social dialogue is underway. Consultations with trade unions resumed on Tuesday, March 26. The Union Marocaine du Travail (UMT) trade union will open the negotiations, putting forward demands such as the improvement of purchasing power and incomes. Miloudi Mokharek, General Secretary, is calling for a general pay rise, suggesting that «*it should not be less than the 2,000 Dirhams (USD 200) granted to teachers*».

The revision of the income tax grid is back on the table: «*The Government had promised this reform for 2023. The measures taken that year had a limited impact on purchasing power*», said the head of UMT. In his opinion, the reform of the income tax grid will correct a tax injustice. In 2023, increases in deductions for professional expenses and tax allowances for pensioners have been granted.

UMT is also aiming to raise the guaranteed inter-professional minimum wage (SMIG) to 5,000 Dirhams (USD 500), compared with the current 3,140 Dirhams (USD 314). This could compromise the country's attractiveness and competitiveness. «*An increase in*



*In addition to improving purchasing power and incomes, other major issues are on the negotiating table: the draft organic law on pensions and pension reform*

*the minimum wage carries risks, particularly in laborintensive sectors*», said a business leader interviewed by L'Économiste. Mokharek refutes this position, asserting that «*we mustn't make workers insecure. In sectors such as cleaning, wages do not exceed 1,400 Dirhams (USD 140) per month*».

With regard to the organic law on strikes, discussions with unions and employers have been underway for some time. However, according to one trade unionist.

In addition to the demands for improved living standards and purchasing power, other major issues are on the table: the organic law on strikes, the overhaul of the Labor Code and of the retirement dossier. On the organic law on strikes, consultations with unions and employers have been underway for some time. «*The unions and employers' associations have submitted their proposals to the Ministry of Employment on the various measures contained in the bill tabled in Parliament. But no complete version of the*

*proposed changes has yet been received,*» says a trade unionist.

At a meeting of the Club de L'Économiste, Younes Sekkouri, Minister for Economic Inclusion, assured us that his ministry had received numerous proposals, while respecting the perspectives of each of the players and the balance provided for by the Constitution. He pointed out that it was not a question of restricting trade union freedoms, but of organizing things in such a way as to protect employees while allowing businesses to operate. It seems that approval of the draft organic law on strikes should not pose any major problems, insofar as the balances are supposed to be respected.

In theory, approval of the draft organic law on strikes should not pose any major «problems», since the balances are supposed to be respected.

Issues such as advance notice, the time limit for negotiations before a strike is called, minimum service in the public sector, the occupation of workplaces, etc. need to be settled. After the law on strikes, the Labor Code will be updated to take account of changes in the way people work. □

**Khadija MASMOUDI**

## Is self-entrepreneurship still attractive?

**H**OW would you assess the auto-entrepreneur scheme less than ten years after its launch? Exclusive figures obtained from the postal bank (Barid Al Maghrib) indicate that since its introduction just under ten years ago, 615,660 people have signed up to the self-employment scheme, of whom 389,565 are active. Just under 5,000 applications are currently under review.

The service sector accounts for the lion's share of registrations, with 44%, followed by commercial activities (40%), industry (9%), and crafts (7%). The surge in membership was recorded over the course of the Covid year, in particular 2020, when the number of registrations soared to 174,665. This figure is explained in particular by the economic and financial implications of the state of emergency due to the health crisis, with compulsory administrative closures and redundancies. According to figures from the High Commissioner's Office for Planning (HCP), the national economy lost



*Service providers have become the majority after a long period dominated by those engaged in a commercial activity*

432,000 jobs in 2020 (295,000 in rural areas and 137,000 in urban areas), compared with the creation of 165,000 jobs the previous year. This was due to the combined effect of the health crisis and the dry agricultural season, hence the use of self-entrepreneur status to create one's own job, all the more so as this professional framework enables one to offer one's services to several customers. On another note, 118,116

people have been deregistered. One of the advantages of this status is the ability to work from home, without having to have a registered office or domicile. Of the 615,660 people who have adopted this system, 262,117 work from home, i.e. 42.25%. 12.52% carry out their activities in a store, and 7.05% on a building site. In terms of nationality, Moroccan nationals represent the overwhel-

ming majority, around 98.3%, while foreigners account for barely 1.07% (10,437 people). In terms of periodicity, it should be noted that 554,155 auto-entrepreneurs operate on a permanent basis (89.32%), as opposed to 66,250 engaged in seasonal activities (10.68%). While 2020 saw a sharp rise in applications to join the national register of self-entrepreneurs, the pace began to slow from 2021 with 104,529 registrations, dropping to 73,519 in 2022, then 61,160 in 2023. For the first two months of 2024, the number of registrations stands at 3,820. Official registration statistics are not broken down by sector. Consequently, it is difficult to distinguish the share of service providers (who are in the majority) from those carrying out commercial, industrial, or craft activities. This breakdown is important, as the tax regime for service providers has been completely overhauled. This greatly reduces its attractiveness. □

**Hassan ELARIF**

## Weekly highlights

# 1.2 million visitors to the Majorelle garden



• **Berber arts and YSL museums also do well**

• **The cultural site with its three components attracts 2/3 of tourists**

**T**HIS is one of the must-see cultural sites during a stay in Marrakech. With its three components - the Jardin Majorelle and the Jardin Majorelle Museum, the Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech Museum and the Pierre Bergé Museum of Berber Art - the site attracts at least half of all tourists visiting Marrakech. The Jardin Majorelle alone attracted 1.2 million visitors in 2023. Created in the 1930s, Majorelle's famous garden continues to seduce, captivate, and bewitch visitors. The other museums, created more recently, are doing well. Attendance at the Pierre Bergé Museum of Berber Arts reached 404,000 in 2023, while the Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech Museum attracted 411,000 visitors, enough to make the museums, monuments, and other historical and cultural sites of Marrakech and the whole of Morocco green with envy.

*Created in the 1930s, Majorelle's famous garden continues to seduce, captivate and bewitch visitors. Other, more recently created museums are doing well*



Winter and summer, weekdays and weekends, tourists flock to this cultural site. The recipe lies in the management of this heritage. When Majorelle bought the land in 1924, it was an arid, windbeaten zone with only a few local palm trees. In the space of 50 years, the landscape has been completely transformed. Bougainvilleas, bamboos, honeysuckles, agaves, aloes and a wide variety of cacti and palms from all over the world have been planted, giving the garden a unique, peaceful atmosphere. In addition to Majorelle's imprint, his two

purchasers, the late Pierre Bergé and the late Yves Saint Laurent, were responsible for restoring the garden to its former glory. And to ensure continuity, Pierre Bergé and Yves Saint Laurent created a foundation to look after this heritage and develop the concept. Thus, in 2011, the gardens had their first Berber museum, and in 2017, the cultural site acquired the Yves Saint Laurent museum in the street that bears the same name as the fashion icon. The Marrakech museum enables visitors to rediscover part of the fashion icon's collection,

including 5,000 garments, 15,000 haute couture accessories, and tens of thousands of sketches and other items still archived in Paris. □

Badra BERRISSOULE

### Ticket purchase exclusively online

**T**HE And still with a view to development, the cultural site has taken a big step towards digital. Tickets for the Jardin Majorelle and the Yves-Saint-Laurent Museum are now sold exclusively online. This choice was made to avoid long queues and free-riders. Recently, the cultural site has been confronted with cases of non-compliant ticket purchases via unauthorized third-party sites, leading to problems for visitors and a negative impact on their experience. «*Holders of non-compliant tickets will be denied access to Jardin Majorelle, Pierre Bergé Museum of Berber Arts and Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech Museum*», says a statement from Jardins Majorelle. □