

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	272
Land:	Marokko-Vestsahara
Kilde:	US Department of State
Titel:	Country report on Terrorism 2019 - chapter 1
Udgivet:	24. juni 2020
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	6. november 2020

Document #2032530

USDOS – US Department of State

Country Report on Terrorism 2019 - Chapter 1 - Morocco

Overview: The United States and Morocco have robust and long-standing CT cooperation. The Government of Morocco continued its comprehensive CT strategy that includes vigilant security measures, regional and international cooperation, and counter-radicalization policies. In 2019, Morocco’s CT efforts largely mitigated its risk of terrorism, doubling the number of arrests compared with 2018. The country continued to face sporadic threats, largely from small, independent terrorist cells, the majority of which claimed to be inspired by or affiliated with ISIS. In March 2019, Morocco repatriated eight FTFs from Syria. Morocco is an active participant in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Morocco is also a member of the GCTF and is currently the co-chair of the GCTF with Canada.

2019 Terrorist Incidents: There were no terrorist incidents reported in Morocco in 2019.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Morocco continued to investigate, prosecute, and sentence defendants under its CT legislation, enacted in 2003 and expanded in 2015.

In 2019, Morocco’s Council of Ministers approved a draft law to manage trade in dual-use goods, which would give Moroccan law enforcement authority to control the import, export, and transit of dual-use goods and related services that could be used for WMD proliferation related purposes, to include the development of a WMD program.

In 2019, under the direction of the Ministry of Interior, Moroccan law enforcement aggressively targeted and reported to have arrested more than 125 individuals, effectively dismantling more than 25 terrorist cells in the early stages of planning attacks against a range of targets, including public buildings, public figures, and tourist sites. Moroccan law enforcement leveraged intelligence collection, police work, and collaboration with international partners to conduct CT operations. Three men who murdered two Scandinavian hikers in the Atlas Mountains in 2018 were sentenced to death in July 2019 (though Morocco has had a moratorium on executions since 1993), while a fourth man received a life sentence.

The Central Bureau of Judicial Investigation (BCIJ) remains the primary law enforcement agency responsible for CT prosecutions. The BCIJ reports to the General Directorate for Territorial Surveillance and operates under the supervision of the public prosecutor of the Court of Appeals. The following offers a snapshot of arrests in 2019:

- In January, Moroccan authorities dismantled a 13-person cell for inciting terrorist crimes and undermining the state’s security in the cities of, Casablanca, Mohammedia, and Sale, seizing electronic devices, bladed weapons, and a written pledge of allegiance to ISIS.
- In May, Moroccan authorities dismantled a nine-member cell pledging allegiance to ISIS that planned to perpetrate terrorist attacks in Tangier, seizing electronic devices, paramilitary uniforms, and harpoon guns.
- In October, Moroccan authorities dismantled a seven-person cell operating in Casablanca, Chefchaouen, and Ouazzane that was preparing to target sensitive infrastructure and strategic sites, seizing bladed weapons, diving equipment, and ISIS flags.

Border security remained a top priority for Moroccan authorities. The General Directorate for National Security has primary responsibility for conducting border inspections at ports of entry such as Casablanca’s Mohammed V Airport. Law enforcement officials and private airline carriers worked regularly with the United States to detect and deter individuals attempting to transit illegally and to address watchlisted travelers. Moroccan airport authorities have excellent capabilities in detecting fraudulent documents. In addition, police, customs officers, and the Royal Gendarmerie operated mobile and fixed checkpoints along the roads in border areas and at the entrances to major municipalities. Moroccan naval and coast guard units monitored and patrolled Morocco’s extensive coastal waters, including the Strait of Gibraltar, to interdict illicit traffickers.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Morocco is a member of MENAFATF. Its FIU, known as the Unité de Traitement du Renseignement Financier, is a member of the Egmont Group. Morocco is also a member of the Defeat-ISIS Coalition's CFIG. In August, MENAFATF published a Mutual Evaluation Report that reviewed Morocco's compliance with FATF standards and the effectiveness of Morocco's AML/CFT system; the report contained several recommendations to enhance its AML/CFT regimes.

Countering Violent Extremism: Morocco has a comprehensive CVE strategy that prioritizes countering radicalization and oversight of the religious sphere. To counter what it views as religious extremism, Morocco promotes an interpretation of the Maliki-Ashari school of Sunni Islam, which it considers tolerant. The Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs has developed an educational curriculum for Morocco's nearly 50,000 imams, as well as for female clerics (mourchidates). In 2019, Morocco's imam training center in Rabat trained more than 2,700 religious leaders, mostly from West Africa, which included more than 400 women graduates. The Royal Mohammedan League of Ulema (Rabita Mohammedia) counters radicalization by producing scholarly research, reviewing educational curricula, and conducting youth outreach on religious and social topics.

In prisons, the U.S. Department of State has supported the General Delegation for Prison Administration and Reintegration's (DGAPR's) efforts to modernize prison management, develop prisoner classification tools, and construct more secure facilities. The DGAPR has conducted four offerings of its deradicalization program, *Moussalaha* (Reconciliation) and plans to open the program to female prisoners in 2020.

International and Regional Cooperation: Morocco is currently a co-chair of the GCTF with Canada. Morocco hosted one GCTF event in June 2019, an Africa-focused regional workshop on the “Initiative on Improving Capabilities for Detecting and Interdicting Terrorist Travel through Enhanced Terrorist Screening and Information Sharing,” an initiative that Morocco co-chaired with the United States. Morocco also participated in UN-led workshops on detecting and preventing terrorist travel. Morocco is a major non-NATO ally. Morocco hosted the annual African Lion exercise and participated in multilateral regional training exercises. Morocco is an active member of the TSCTP. Morocco also has strong cooperation with European partners – especially Belgium, France, and Spain – to thwart potential terrorist threats in Europe. Regional tensions between Morocco and Algeria remained an impediment to CT cooperation in 2019.

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Annual report on
terrorism (covering 2019)



Country:

Morocco

Source:

[USDOS – US Department of
State](#)

Original link:

<https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2019/morocco/>

Document type:

Periodical Report

Language:

English

Published:

24 June 2020

Document ID:

2032530

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ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

