

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	316
Land:	Marokko-Vestsahara
Kilde:	US Department of State
Titel:	Report on International Religious Freedom 2021 - Morocco
Udgivet:	2. juni 2022
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	20. juni 2022

MOROCCO 2021 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

According to the constitution, Islam is the religion of the state, and the state guarantees freedom of thought, expression, and assembly. The constitution also says the state guarantees to everyone the freedom to “practice his religious affairs.” The constitution states the King holds the title “Commander of the Faithful” and that he is the protector of Islam and the guarantor of the freedom to practice religious affairs in the country. The constitution prohibits political parties founded on religion as well as political parties, parliamentarians, and constitutional amendments that denigrate or infringe on Islam. The law penalizes the use of enticements to convert a Muslim to another religion and prohibits criticism of Islam. It criminalizes acts and speech “undermining the Islamic religion.” Although the law allows registration of religious groups as associations, some minority religious groups reported the government delayed or rejected their registration requests. The Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs (MEIA) continued to guide and monitor the content of sermons in mosques, Islamic religious education, and the dissemination of Islamic religious material by broadcast media, actions it said were intended to combat violent extremism. The government restricted the distribution of non-Islamic religious materials, as well as Islamic materials it deemed inconsistent with the Maliki-Ashari school of Sunni Islam. According to the government, 79 persons were criminally charged or convicted for engaging in prohibited acts during the month of Ramadan. On December 14, King Mohammed VI introduced an initiative to renovate Jewish heritage sites in the country, to include hundreds of synagogues, cemeteries, and other sites in several cities. An organization of Moroccan Christians launched a campaign to revise laws restricting the ability to conduct and attend services in official churches and the right to ecclesiastical or civil marriage. The group also called on the government to allow Moroccan Christians to be buried in Christian cemeteries and to hold Christian names. The Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education, and Scientific Research announced a change to the public school curriculum to include Jewish heritage and history in both Arabic and French.

According to a 2020-2021 report by the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Moroccan Association of Human Rights (AMDH), there was continued societal harassment of Shia individuals and Shia Islam in the press and in Friday sermons. As a result, many worshipped in private and avoided disclosing their religious affiliation. Representatives of minority religious groups said fear of societal

harassment, including ostracism by converts' families, social ridicule, employment discrimination, and potential violence against them by "extremists," were the main reasons leading them to practice their faiths discreetly. Jewish citizens continued to state that they lived and attended services at synagogues in safety. They said that they were able to visit religious sites regularly and to hold annual commemorations.

The Charge d'Affaires and other U.S. embassy and consulate general officials met with government officials, including from the Ministries of Interior (MOI) and MEIA, to discuss religious freedom and tolerance, including the rights of minority communities. In regular meetings and discussions with members of religious minority and majority communities throughout the country, embassy and consulate general representatives highlighted the importance of the protection of religious minorities and interfaith dialogue. The Charge d'Affaires and Consul General regularly met with members of the Jewish community in Casablanca, as well as with Jewish leaders in other cities, including Marrakesh and Tangier. Together, they met with more than 50 Jewish government leaders, and others to highlight the country's religious diversity. Consulate general officials in Casablanca also engaged with Protestant, Catholic, and Anglican Church leadership. As part of this outreach, the Consul General visited local churches and heard from committee members and church leaders about the growing Christian population in the country, comprised primarily of recently arrived sub-Saharan African migrants.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 36.4 million (midyear 2021). More than 99 percent of the population is Sunni Muslim, and less than 0.1 percent of the population is Shia Muslim. Groups together constituting less than 1 percent of the population include Christians, Jews, and Baha'is.

According to Jewish community leaders, there are an estimated 2,000 to 3,500 Jews, approximately 2,500 of whom reside in Casablanca. Some Christian community leaders estimate there are between 2,000 and 6,000 Christian citizens distributed throughout the country; however, AMDH estimates there are 25,000 Christian citizens. The number of Moroccan Christians reached approximately 31,500, according to reports from a number of print and electronic media, although due to the absence of statistical data from official and research centers and the fact that some Christians practice in private, it is difficult to reach an accurate estimate.

Foreign-resident Christian leaders estimate the Christian population includes at least 30,000 Roman Catholics and approximately 10,000 Protestants, many of whom are recent migrants from sub-Saharan Africa or lifelong residents whose families have resided and worked in the country for generations but do not hold citizenship. There are small, foreign-resident Anglican communities in Rabat, Casablanca, and Tangier. There are an estimated 3,000 foreign residents who identify as Russian and Greek Orthodox, including a small Russian Orthodox community in Rabat and a small Greek Orthodox community in Casablanca. Most foreign-resident Christians live in the Casablanca, Marrakesh, Tangier, and Rabat urban areas, but small numbers are present throughout the country, including many who are migrants from sub-Saharan Africa.

Shia Muslim leaders estimate there are several thousand Shia citizens, with the largest proportion in the north. In addition, there are an estimated 1,000 to 2,000 foreign-resident Shia from Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia, and Iraq. Leaders of the Ahmadi Muslim community estimate their numbers at 750. Leaders of the Baha'i Faith community estimate there are 350-400 members throughout the country.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

According to the constitution, the country is a “sovereign Muslim state,” and Islam is the religion of the state. The constitution guarantees freedom of thought, expression, and assembly, and the state guarantees every individual the freedom to “practice his religious affairs.” The constitution states the King holds the title “Commander of the Faithful,” and that he is the protector of Islam and the guarantor of the freedom to practice religious affairs in the country. The constitution prohibits the enactment of laws or constitutional amendments infringing upon its provisions relating to Islam, and it also recognizes the Jewish community as an integral component of society. According to the constitution, political parties may not be founded on religion and may not denigrate or infringe on Islam. A political party may not legally challenge Islam as the state religion. Religions other than Islam and Judaism are not recognized by the constitution or laws.

The constitution and the law governing media prohibit any individual, including members of parliament, who are normally immune from arrest, from criticizing Islam on public platforms, such as print or online media, or in public speeches. Such expressions are punishable by imprisonment of up to two years, a fine of up

to 200,000 dirhams (\$21,600), or both. Imprisonment may be increased to five years or fine of 50,000 to 500,000 dirhams (\$5,400-\$53,900), or both, if the acts “are committed either by speech, scream, or threat made in public places or public meetings, or by poster publicly exhibited by sale, distribution, or any other means used for publicity included by online form, paper, and audiovisual form.”

The law penalizes anyone who “employs enticements to undermine the faith” or convert a Muslim to another faith by exploiting a weakness or need for assistance, or through the use of educational, health, or other institutions and provides punishments of six months to three years’ imprisonment and a fine of 200 to 500 dirhams (\$22-\$54). The same penalties apply to anyone who intentionally interferes with religious rites or celebrations where this causes disturbances or affects the dignity of such religious acts. It also provides the right to a court trial for anyone accused of such an offense. Voluntary conversion is not a crime under the law. The law permits the government to expel summarily any noncitizen resident it determines to be “a threat to public order,” and the government has used this clause to expel foreigners suspected of proselytizing.

By law, impeding or preventing one or more persons from worshipping or from attending worship services of any religion is punishable by six months to three years’ imprisonment and a fine of 200 to 500 dirhams (\$22-\$54). The penal code states any person known to be Muslim who breaks the fast in public during the month of Ramadan without an exception granted by religious authorities is liable to punishment of six months in prison and a fine of 200 to 500 dirhams (\$22-\$54). Owners have discretion to keep their restaurants open during Ramadan.

The High Authority for Audiovisual Communications established by the constitution requires all eight public television stations to dedicate 5 percent of their airtime to Islamic religious content and to broadcast the Islamic call to prayer five times daily.

Sunni Muslims and Jews are the only religious groups recognized in the constitution as native to the country. A separate set of laws and special courts govern personal status matters for Jews, including functions such as marriage, inheritance, and other personal status matters. Rabbinical authorities, who are also court officials, administer Jewish family courts. Muslim judges trained in the country’s Maliki-Ashari Sunni interpretation of sharia administer the courts for personal status matters for all other religious groups. According to the law, a Muslim man may marry a Christian or Jewish woman; a Muslim woman may not marry a man of another religion unless he converts to Islam. Non-Muslims must

formally convert to Islam and be permanent residents before they can become guardians of abandoned or orphaned children. Guardianship entails the caretaking of a child, which may last until the child reaches 18, but it does not allow changing the child's name or inheritance rights, and requires maintaining the child's birth religion, according to orphanage directors.

Many foreign-resident Christian churches (churches run by and attended by foreign residents only) are registered as associations. The Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Protestant, and Anglican Churches maintain different forms of official status. The Russian Orthodox and Anglican Churches are registered as branches of international associations through the embassies of Russia and the United Kingdom, respectively. The Protestant and Catholic Churches, whose existence as foreign-resident churches predates the country's independence in 1956, as well as the Russian and Greek Orthodox Churches, maintain a special status recognized by the government, which allows them to preserve houses of worship and assign foreign clergy.

Legal provisions outlined in the general tax code provide tax benefits, land and building grants, subsidies, and customs exemptions for imports necessary for the religious activities of recognized religious groups (Sunni Muslims and Jews) and religious groups registered as associations (some foreign-resident Christian churches). The law does not require religious groups to register to worship privately, but a nonrecognized religious group must register as an association to conduct business on behalf of the group (e.g., open and hold bank accounts, rent property, acquire land and building grants, and have access to customs exemptions for imports necessary for religious activities) or to hold public gatherings. Associations must register with local MOI officials in the jurisdiction of the association's headquarters. An individual representative of a religious group neither recognized nor registered as an association may be held liable for any of the group's public gatherings, transactions, bank accounts, property rentals, and/or petitions to the government. The registration application must contain the name and purpose of the association; the name, nationality, age, profession, and residential address of each founder; and the address of the association's headquarters. The constitution guarantees civil society associations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) the right to organize themselves and exercise their activities freely within the scope of the constitution. The law on associations prohibits organizations that pursue activities the government regards as "illegal, contrary to good morals, or aimed at undermining the Islamic religion, the integrity of the national territory, or the monarchical regime, or which call for discrimination."

The law does not allow Moroccan Christians to be buried in Christian cemeteries or to hold Christian names.

By law, all publicly funded educational institutions must teach Sunni Islam in accordance with the teachings and traditions of the Maliki-Ashari school of Islamic jurisprudence. Foreign-run and privately funded schools have the choice of including or omitting religious instruction within the school's curriculum. Private Jewish schools may teach Judaism.

According to the constitution, only the High Council of Ulema, a group headed and appointed by the King with representatives from all regions of the country, is authorized to issue fatwas, which become legally binding only through the King's endorsement in a royal decree and a subsequent confirmation by parliamentary legislation. Such fatwas are considered binding only on Maliki-Ashari Sunni Muslims. If the King or parliament declines to ratify a decision of the council, the decision remains nonbinding and unenforced.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

On June 17, security services arrested an Italian national of Moroccan origin, Ikram Nazhi, upon her arrival in Morocco from Italy, for contempt and blasphemy against Islam via her use of social media networks in 2019 while visiting Morocco. On June 28, the First Instance Court of Marrakesh sentenced Nazhi to three years in prison and a fine of 50,000 dirhams (\$5,400) for insulting Islam. Nazhi appealed on June 30 and the court reduced her sentence to two months in prison without a monetary fine. Following the sentencing, AMDH-Marrakesh released a statement calling on the government to stop "depriving" citizens of fundamental freedoms enshrined in the constitution. Nazhi was released from prison on August 23.

In May, a court in Casablanca fined movie actor Rafik Boubker 5,000 dirhams (\$540) as a condition for provisional release from custody pending a hearing on his case. Authorities arrested him in May 2020 and charged him with making blasphemous remarks against Islam and attacking the sacredness of worship in an alleged posting of a video of himself on social media. No date had been set for the hearing as of year's end.

Following a process that lasted more than a year, authorities renewed the registration of the Rabat International Church in December. By year's end, the new pastor of the church, a non-Moroccan who had arrived in February, had not received his residency permit and permission to manage the church's activities.

Authorities continued to deny Moroccan citizen Christian groups the right to Christian or civil marriage and funeral services, and the right to establish churches. The government denied official recognition to NGOs that it considered to be advocating against Islam as the state religion.

The government continued to allow the operation of 44 registered, foreign-resident Christian churches. Some church leaders reported that Christian citizens generally did not attend those services out of fear of incurring governmental harassment, including concern that security authorities might open a file on them. However, some foreign-born clergy and Christian citizen leaders stated that some citizens who were well known to be Christian encountered no harassment from government security officers when they attended the services of registered foreign-resident Christian churches. Foreign residents and visitors attended religious services without restriction at those churches.

The Justice and Charity Organization (JCO), a Sunni Islamist social movement that rejects the King's spiritual authority, remained banned but still active. The government continued to monitor the JCO's activities, and it remained the largest social movement of its kind in the country, despite being unregistered. The JCO continued to release press statements, hold conferences, manage internet sites, and participate in political demonstrations. According to media in the country, there were instances in which the government prevented the organization from meeting and restricted public distribution of JCO's published materials. In December, during a visit from the Israeli Defense Minister to the country, JCO participated in a protest that local police dispersed.

Community leaders from various Christian groups said authorities continued to make phone or house calls to monitor the activities of Christians. According to various sources, authorities continued to say the purpose of such monitoring was to protect minority religious communities. Authorities informed religious communities they would be monitoring compliance with COVID-19 restrictions at religious venues, as they did with the general population.

A number of religious groups reported occasionally informing authorities of planned large gatherings, for which authorities at times assisted with security measures.

According to religious leaders and legal scholars, the government's refusal to allow Shia Muslim groups to register as associations continued to prevent these groups from gathering legally for public religious observations. There are no known Shia mosques in the country. According to Shia community members, they were able to pray in Sunni mosques, but they risked criticism from other worshippers for their religious practices. Shia representatives reported they did not attempt to register during the year because they feared security forces would harass them, as had been the case in previous years.

The Moroccan Association of Religious Liberties, an organization that advocates for rights of religious minorities, applied for registration in 2019 and remained unregistered at year's end. A foreign, non-Muslim religious association was still waiting for its organization's registration to be renewed, limiting its ability to hold meetings and raise funds.

The U.S.-based NGO Open Doors stated in its annual 2021 World Watch List that the penal code, which criminalizes "shaking the faith" of a Muslim, put many Christians who talked to others about their faith at risk of criminal prosecution and arrest. The NGO also stated that while the penal code provision "only punish[ed] proselytization, converts to Christianity [could] be punished in other ways, such as loss of inheritance rights and custody of their children."

Christian leaders continued to say there were no reports of authorities pressuring converts to renounce their faith by informing friends, relatives, and employers of the individual's conversions.

According to the government, 79 persons were criminally charged or convicted for performing prohibited acts during the month of Ramadan.

A 2017 ban on the import, production, and sale of the burqa remained in effect. The MOI cited security concerns as justification for the ban. The ban did not prevent individuals from wearing burqas or making them at home for individual use. Authorities prohibited news anchors on national television and police and army personnel in uniform from wearing a hijab or burqa.

The MEIA's Mohamed VI Institute remained the principal government institution responsible for shaping the country's religious life and promoting its interpretation of Sunni Islam. It employed 2100 *morchidines* (male Muslim spiritual guides) and 901 *morchidates* (female Muslim spiritual guides) in mosques or religious institutions throughout the country. The *morchidates* taught religious subjects and provided counsel on a variety of matters, including women's legal rights and family planning. The institute continued to provide government-required one-year training for imams and trained an average of 150 *morchidines* and 100 *morchidates* per year. It also continued to train foreign imams, predominantly from sub-Saharan Africa. The training sessions fulfilled the requirement for religious leaders to acquire a certificate issued by the High Council of Ulema to operate in the country. The High Council of Ulema also continued to host continuing training sessions and capacity-building exercises for the religious leaders.

The government required religious leaders who worked in the country to abide by the guidelines outlined in the MEIA-issued *Guide of the Imam, Khatib, and the Preacher*. The MEIA continued to guide and monitor the content of sermons in mosques, Islamic religious education, and the dissemination of Islamic religious material by broadcast media, actions it said were intended to combat violent extremism.

The MEIA continued to monitor Quranic schools to prevent what the ministry considered inflammatory or extremist rhetoric and to ensure teaching followed approved doctrine.

The government required mosques to close to the public shortly after daily prayer times to prevent use of the premises for what it termed "unauthorized activity," including gatherings the government believed could promote extremism. Construction of new mosques, including those constructed using private funds, required authorization from the MEIA.

The government continued to restrict the distribution of non-Islamic religious materials, as well as some Islamic materials it deemed inconsistent with the Maliki-Ashari school of Sunni Islam.

Some Amazigh (Berber)-rights activists reported intolerance and suppression of traditional Amazigh customs in rural Amazigh villages by government-appointed Muslim spiritual guides.

The government's policy remained prohibiting the sale of all books, videotapes, and DVDs it considered religiously extremist.

The government permitted the display and sale of Bibles in French, English, and Spanish. A limited number of Arabic translations of the Bible were available for sale in a few bookshops for use in higher education courses.

The government continued drafting and implementing an educational charter mandating traditional education be based on "values" and the "respect for religious and legal studies." The Ministry of Education continued an ongoing review of the religion curriculum used in primary and secondary education and continued to make reforms based on universal values of liberty, empathy, solidarity, and honesty. Since the review began in 2016, 29 textbooks had been rewritten, and additional modifications to textbooks continued during the year.

Jewish and Christian citizens continued to state that elementary and high school curricula did not include mention of the historical legacy and current presence of their groups in the country. The government continued to fund the study of Jewish culture and heritage at state-run universities. In October, the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education, and Scientific Research announced a change to the public school curriculum to include Jewish heritage and history in both Arabic and French, starting in the fourth year of primary school.

The government continued to disseminate information about Islam and Judaism over dedicated state-funded television and radio channels. Television channel Assadissa (Six) programming was strictly religious, consisting primarily of Quran and *hadith* (sayings or customs of Muhammad and his companions) readings and exegesis, highlighting the government's interpretation of Islam.

On October 9, the group Coordination of Moroccan Christians launched a campaign advocating for revision of existing laws restricting the ability to conduct and attend services in official churches and the right to ecclesiastical or civil marriage. The group also called on the government to allow Moroccan Christians to be buried in Christian cemeteries and to hold Christian names.

According to observers, the government permitted social and charitable activities consistent with Sunni Islam. For example, the Unity and Reform Movement, the country's largest registered Islamic social organization, continued its close relationship with the Party of Justice and Development, the largest party in the

governing coalition, and continued to operate without restriction, according to media reports.

From April to September, the Baha'i community invited followers of its Facebook page from different faiths to pray for relief from COVID-19 and organized several online conferences.

The monarchy continued to support the restoration of synagogues and Jewish cemeteries throughout the country, efforts it stated were necessary to preserve the country's religious and cultural heritage and to serve as a symbol of tolerance. On December 14, King Mohammed VI introduced an initiative to renovate Jewish heritage sites in the country, including hundreds of synagogues, cemeteries, and other sites in several cities. The Israeli *Israel Hayom* publication said the Jewish cemetery in Fes, which includes 13,000 graves, was included in the initiative, and that the King had decided to reinstate the original names of some of the country's Jewish neighborhoods.

The Prison Administration authorized religious observances and services provided by religious leaders for all prisoners, including religious minorities.

On August 12, Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid visited the Beth-El Synagogue in Casablanca. Secretary General Serge Berdugo of the Council of Jewish Communities in Morocco presented Lapid with a book documenting the restoration of Jewish cemeteries and holy places in the country. A Moroccan delegation, including government officials, also met Lapid at the synagogue where Lapid said a prayer.

MOI and MEIA authorization continued to be a requirement for the renovation or construction of churches, synagogues, and mosques.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Representatives of minority religious groups said fear of societal harassment, including ostracism by converts' families, social ridicule, employment discrimination, and potential violence against them by "extremists," were the main reasons leading them to practice their faiths privately and away from the public eye.

According to the 2018-2019 AMDH report, societal harassment of Shia for manifesting Shia beliefs continued to occur in the press and at Friday sermons.

Shia sources reported they observed Ashura in private to avoid societal harassment. Shia Muslims said that many avoided disclosing their religious affiliation in areas where their numbers were smaller.

There were reports from media, activists, community leaders, and Christian converts that Christian citizens faced social pressure from non-Christian family and friends to convert to Islam or renounce their Christian faith. Some young Christian converts who still lived with their Muslim families reportedly did not reveal their faith because they believed they might be expelled from their homes unless they renounced Christianity.

Jewish citizens continued to state that they lived and attended services at synagogues in safety. They said they were able to visit religious sites regularly and to hold annual commemorations.

On May 27, the Wali (Governor) of Tangier, Mohammed M'hidia, held a working session with Serge Berdugo, Secretary General of the Council of Jewish Communities in Morocco, and a delegation from one of the Council's regional chapters, the Jewish Community Committee of Tangier, composed of Aron Abikzer, Vice President; and Sonia Zagury, in charge of Cultural Heritage. Participants reviewed projects launched by the Jewish Community of Tangier as part of a national initiative, the Rehabilitation of Jewish Heritage, approved by King Mohammed VI.

In June, the Assayage Synagogue in Tangier announced plans for creation of the Jewish Museum of Tangier, to be located in the synagogue. Establishment of the museum is in accordance with royal directives requiring preservation and safeguarding of the country's Jewish heritage and includes government funding.

The Eias Hazan Synagogue remained open for worship and in active use as a national heritage site after being designated as such in 2020.

Members of the Baha'i Faith said they were open about their faith with family, friends, and neighbors.

Muslim citizen children and youths continued to study at private Christian and Jewish elementary and high schools, reportedly because these schools maintained a reputation for offering a high quality education. According to school administrators, Muslim students constituted a significant portion of the students enrolled at Jewish schools in Casablanca.

The UAE research and consulting firm PSB took a June poll of youth between the ages of 17 and 24 in 17 Arab states and reported 39 percent of Moroccan respondents said that their religion was the most important factor in their personal identity, which was higher than the regionwide result of 34 percent. Other choices offered by the poll as possible responses included family/tribe, nationality, Arabic heritage, political beliefs, language, and gender.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The Charge d’Affaires and other embassy and consulate general officials met with government officials, including from MOI and MEIA, to promote religious freedom and tolerance, including the rights of minority communities.

In February, the U.S. government entered into a cooperative agreement with Mimouna Association, a Moroccan-based NGO to combat antisemitism, including anti-Zionism, the delegitimization of Israel, and other forms of intolerance and hatred, including “Islamophobia.”

In regular meetings and discussions with members of religious minority and majority communities throughout the country, embassy and consulate general representatives highlighted the importance of protection of religious minorities and interfaith dialogue. The Charge d’Affaires and Consul General regularly met with members of the Jewish community in Casablanca as well as with Jewish leaders in other cities, including Marrakesh and Tangier. Together, they met with more than 50 Jewish government leaders, and other guests to highlight the country’s religious diversity.

Consulate general officials in Casablanca also engaged with Protestant, Catholic, and Anglican Church leadership. As part of this outreach, the Consul General visited local churches and heard from committee members and church leaders about the growing Christian population in the country that was comprised primarily of recently arrived sub-Saharan African migrants.

In December, the Consul General met with Christian leaders in Casablanca and highlighted the importance of religious freedom. The discussion included the importance of supporting and encouraging religious tolerance and diversity.

On November 8, the Consul General met with members of the Jewish community to highlight the longstanding bond between the United States and the community.

The discussion included concerns and challenges facing the Jewish community and the need for further collaboration to promote inclusion of all religions in the country.

On November 3, the Consul General participated in a conference on religious coexistence hosted by the Salam Contemporary Art Forum and provided opening remarks.

On October 5, the Charge d’Affaires joined Andrew Azoulay, Advisor to King Mohammed VI, at Bayt Dakira, in Essaouira, as part of the launch of a three-year, U.S. government program supporting the activities of religious and ethnic minorities. The Charge d’Affaires also toured the city’s Christian, Muslim, and Jewish cemeteries and visited a U.S.-government-funded Hebrew-language and Jewish cultural heritage class for Essaouira tour guides that aims, in part, to preserve Essaouira’s Jewish heritage.

On September 18, the Charge d’Affaires attended a rededication ceremony of St. John’s Anglican Church, the first Protestant church established in Casablanca, built in 1906. In discussion with leaders of the Christian community, the Charge d’Affaires emphasized the need for religious diversity and protection for all religious minorities.

In March, the Consul General met with members of the Moroccan Jewish Community in Casablanca. The Consul General discussed challenges impacting the Jewish community and the need to collaborate further to protect and promote all religious minority groups.

The embassy implemented a multi-year \$3 million program to promote religious tolerance and community efforts that preserve cultural heritage sites of ethnic and religious minorities in the country.