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Morocco: COI Compilation

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This report serves the specific purpose of collating legally relevant information on conditions in countries of origin pertinent to the assessment of claims for asylum. It is not intended to be a general report on human rights conditions. The report is prepared within a specified time frame on the basis of publicly available documents as well as information provided by experts. All sources are cited and fully referenced.

This report is not, and does not purport to be, either exhaustive with regard to conditions in the country surveyed, or conclusive as to the merits of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Every effort has been made to compile information from reliable sources; users should refer to the full text of documents cited and assess the credibility, relevance and timeliness of source material with reference to the specific research concerns arising from individual applications.

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List of abbreviations

CAT	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEOs	Chief Executive Officers
CERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CNDH	National Human Rights Council (Le Conseil national des droits de l'Homme)
CNP	Conseil National de la Presse
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DGAPR	General Delegation for Prison Administration and Reintegration (La Délégation générale de l'administration pénitentiaire et de la reinsertion)
GBV	Gender-based violence
HCP	Moroccan High Commission for Planning (Haut-Commissariat au Plan)
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
MAD	Moroccan dirham
NGOs	non-governmental organizations
NPM	National Preventive Mechanism
OPCAT	Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
RGPH	General Population and Housing Census
UNTB	UN Treaty Body
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USD	US-Dollar
WGAD	Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

1 Background information

1.1 Demographics

The Moroccan High Commission for Planning (Haut-Commissariat au Plan, HCP), the institution primarily responsible for official statistics, conducted a General Population and Housing Census (Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat, RGPH) in 2024 (HCP, 29 August 2024, p. 1). Data from the 2024 census indicate that Morocco's population was approximately 36.8 million in September 2024, of which 148,152 were foreigners. With an annual growth rate of 0.85 per cent, the population had increased by almost three million compared to the 2014 census (HCP, November 2024, p. 2).

23.1 million (around 63 per cent) of the total population live in urban areas, whereas 13.7 million (around 37 per cent) reside in rural areas (HCP, November 2024, p. 5). Seven major cities are home to almost 38 per cent of the urban population, including Morocco's four cities with over a million inhabitants: Casablanca (3.2 million), Tanger (1.3 million), Fès (1.2 million) and Marrakesh (1 million) (HCP, 17 December 2024, p. 7).

Children under the age of 15 make up 26.5 per cent of the population, while the working-age population (15–59 years old) accounts for almost 60 per cent (MWN, 6 June 2025). According to the latest RGPH data, Morocco's illiteracy rate fell from 32.2 per cent to 24.8 per cent between 2014 and 2024 and stands at 38 per cent in rural areas and 17.3 per cent in cities. 67.6 per cent of Moroccan women can read and write, compared to 82.8 per cent of men (MWN, 23 December 2024).

By far, most Moroccans (99 per cent) are Sunni Muslims (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 7; CIA, last updated 10 December 2025) and Islam has the status of a state religion (Encyclopaedia Britannica, last updated 17 December 2025, People). Religious minorities include Shia Muslims, Christians, Jews and Baha'i (CIA, last updated 10 December 2025).

Regarding ethnic composition, the online Encyclopaedia Britannica lists, as of 2000[1], the following groups: Arabs (44 per cent), Arabized Amazigh (24 per cent), other Amazigh (21 per cent), Mauritanian Moors (10 per cent) and other (1 per cent). It also notes that the Moroccan population consists mainly of Arabs and Imazighen (collective name of Amazigh)[2], or a combination of both (Encyclopaedia Britannica, last updated 17 December 2025, People).

Results of the 2024 RGPH show that 92 per cent of Moroccans speak Moroccan Arabic (Darija), while one quarter of the population speaks Amazigh (MWN, 17 December 2024), an Afro-Asiatic language (Encyclopaedia Britannica, last updated 7 March 2025). Alongside Arabic, Tamazight is recognised as an official language in Morocco by the 2011 Constitution (HCP, 23 December 2024, p. 1; Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Article 5).

[1] These are the most recent figures on ethnic composition that could be found.

[2] The Amazighs/Imazighen are the native inhabitants of North Africa (MRG, updated January 2023). The Minority Rights Group (MRG), an international human rights organisation working to promote the rights of ethnic, national, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples, explains that "Amazigh is the name for members of this indigenous people, while the collective is called Imazighen; Tamazight is the name of their language". According to the MRG, an antiquated term for the Imazighen and their language is "Berber", but it can be regarded as pejorative (MRG, updated July 2024).

French also occupies an important role, especially in the fields of education, administration and the economy (MWN, 22 July 2024).

1.2 Socioeconomic situation

In the 2023 Human Development Index, which summarises achievements in areas such as standard of living, health, and education (UNDP, undated), Morocco was ranked 120th out of the 193 countries listed (UNDP, 6 May 2025, p. 275). In May 2025 the HCP published a report on "multidimensional poverty" based on 2024 RGPH data[3]. Results show that between 2014 and 2024, the proportion of the population living in poverty fell from 11.9 per cent (4 million) in 2014 to 6.8 per cent (2.5 million) in 2024. Poverty remains primarily a rural phenomenon; 72 per cent of poor people still live in rural areas. The rural poverty rate is 13.1 per cent, which is more than four times higher than in urban areas (HCP, May 2025, p. 4). The 2024 Country Report by the German non-profit think tank Bertelsmann Stiftung, which covers the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023, notes that "[r]eports indicate alarming social inequalities and a growing income inequality gap between the top and bottom of the socioeconomic ladder" and that "significant gender inequalities persist regarding access to employment or education" (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 19).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in a September 2024 publication on Morocco's economy states that the per capita income of Moroccans is well below that of regional peers (OECD, September 2024, p. 17). The labour force participation rate is low, especially among women and youth (OECD, September 2024, p. 18). The labour market suffers from informality, with two-thirds of the employed working in the informal sector, which contributes to insufficient social protection (OECD, September 2024, pp. 11, 18).

1.3 Political situation

Morocco is a constitutional, democratic, parliamentary and social monarchy, according to Article 1 of the Moroccan constitution of July 2011 (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Article 1). Furthermore, the constitution stipulates that political power in Morocco is to be divided between the hereditary monarch and the elected bicameral parliament (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Articles 1, 2, 60; see also Encyclopaedia Britannica, last updated 17 December 2025, Government and Society). Mohammed VI has been the King of Morocco since 1999 (BBC, 28 October 2024), having succeeded his father, Hassan II, to the throne (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 5).

On the political system and the legal electoral framework, the November 2021 Election observation report published by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (CoE-PACE) states:

> "Legislative power is vested in the bicameral parliament, comprising a lower house – the House of Representatives (Majlis al-Nuwab) – with 395 members elected every five years

[3] The report provides the results of a multidimensional approach to measuring poverty in Morocco, which goes beyond a purely monetary perspective by seeking to include other factors, such as education, health and living conditions. Accordingly, a household is considered poor when it experiences deprivation representing at least 33 per cent of a total of 10 indicators (HCP, May 2025, pp. 4, p. 14).

> by universal suffrage, and an upper house – the House of Councillors (Majlis al-Mistacharin) – with 120 members elected indirectly by representatives of professional bodies, employees, the General Confederation of Business and regional and local authorities, a third of whom are renewed every three years. […] The members of the House of Representatives are elected for a five-year term." (CoE-PACE, 25 November 2021)

The country has a multiparty system, but parties based on ethnic, regional or religious identity are not admitted (Freedom House, 2024, section B1, section B4).
The executive is made up of the cabinet, which is led by a prime minister (Encyclopaedia Britannica, last updated 17 December 2025, Government and Society). Aziz Akhannouch, who had served as the minister of agriculture from 2007 to 2021, became Morocco's prime minister after his National Rally of Independence Party won the 2021 elections (Forbes Middle East, 13 September 2021).
The online Encyclopaedia Britannica provides the following information on the government at a local level:

> "At the local level, Morocco is subdivided into multiple levels of government, all directly under the Ministry of the Interior. At the top are 16 regions, which are further divided into several dozen provinces and urban prefectures, each ruled by a governor appointed by the king. Beneath this second-order subdivision are rural qaḍawāt (districts) and municipalities, governed by chefs de cercle. The fourth level comprises rural communes and autonomous urban centres, governed respectively by qāʾids (caids) and pashas." (Encyclopaedia Britannica, last updated 17 December 2025, Government and Society)

According to the US-based non-governmental organisation Freedom House "[t]he constitution and informal practice give the king overwhelming influence over political affairs, including government formation" (Freedom House, 2024, section B3). The king and his advisers possess vast private political power and economic influence (Freedom House, 2024, section B3). Regarding the relationship between the monarch and democratic institutions, the 2024 Country Report by the Bertelsmann Stiftung notes:

> "Both national and local elections are held regularly. However, they do not contribute to significant popular political participation nor do they produce autonomous democratic institutions. Instead, the elections mainly serve to preserve a democratic façade. […] Morocco's political system is an executive monarchy in which the king reigns and governs through formal and informal mechanisms. The constitution designates religion, security issues and strategic major policy choices as the domain reserved to the king. The king is the supreme arbiter among political forces. The king also heads the Ministerial Council and has the right to dissolve parliament. He has veto power over parliamentary and governmental decisions, while his royal decrees (dahirs) are immune to any judicial control. Royal speeches given on specific occasions define the contours of the country's economic, social and foreign policy. The king nominates pro-palace technocrats to important positions ensuring they follow his instructions. The Makhzen (i.e., the economic, political and military elite), who surround the monarchy, can be viewed as a 'shadow government' that holds significant influence over decision-making, often surpassing the influence of elected officials. Given that decisions are usually taken through informal channels,

> decision-making remains opaque. Within this context, the role played by elections is relatively minor." (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, pp. 9-10)

In its annual report on political rights and civil liberties in 2023, Freedom House states that the monarch yields influence over the judiciary and that there is no independent court system. The courts are used to go against perceived government opponents, "including dissenting Islamists, human rights and anticorruption activists, and critics of Moroccan rule in Western Sahara[4]" (Freedom House, 2024, section F1).

[4] Western Sahara is a sparsely populated, mostly desert area on the north-west coast of Africa. It was a Spanish colony until Spain began the process of decolonisation in 1975. Morocco subsequently annexed the territory, and a territorial dispute has been ongoing ever since between Morocco and the indigenous Sahrawi independence movement (BBC, 28 October 2024).

2 Security situation

For the period between 1 January 2023 and 30 November 2025, ACLED[5] reports 92 security-related incidents coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians[6] in Morocco, resulting in 126 fatalities[7]. Of these, 77 incidents were recorded in Western Sahara (see section 2.1) (ACLED, as of 5 December 2025).

2.1 Western Sahara

In its annual report covering 2024, Human Rights Watch (HRW) provides the following background information on the conflict in Western Sahara and the Polisario Front (Frente Polisario):

> "Most of Western Sahara has been under Moroccan control since 1975. In 1991, both Morocco and the Polisario Front, a liberation movement that seeks self-determination for Western Sahara, agreed to a UN-brokered ceasefire in anticipation of a referendum on self-determination, yet Morocco has rejected holding a vote on self-determination that would include independence as an option. In 2020, the Algeria-based Polisario Front announced an end to the ceasefire with Morocco and resumed its armed struggle." (HRW, 16 January 2025)

An entry in Encyclopaedia Britannica notes that the "political status of Western Sahara remains unresolved" and elaborates:

> "Following the participation of Morocco in the Abraham Accords in 2020, the United States and Israel became the only countries to formally recognize Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara, while several others, including the region's formal colonial powers Spain and France, officially endorsed [Morocco's King] Mohammed's plan for autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty. The independence of Western Sahara, under the government-in-exile called the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), is recognized by more than 40 countries and adamantly backed by neighboring Algeria." (Encyclopaedia Britannica, last updated 15 November 2025, Introduction & Quick Facts)

On 31 October 2025, the UN Security Council passed a resolution (see UN Security Council, 31 October 2025) backing Morocco's claim over the contested Western Sahara, marking a change that reflects the Trump administration's stance in favour of the North African nation. The news agency Associated Press News (AP) reports the following:

> "The resolution refers to Morocco's plan as a basis for negotiation. As with similar resolutions in previous years, the text makes no mention of a referendum on self-determination that includes independence as an option, which is the solution long favored

[5] For detailed information on ACLED's methodology, please see their Codebook (ACLED, undated).

[6] ACLED codes security-related incidents as follows: battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians, riots, protests and strategic developments (ACLED, undated). Please note, that for the purpose of this chapter, only the event types of battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians were included.

[7] Please note that ACLED does not differentiate between civilian and non-civilian casualties (ACLED, undated).

by the pro-independence Polisario Front and its allies, including Algeria, Russia and China." (AP, 31 October 2025)

In August 2025, Hespress, a Moroccan online news portal, cites a statement by the National Observatory for Strategic Studies, - described as a Moroccan think tank - that urged Morocco's partner and allied states to classify the Polisario Front as a terrorist group. This move would enhance Morocco's legal position, enable counterterrorism measures, and criminalize support. It would also disrupt the group's logistics, restrict movements, and politically isolate it by pressuring its international backers and limiting its influence (Hespress, 12 August 2025). In September 2025, the Jamestown Foundation notes that the Polisario Front is accused without credible evidence of "ties to Iran, Hezbollah, and global jihadist networks", apparently to "reinforce Morocco's ties with the United States and Israel". According to the Jamestown Foundation, the group "dwells in a perpetual state of political, diplomatic, and military weakness" (The Jamestown Foundation, 10 September 2025). More recent information on the designation of the Polisario Front as a terrorist group could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

For the period between 1 January 2023 and 30 November 2025, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) lists 77 security-related incidents in Western Sahara (Aousserd, Assa-Zag, Boujdour, Es Semara, Laayoune, Oued Eddahab, Tarfaya), coded as battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians, resulting in 123 fatalities. Of the 77 security-related incidents coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians, 41 incidents are coded as incidents with "civilian targeting", i.e. incidents where civilians are reported to be the main or only target (ACLED, as of 5 December 2025).

According to the September 2025 report of the UN Secretary-General, covering the period between 1 October 2024 and 30 September 2025, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) "continued to receive reports of alleged shootings by Frente POLISARIO towards units of the Royal Moroccan Army at or near the berm and of strikes allegedly conducted by uncrewed aerial vehicles of the Army east of the berm" (UN Security Council, 30 September 2025, p. 3). The Moroccan "Berm" is a 2,700 kilometres "long defensive construction surrounding the occupied part of the territory" (Forbes, 6 January 2024). According to The Guardian "[i]t is made of sand, patrolled by more than 100,000 Moroccan soldiers, and was designed to keep independence-seeking Sahrawis in the eastern part of the desert". Morocco has occupied Western Sahara since 1975 (The Guardian, 22 September 2018).
Firing incidents west of the berm reportedly "continued to be concentrated in the northern region, near Mahbas." MINURSO was unable to directly verify the number and locations of more than half of the reported incidents, and their impact continued to be disputed by the parties involved (UN Security Council, 30 September 2025, p. 3). Regarding the situation between October 2022 and October 2024, the UN Secretary General similarly mentioned "tensions and low-intensity hostilities" between Morocco and Polisario Front, with most firing incidents concentrated in the northern region (UN Security Council, 1 October 2024, p. 1; UN Security Council, 3 October 2023, p. 1).

The UN Secretary General also mentions an artillery strike by the Moroccan Army near Mijek area in October 2024, reportedly resulting in three civilian deaths, and one uncrewed aerial vehicle strike in May 2025 - also in the Mijek area, reportedly resulting in two civilian deaths. The report further notes:

> "MINURSO investigated eight additional sites where uncrewed aerial vehicle strikes had occurred. On each occasion, MINURSO observed that vehicles had been damaged and was informed by local witnesses that no deaths had occurred. During the reporting period, local media sources reported nine additional uncrewed aerial vehicle strikes against the Frente POLISARIO military, claiming a total of 28 casualties, 21 deaths and 7 injuries. Most of the reported uncrewed aerial vehicle strikes were in the south-eastern region, near Mijek, where artisanal mining also takes place. MINURSO was not given permission by Frente POLISARIO to investigate any of the alleged incidents." (UN Security Council, 30 September 2025, p. 4)

Crisis Watch notes that on 27 June 2025, the Polisario Front launched a rocket attack on the city of Smara, located in Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara. This has been the first significant operation by the group since November 2024. The attack resulted in no casualties, however, one rocket landed near a MINURSO camp. The Moroccan army stated that on the same day, a drone strike eliminated the Polisario unit responsible for the attack (International Crisis Group, December 2025; see also UN Security Council, 30 September 2025, p. 3).
In June 2025, Moroccan drone strikes hit a truck near Bir Lahlou, resulting in three people killed. A Polisario Front vehicle was hit near Mijek. Pro-Polisario media outlets claimed the vehicle was a civilian car (International Crisis Group, December 2025). Moroccan drone strikes were also reported in November (see also UN Security Council, 30 September 2025, p. 3) and December 2024 and January (see also Yabiladi, 13 January 2025) and May 2025 (International Crisis Group, December 2025).
Aerial strikes by the Royal Moroccan Army were also reported in December 2023 and January, February, March and April 2024 (UN Security Council, 1 October 2024, p. 4) and firing incidents allegedly carried out by the Polisario Front in October (see also Asharq Al-Awsat, 30 October 2023), November and December 2023, and in May and July 2024 (UN Security Council, 1 October 2024, p. 3).
Aerial strikes allegedly occurred on 12 January 2023 in Tifariti, with reportedly one civilian killed, and on 24 January 2024 in Bir Lahlou, reportedly resulting in three fatalities, and on 1 September 2023 in Bir Lahlou, reportedly resulting in four casualties (UN Security Council, 3 October 2023, p. 2).
In its annual report covering 2024 the Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders in Western Sahara (CODESA)[8] alleges several incidents of civilian targeting east of the military berm, including drone strikes resulting in the deaths of Mauritanian and Malian citizens in January and February 2024. In July 2024, Moroccan forces allegedly targeted two Mauritanian civilian

[8] Front Line Defenders (FLD) describes CODESA as "a collective of Sahrawi human rights defenders", promoting "the right to self-determination in the territory of Western Sahara under Moroccan control, in the cities of southern Morocco where there is a high concentration of Sahrawi people, and in Moroccan universities where Sahrawi students pursue their higher education" (FLD, undated).

vehicles (CODESA, 17 February 2025, p. 3). Freedom House's annual report on political rights and civil liberties in Western Sahara (covering 2024) mentions the following:

> „In May [2024], the Sahrawi Mine Action Coordination Office (SMACO)—the Polisario's humanitarian group dealing with explosive remnants of war—released a report on civilian casualties resulting from the Moroccan army's use of military drones in the region. The report said that amid conflict between Moroccan and Sahrawi forces, 73 Moroccan drone attacks on civilians between 2021 and 2023 had resulted in 160 civilian casualties, including 80 fatalities among Sahrawi, Mauritanian, and Algerian nationals." (Freedom House, 2025a, Key Developments in 2024)

2.1.1 Human rights violations during conflict

In its September 2025 report (covering the period between October 2024 and September 2025) the UN Secretary-General notes the following regarding human rights monitoring access in Western Sahara:

> "The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has not been granted access to the Territory since 2015 despite repeated requests and although the Security Council, most recently in its resolution 2756 (2024), strongly urged enhancing cooperation with OHCHR, including through facilitating visits to the region. The lack of independent, impartial, comprehensive and sustained human rights monitoring remained detrimental to a comprehensive assessment of the human rights situation on the ground. International observers, including parliamentarians, lawyers and journalists, reportedly continued to face entry restrictions, with dozens denied entry or expelled." (UN Security Council, 30 September 2025, p. 11)

According to Freedom House's annual report on political rights and civil liberties in Western Sahara (covering 2024), „[c]ivil liberties are severely restricted in Moroccan-controlled territory, especially relating to independence activism; civil liberties are also curtailed in Polisario-controlled territory" (Freedom House, 2025a, Overview).

In October 2024 and October 2023, the UN Secretary-General reports similar concerns (UN Security Council, 1 October 2024, p. 11; UN Security Council, 3 October 2023, p. 13). In its annual report covering 2024, Amnesty International writes the following regarding repression of dissent in Western Sahara:

> "In April the Moroccan army and gendarmerie bulldozed and destroyed the homes of 12 Sahrawi families in the town of Al-Jitir, north of Smara. Moroccan authorities stated they were acting against unregulated construction. The homes were destroyed without reasonable notice or the provision of alternative housing, amounting to forced evictions. In August, police subjected 13 activists at the airports of Laayoune and Dakhla to arbitrary searches and confiscated documents and other personal belongings. The activists were returning from a conference in Türkiye." (Amnesty International, 29 April 2025)

In August 2024, the Sahara Press Service (SPS), "a public institution affiliated with the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic" (SPS, undated), reports the following:

> "Documented reports with photographs and eyewitness testimonies from the occupied Sahrawi territories indicate that Moroccan occupation authorities attacked dozens of Sahrawi families residing in the Lamriyat area southeast of the occupied city of El Aaiun [Laayoune] early on Monday. They used bulldozers to destroy their homes, vandalize their properties, treat them brutally, and forcibly evict them from the area." (SPS, 31 August 2024)

Regarding incidents of civilian targeting in the areas west of the military berm CODESA recorded the fatal shooting of a Sahrawi student south of the city of Tarfaya, the deaths of two patients in Laayoune's Hassan Ben Mehdi Hospital "under mysterious circumstances", and the death in custody of a Sahrawi man following his arrest. CODESA also recorded the death of a Sahrawi prisoner in Laayoune, allegedly due to medical neglect. According to CODESA, Sahrawi activists "face repression and retaliation amid the military and media blockade imposed on Western Sahara" (CODESA, 17 February 2025, p. 4).

A June 2025 article published by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), an US-based research institute focusing on national security and foreign policy, mentions that the Polisario Front had launched several attacks against Moroccan civilians since the end of the ceasefire in 2020. The group has also been accused of recruiting child soldiers (FDD, 9 June 2025). A submission to the UN Human Rights Council by Il Cenacolo, an NGO in consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council, mentions recruitment of child soldiers by Polisario in Algeria's Tindouf refugee camps (Il Cenacolo, 12 June 2024, p. 2).

2.2 Extremist groups

Morocco was ranked 100th in the Global Terrorism Index report published by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) in March 2025 (covering 2024), which placed it last among a number of other countries and indicated that terrorism has "no impact" in Morocco (IEP, March 2025, p. 7). In the previous year's report, Morocco was also placed in last position among other countries, this time at number 89, again with the "no impact" designation (IEP, February 2024, p. 7). In the 2023 report the country ranked 83rd out of 93, indicating a "very low impact" of terrorism (IEP, March 2023, p. 9).
According to a February 2025 media article, Morocco is the only North African country "not to have experienced a major terrorist attack for more than a decade", however, security forces regularly foil terrorist attacks and dismantle terrorist cells (AP, 24 February 2025).

In its report submitted to the UN Security Council the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team mentions that in the first six months of 2023, "authorities dismantled five terrorist cells" and arrested 25 persons, with the most significant cell planning "to rob banks and attack vital security infrastructure" (UN Security Council, 25 July 2023, p. 10). In the second half of 2023 the country "experienced a resurgence of the lone actor phenomenon, with the situation in the Sahel inspiring numerous individuals to build operational relationships with ISGS [Islamic State in the Greater Sahara]." Authorities dismantled a four-member cell in October 2023 (UN Security Council, 29 January 2024, p. 11). In its annual report on terrorism, the USDOS

notes that one terrorist incident was reported by Moroccan law enforcement in 2023" (USDOS, 12 December 2024). The incident involved the killing of a policeman, whose body had been recovered near Casablanca. Three main suspects affiliated with IS were arrested in Casablanca and Sidi Hraze. Initial media reports had indicated that the incident might be linked to drug trafficking (Africanews, 13 August 2024). According to the USDOS, at least 56 persons were arrested in 2023, including 40 lone actors. The remaining 16 individuals "were associated with six different terrorist cells." The USDOS report also mentions that security operations were conducted in several cities (Chtouka Ait Baha, Inzegane-Ait Melloul, Larache, Nador, Souk El Arbaa du Gharb, Tangier, and Tetouan) between January and November 2023, with arrested individuals "allegedly involved in planning sabotage attacks targeting vital, sensitive national facilities, as well as security elements and institutions" (USDOS; 12 December 2024).

According to the UN Secretary-General, in 2024 authorities dismantled five terrorist cells and arrested 23 persons (UN Security Council, 6 February 2025, p. 10), "revealing multiple trends and plots: incitement to commit terrorist acts against critical infrastructure and security institutions, planning of assassinations targeting security officials and public figures, the use of confiscated weapons for attacks, and the use of online resources for learning firearm handling techniques and fabrication of improvised explosive devices" (UN Security Council, 22 July 2024, p. 11).

In January 2025, authorities dismantled another ISIL-linked cell and "seized weapons, explosive precursors and digital content containing pledges of allegiance to ISIL (Da'esh)" (UN Security Council, 24 July 2025, p. 11), and in February 2025, Morocco's counterterrorism agency reportedly prevented planned attacks by a 12-member group affiliated with the Islamic State in the Sahel, calling itself "the Lions of the Caliphate in the Maghreb Al Aqsa (Morocco)" (Reuters, 24 February 2025). The suspects were detained in nine cities, including Casablanca, Fez and Tangier, and had reportedly planned remotely controlled bomb attacks (AP, 24 February 2025). Authorities also discovered explosive materials, chemicals, and a cache of weapons in the Errachidia region near the Algerian border (Reuters, 24 February 2025). In July 2025, media reported the dismantling of a four-member ISIS-linked terrorist cell active between the cities of Tetouan and Chefchaouen. Reportedly "the cell was actively preparing terrorist plots aligned with ISIS's agenda to destabilize Morocco" (Yabiladi, 2 July 2025a).

2.3 Human rights violations during counterterrorism operations

Amnesty International's country report (covering 2024) mentions that Moroccan authorities did not extend an invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on counterterrorism and human rights following a 24 April 2024 visit request, "amid concerns of continuing human rights violations in the name of 'countering terrorism'" (Amnesty International, 29 April 2025).
According to the USDOS report on terrorism (covering 2023), several human rights groups have accused the government of using counterterrorism laws to target journalists and government critics (USDOS, 12 December 2024). Law No. 03-03 to Combat Terror (amending and supplementing the Moroccan Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code) was passed in 2003 (Law No. 03-03, 28 May 2003 and Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018), less than two weeks after the Casablanca bombings (HRW, 20 October 2024; IEP, 30 May 2022). The law defines terrorist acts as those deliberately perpetuated by an individual, group or organization,

where the main objective is to disrupt public order by intimidation, violence, fear or terror (Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Article 218-1). It also criminalizes the promulgation and dissemination of propaganda or advertisement in support of such acts (Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Article 218-2). Law No. 03-03 prescribes prison terms of two to six years and fines up to MAD 200.000 [approximately USD 22.000 as of December 2025][9] for those accused of terrorisms-related activities offline and online (Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Article 218-2; see also Freedom House, 16 October 2024, section C2). A joint report of human rights organizations about the criminalization of activism in Western Sahara states that Moroccan authorities strategically confront human rights activist in Western Sahara with terrorism charges "to break the will of peaceful activists, while media incitement undermines their safety and well-being, and that of their families." (WGHRWS et al., 9 May 2024; see also section 3.2.3 of this report).

[9] All currency calculations in this report are based on the exchange rate from European Commission, Exchange rate (InforEuro), undated, https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/procedures-guidelines-tenders/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/exchange-rate-inforeuro_de, as of December 2025

3 Human rights situation

3.1 Morocco's engagement with UN human rights monitoring mechanisms

In a joint June 2025 submission to the Human Rights Committee the NGO The Advocates for Human Rights, an organisation that aims to promote and protect international human rights standards, and the non-governmental women's rights organisation Mobilising for Rights Associates (MRA), make the following observations on the status of international human rights treaties in Morocco:

> "The preamble to the Constitution establishes the supremacy of international human rights conventions over domestic law, but Morocco limits the supremacy of international law to 'within the framework of Constitutional provisions and laws of the Kingdom, in respect of immutable national identity.' This creates opt-out clauses to declarations on international human rights." (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, p. 2)

Morocco has ratified all nine core UN human rights treaties: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED), the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (DIHR, 2022, pp. 11-12; OHCHR, undated (a)). In 2022, Denmark's national human rights institution, The Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR), reports that, with regard to the competence of a UN Treaty Body (UNTB) to receive individual complaints, "Morocco has accepted the competence of five UNTBs: CERD, CAT, CRPD and since April 2022, the Human Rights Committee and the CEDAW" (DIHR, 2022, p. 13; see also OHCHR, undated (a)).

The control mechanisms within the field of international treaty-based human rights include general and specific reporting procedures as well as the adjudication of individual or inter-State complaints (OHCHR & IBA, 2003, pp. 28-29). According to sources, the mandatory reports to the monitoring committees were sometimes submitted late by several years or remain overdue (El allaoui Berhouchi, June 2025, p. 137; MENA Rights Group, March 2022, p. 4; OHCHR, undated (b)).

There is conflicting information on whether Morocco has issued a standing invitation to all UN thematic special procedures, which would represent a commitment to accept all visit requests (OHCHR, undated (c)) from independent human rights experts of the Human Rights Council (OHCHR, undated (d)). An undated OHCHR website indicates that Morocco has not done so (OHCHR, undated (c)). On the other hand, a document issued during Morocco's most recent Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which started in November 2022 (OHCHR, undated (e)), indicates that Morocco supported recommendations to extend such an invitation (OHCHR, undated (f)). Additionally, a UN Secretary-General report from October 2023 states that Morocco extended a standing invitation in November 2022" (UN Security Council, 3 October 2023, p. 13).

In its April 2025 Monthly Forecast, the independent think tank Security Council Report (SCR) notes that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has not been granted access to Western Sahara since 2015 and "was unable to conduct any visits to Western Sahara for the ninth consecutive year," even though there have been multiple requests (SCR, 31 March 2025). The Al-Basher Foundation for Development in a written statement to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) states that Western Sahara is "one of the most restricted and least monitored territories in the world" (Al-Basher Foundation for Development, 5 June 2025, p. 2). The organisation further states:

> "Morocco's refusal to allow UN mechanisms and independent human rights organizations access to occupied Western Sahara has created a vacuum of accountability […]. This deliberate suppression of oversight violates the fundamental principles of UN human rights mechanisms and calls for immediate corrective measures. […] Unlike other conflict-affected regions, Western Sahara lacks a UN human rights office, a special rapporteur mandate, or a dedicated investigative body. While multiple treaty bodies and special procedures have raised concerns about human rights violations in the territory, these concerns have not translated into sustained monitoring or enforcement measures. Western Sahara remains the only non-self-governing territory in the world without a UN mechanism dedicated to human rights monitoring, despite repeated calls for one by UN experts and civil society organizations. […] Moroccan authorities systematically block access to UN special rapporteurs, prevent fact-finding missions, and intimidate human rights defenders who attempt to report violations." (Al-Basher Foundation for Development, 5 June 2025, pp. 2-3)

In a February 2025 article, the independent non-profit organisation International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) also reports on the lack of independent UN monitoring mechanisms in Western Sahara and consequences thereof:

> "The situation in the occupied territory of Western Sahara has significantly deteriorated in 2024. The lack of independent UN monitoring mechanisms has enabled Morocco to intensify its repressive policies while systematically denying access to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Special Procedures since 2015. These violations include arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearances, racial and economic discrimination, suppression of fundamental freedoms, and the plundering of natural resources." (ISHR, 13 February 2025)

3.2 Freedom of expression

3.2.1 Legal framework

Constitution

In May 2025, the National Human Rights Council of Morocco (CNDH), a national human rights institution, mentions that "Morocco does not have a specific or a thorough freedom of expression legislation" (CNDH, 29 May 2025, p. 13), however, the CNDH states the following:

> "The right to freedom of opinion and expression is an explicit constitutional right in Morocco, guaranteed to everyone, with no discrimination. Protection of this right extends to different forms of expression. In addition, the Constitution provides for additional implicit protection of this right in several other articles, including, but not limited to, the primacy of international human rights law over national legislations. […] Concerning alleged violations of the right to freedom of expression, the CNDH notes with concern the existence of legal gaps and shortcomings in the current legislative framework, which should be addressed through the anticipated legal reforms. Such reforms must ensure that any restriction on the exercise of freedom of expression is lawful, pursues a legitimate aim, and is necessary and proportionate." (CNDH, 29 May 2025, pp. 12-13)

Morocco's constitution ensures the right to free expression and forbids any form of prior censorship (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Articles 25, 28; see also RSF, undated). It also provides for the right of access to information (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Article 27).

Press and Publishing Code

According to an October 2023 report by Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis and others "[t]he years 2016 and 2020 have been pivotal in advancing protection of freedom of expression and ensuring the right to access information. Within this period, the Press and Publishing Code was officially implemented after being published in the Official Gazette" (MIPA et al., October 2023, p. 15). In 2016 the Press and Publishing Code was adopted, "made up of Law 88-13 on the Press and Publishing, Law 89-13 on the Status of Professional Journalists, and Law 90-13 on the Establishment of the National Press Council[10]" (TIMEP & CPJ, May 2022, p. 3).
Prison sentences for press offences were abolished (RSF, undated; see Law No. 88-13, 10 August 2016[11]), although many nonviolent speech offenses were still punished, "but only by fines and court-ordered suspensions of publications or websites" (HRW, 4 May 2017, p. 1).

[10] The National Press Council (Conseil National de la Presse, CNP) was established in 2018 "to regulate the sector and uphold journalistic ethics". Following the expiry of the Council members' mandate in 2022 and the absence of new elections, the government temporarily extended their term before transferring the Council's responsibilities to an interim committee mandated to oversee press and publishing affairs for a two-year period (Committee for Justice, 15 August 2025).

[11] When referencing Moroccan laws, the date of the relevant Dahir is indicated as the law's date.

In July 2025, Morocco's government approved two draft laws "aimed at strengthening the legal framework governing professional journalism": bill 27-25, amending Law 89-13 on the Status of Professional Journalists, and bill 26-25, reorganizing the National Press Council in line with constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression (MWN, 3 July 2025). In August 2025 the Committee for Justice, a Geneva-based human rights association, reports the following:

> "Draft Law No. 26.25 on reorganizing the National Press Council has sparked wide controversy following its adoption by parliament. Many actors in the media field view the bill as a step that could weaken the council's independence and restrict its role in safeguarding press freedom and regulating the profession. The Moroccan Federation of Newspaper Publishers has denounced the government's disregard for objections raised by journalists and media professionals to the draft law." (Committee for Justice, 15 August 2025)

In September 2025, the Minister of Youth, Culture, and Communication presented bill 26-25 to the House of Councillors, citing consultations with journalists, publishers, and professional bodies (MWN, 8 September 2025). Shortly after, the CNDH issued a 43-page memorandum, warning "that the current proposed bill violates constitutional principles and international standards", and proposing 40 recommendations and 10 reforms (MWN, 17 September 2025a).

Penal Code

The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) note in a report on press freedom in Morocco published in October 2022, that the Press and Publishing Code "does not preclude journalists from being sentenced to jail time under other legal frameworks, including the Penal Code" (TIMEP & CPJ, October 2022, p. 1). Similarly, HRW notes that the press code of 2016 "cannot be viewed in isolation from the penal code, which continues to punish with prison a range of nonviolent speech offenses, whether committed by journalists or non-journalists" (HRW, 4 May 2017, p. 2). In a report on the legal framework on freedom of expression published in January 2019, Jocelyn Grange notes the following:

> "While Article 17(4) of the Press Code states that 'the provisions of other legislation shall not apply to all matters expressly provided for in the Press and Publishing Code', this guarantee constitutes but a fragile and incomplete safeguard. On the one hand, journalists may still receive prison terms under the Criminal Code for non-violent forms of expression that are not covered by the Press Code (justification of terrorism, defamation of judicial decisions), or that are included but under a different label (the so-called 'red lines'). On the other hand, no judicial or procedural safeguards have been set up to regulate the power of the courts to use the Criminal Code against journalists on the grounds that they were not acting in performance of their duties when committing the offence in question." (Grange, January 2019, p. 18)

Grange also mentions the following in his report:

> "In July 2016, the government enacted a series of amendments to the Criminal Code that introduced prison sentences for incitement to hatred or discrimination (Article 431(5)), as

> well as for speech against Morocco's monarchical form of government, Islam, and the country's territorial integrity (Article 267(5)). These new custodial sentences were added to the existing 'offences of expression' under the Criminal Code: offences, insults or privacy violations committed against the King or members of the royal family and failure to display the respect and reverence due to the King (Article 179); the promotion of acts of terrorism (Article 218(2)); the defamation of judicial decisions with intent to undermine the authority or independence of the judiciary (Article 266); the defamation of public bodies and public officials in the performance of their duties (Article 263)." (Grange, January 2019, pp. 11-12; see also HRW, 4 May 2017, pp. 4-5; see also Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018)

In its annual report on freedom on the net Freedom House reports that Morocco's minister of justice "asserted in 2022 that online defamation will be 'strictly dealt with' with the penal code, rather than the press code" (Freedom House, 16 October 2024, section C2). The report further mentions:

> "Under the penal code, which is currently undergoing a process of reform, journalists can still be jailed for speech offenses related to the monarchy, Islam, and Western Sahara, as well as threats to national security. The reform process remains largely state-led, without contribution from civil society. Defamation also remains a criminal offense." (Freedom House, 16 October 2024, section C2)

In February 2025, the justice minister mentioned upcoming amendments to the Penal Code, explicitly criminalizing online extortion and digital defamation. The minister, however, "rejected the notion that the government sought to silence voices, stressing that the law must address the rise of online harassment without impeding legitimate free speech" (Hespress, 10 February 2025). According to HRW, "[i]n recent years, Moroccan authorities have stepped up repressive tactics against dozens of journalists and social media activists, convicting them for libel; publishing 'false news,' 'insulting' or 'defaming' local officials, state bodies, or foreign heads of state; and 'undermining' state security or the institution of the monarchy"(HRW, 27 March 2025).

Articles 201 to 207 of the Penal Code cover crimes and offenses against the internal security of the state ("crimes et delits contre la surete interieure de l'etat") (Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018). In January 2021, newspaper columnist Maati Monjib was convicted "on trumped-up charges of 'fraud' and 'undermining state security'" (RSF, 29 July 2022). In April 2021, journalist and human rights activist Omar Radi faced charges including undermining state security. According to HRW, "[t]he national security charges against Mr. Radi appear to be based on nothing more than the kind of journalistic or corporate due diligence work and contact with diplomats that many journalists and researchers engage in routinely" (HRW, 6 April 2021).

Libel laws

In its annual report covering 2023, the USDOS reports the following regarding libel or slander laws:

> "The press code included provisions that permitted the government to impose financial penalties on accredited journalists and publishers who violated restrictions related to defamation, libel, and insults, and the government enforced these provisions. Individuals not registered as journalists could be charged with defamation, libel, and slander under the criminal code, as could accredited journalists for their private actions." (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 2A)

In October 2023, RSF reports that website editor Abdelmajid Amyay was charged under Article 447-2 ("defaming and disseminating or distributing information relating to the private lives of persons without their consent") and Article 263 ("intent to undermine [a person's] honour or propriety or the respect due to their authority, or contempt in the exercise of their functions") of the Penal Code (RSF, 18 October 2023; see also Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Articles 447-2, 263).

In November 2024, journalist Hamid Mahdaoui was sentenced to "18 months in prison on a charge of defamation against justice minister Abdellatif Ouahbi" (Reuters, 11 November 2024) and was ordered to pay a fine of MAD 1,500,000 [approximately USD 162,000 as of December 2025] in damages to the minister. In June 2025 his conviction was upheld by an appeals court. Mahdaoui had been "prosecuted on charges of defamation, public insult, and spreading false claims with the intent to harm, under Articles 443, 444, and 447 of the Moroccan Penal Code". The ruling renewed discussions about press freedom and defamation legislation in Morocco (Hespress, 30 June 2025). Article 443 to 447 of the Penal Code cover attacks on the honour and reputation of individuals and the violation of confidentiality (Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Articles 443 - 447).

Law No. 88-13 on the Press and Publishing also contains articles on defamation (see for example Law No. 88-13, 10 August 2016, Articles 83 - 88). In January 2025, journalist Hicham El Amrani faced charges of "defamation" and "publishing false information with malicious intent" under Articles 83, 84, and 72 of the Law No. 88-13 (MWN, 8 January 2025). In April 2025, he was acquitted (Medias24, 10 April 2025).

Articles 263 to 267 of the Penal Code cover insults and violence against public officials (Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Articles 263 - 267). In October 2024 Freedom House reports the following:

> "In recent years, authorities have increasingly used Articles 263 through 267 from the vaguely worded penal code, which criminalize 'insults against public authorities, officials, and organizations,' to crack down on free speech. These circumstances have prompted a number of popular online commentators, including Dounia Filali and Zakaria Moumni, to seek asylum or remain abroad." (Freedom House, 16 October 2024, section C2)

Article 267-5 of the Penal Code, for example, punishes "anyone who undermines the monarchical regime" (Africanews, 3 August 2023) or causes harm to Islam (HRW, 11 September 2025) with six months to two years in prison and a fine of 20.000 to 200.000 dirhams (Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Article 267-5). The punishment can be increased to

two to five years in prison and/or a fine of MAD 50,000-500,000 [approximately USD 5,500-55,000] if the alleged offense is committed in public, including by electronic and audiovisual means (Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Article 267-5).

Law No. 03-03 on Combating Terrorism

Tech Against Terrorism[12] provides the following overview on the Law to Combat Terror (Law No. 03-03, 28 May 2003):

> "The law strictly prohibits the diffusion by any means – whether by oral proclamation on the street or by audio-visual content shared by an electronic means – of speech that either condones or incites to acts of terrorism. Individuals found condoning an act of terrorism or provoking others to commit such acts can face jail terms and substantial fines. The Anti-Terrorism law does not directly address the responsibility and liability of tech platforms with regard to terrorist content online. There is also some uncertainty with regards to the scope of the powers conferred to Moroccan authorities regarding online content and terrorist exploitation of internet technologies. The law permits judicial authorities to request the interception and the seizure of communications in relation to a terrorist investigation, or in 'extreme emergency' situations. It also sanctions with prison time, for individuals, or with a fine, for a legal entity, the non-disclosure of terrorist offences. However, the law in itself remains broad into specifying what the seizure of communications and non-disclosure entails. Potentially, both provisions can apply to internet service providers (ISPs)." (Tech Against Terrorism, 5 November 2020)

TIMEP and CPJ report the following on the effects of Law No. 03-03 on freedom of expression:

> "The Law No. 03-03 on Combating Terrorism sets forth a broad definition for the crime of terrorism and stipulates hefty penalties. The law has been criticized due to its broad definitions that have been used to justify the detention of non-violent offenders, including journalists for their exercise of freedom of expression. The law also gives the authorities the power to filter and delete content that is deemed to 'disrupt public order by intimidation, force, violence, fear, or terror.' (TIMEP & CPJ, May 2022, p. 4)

Similarly, in its report covering 2023, the USDOS mentions the following regarding national security:

> "Authorities sometimes used counterterrorism and national security laws to arrest or punish critics of the government or deter criticism of government policies or officials. The antiterrorism law permitted the arrest of individuals, including journalists, and blocking websites deemed to 'disrupt public order by intimidation, terror, or violence.' The law held liable both the author and anyone, including website owners and internet service providers, who helped the author disseminate information the government deemed to be justification for acts of terrorism. Although the stated purpose of the law was to combat

[12] Tech Against Terrorism is a partnership between technology companies, governments, and the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) (UN CTED, undated).

> terrorism, authorities retained discretion to define terms such as 'national security' and 'public order,' and under the penal code the government could seek fines of up to 200,000 Moroccan dirhams ($19,100) for publishing content online seen as disruptive to public order, with the maximum fine of 500,000 Moroccan dirhams ($47,900) if the content offended the military. Online speech offenses related to the monarchy, Islam, and Western Sahara, as well as threats to national security, could carry prison sentences of two to six years." (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 2A; see also Freedom House, 16 October 2024, section B3)

Drafting of legal framework to regulate social media and digital platforms

In May 2025, the government announced the drafting of "a new legal framework to regulate social media and digital platforms", aiming "to curb the spread of disinformation, incitement to violence, and content that undermines public trust" (Hespress, 14 May 2025). The planned regulation also includes more powers for the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle, HACA), which would "transition from a traditional media regulator to a powerful digital watchdog with expansive jurisdiction over the online space" (MWN, 16 May 2025). HACA was established in 2002 under Dahir[13] No. 1-02-212 (HACA, undated; Dahir No. 1-02-212, with amendments up to 20 October 2008). Law No. 77-03 on Audiovisual Communication "grants HACA the authority to monitor programming, hear complaints regarding content on radio and television, and issue licenses, among other responsibilities" (TIMEP & CPJ, May 2022, p. 4; see also Law No. 77-03, 7 January 2005). A May 2025 article by MWN mentions criticism by civil society organisations regarding the planned legal framework. The organisations feared "that the proposed framework may offer legal cover for expanding state censorship and surveillance". The article describes:

> "The vague language around 'protecting social values' is seen by critics as a Trojan horse for censorship—a velvet glove concealing a fist—capable of weaponizing morality to stifle dissent and sweep away legitimate political expression under the guise of public interest." (MWN, 16 May 2025)

Further detailed information on the legal framework regarding freedom of expression can also be found in the following older reports:

- Grange, Jocelyn: The legal framework on freedom of expression in Morocco, January 2019 https://erim.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Rapport_liberté_dexpression_EN-final.pdf
- HRW – Human Rights Watch: The Red Lines Stay Red, Morocco's Reforms of its Speech Laws, 4 May 2017 https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/05/05/red-lines-stay-red/moroccos-reforms-its-speech-laws

[13] A Dahir is a Royal Edict (ANND, May 2023, p. 8) or Decree (ICNL, last updated 8 September 2025).

3.2.2 Censorship

Regarding censorship the USDOS notes the following in its annual human rights report covering 2024:

> "Self-censorship and government restrictions on sensitive topics remained serious hurdles to the development of a free, independent, and investigative press. Publications and broadcast media required government accreditation, and the government could deny and revoke accreditation as well as suspend or confiscate publications that breached public order or criticized Islam, the institution of the monarchy, or the government's positions on territorial integrity. While the government rarely censored the domestic press, it exerted pressure through written and verbal warnings and by pursuing legal cases that resulted in heavy fines, suspended publication, and imprisonment." (USDOS, 12 August 2025, section 2a)

In its undated country profile, RSF mentions that "[j]ournalists often resort to self-censorship because of the lack of legal safeguards for freedom of expression and of the press, the low level of judicial independence, and the frequency with which they are the targets of judicial proceedings" (RSF, undated).

3.2.3 Situation of human rights defenders

In October 2025, human rights organisation Front Line Defenders (FLD) mentions "reports concerning the unlawful use of force and a wave of arbitrary arrests by Moroccan authorities targeting peaceful protesters, including human rights defenders, across the country" (FLD, 3 October 2025; see also OMCT, 1 October 2025).

According to Amnesty International's annual human rights report covering 2024, "[a]uthorities continued to repress dissent and target journalists, activists and government critics through prosecution and surveillance". Activists were among those "subjected to prosecution, digital surveillance and smear campaigns by pro-state media" (Amnesty International, 29 April 2025). Similarly, in October 2024, Freedom House mentions "coordinated harassment campaigns against prominent human rights defenders" by anonymous online progovernment accounts (Freedom House, 16 October 2024, section B5). In July 2024, "around 2,460 prisoners, including several high-profile journalists and human rights defenders" were released by royal pardon (Amnesty International, 29 April 2025). In its report covering 2023, the organization highlights that courts continued to show intolerance towards free speech, convicting at least six people, including amongst others, activists and a lawyer, for expressing their opinions (Amnesty International, 24 April 2024).

3.2.3.1 Prosecutions and convictions of human rights defenders

On 10 August 2025, activist Ibtissame Lachgar was arrested and charged with "causing harm to Islam" after sharing a photo of herself online wearing a shirt bearing the phrase "Allah is lesbian" (HRW, 11 September 2025). Please see section 3.5.3 for details on the case.

In July 2025, human rights defender and blogger Saida El Alami was arrested (FLD, 18 July 2025). In September 2025 she was sentenced to three years in prison and a fine. She had criticised public policies in postings and live streams on Facebook (Le Monde, 18 September 2025; see also MWN, 17 September 2025b). She was charged "with 'insulting a body regulated by law,'

'insulting public officials while carrying out their duties,' 'contempt of judicial decisions,' and 'broadcasting and distributing false allegations without consent,' invoking Articles 263, 265, 266, and 477-2 of the Penal Code" (MWN, 17 September 2025b). Already in September 2022 she had been sentenced to three years in prison for insulting a constituted body and in October 2023, she had received a new eight-month sentence on appeal for remarks deemed offensive to King Mohammed VI and the judiciary. She had been granted a royal pardon in July 2024 (Le Monde, 18 September 2025).

In October 2024, a Moroccan pro-Palestinian human rights defender was arrested (FLD, 5 February 2025). In December 2024, he received a one-year prison sentence for "calling for a blockade of the US embassy over its support for Israel". However, in February 2025, an appeals court in Casablanca reduced the sentence to two months, which he had already completed, leading to his release (The New Arab, 5 February 2025).

In November 2022, Rida Benotmane, a member of the human rights group Moroccan Association for the Defence of Human Rights (AMDH), was found guilty on charges connected to his social media posts and YouTube videos from 2021, criticizing the Moroccan government (Amnesty International, 28 February 2023, p. 1). The charges included "'insulting a body regulated by law', 'insulting public officials while carrying out their duties', and 'broadcasting and distributing false allegations without consent' under Articles 265, 263, and 447-2 of the Penal Code" (Amnesty International, 28 February 2023, p. 2). He was released in March 2024 after completing an eighteen-month prison term (FLD, 29 March 2024).

Please also see section 3.2.5 for information on government critics and dissidents.

Situation of Sahrawi human rights defenders

In September 2025, the UN Secretary-General mentions "reports of an increasingly shrinking civic space and restrictions on Sahrawis' rights to freedom of expression […] amid growing surveillance, harassment and intimidation." The Moroccan authorities reportedly suppressed demonstrations and assemblies advocating for self-determination, affecting Sahrawi women human rights defenders in particular (UN Security Council, 30 September 2025, p. 11; see also UN General Assembly, 31 July 2025, pp. 5-6). The UN Secretary General also reports the following:

> "On 20 March 2025, United Nations special procedure mandate holders sent a communication to Morocco expressing concerns over violations affecting 79 Sahrawi activists. It also cited human rights abuses linked to coastal development projects that entail large-scale land acquisition, destruction of private property and displacement. Morocco denied the allegations in May 2025." (UN Security Council, 30 September 2025, p. 11)

According to a written communication by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders to the Government of Morocco, published in April 2025, human rights defenders, amongst others, had faced increased repression in previous months, apparently in retaliation for their human rights work, including their support for self-determination for the Sahrawi people. Reports indicated heightened surveillance and the use of intimidation methods, such as threats and harassment, to silence dissent. Increasing accounts also described arbitrary

detentions, violent crackdowns on peaceful protests, and restrictions on freedom of expression and movement against human rights defenders (UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, 4 April 2025; see also Mission Permanente du Royaume du Maroc Genève, 7 April 2025).

In its annual report covering 2024, Sahrawi rights organisation CODESA lists incidents described as "repression of peaceful demonstrations advocating for Sahrawi self-determination" (CODESA, 17 February 2025, pp. 5-10). The organisation also mentions that Sahrawi activists face "surveillance, phone tapping, confiscation and inspection of mobile phones, defamation, and violations of privacy and personal life" (CODESA, 17 February 2025, p. 10) and lists cases of "arbitrary arrests and political trials against Sahrawi activists" (CODESA, 17 February 2025, pp. 10-11). A joint report by the human rights monitoring group Working Group on Human Rights in the Occupied Territory of Western Sahara (WGHRWS) and the Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara, an NGO which advocates the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, notes that Sahrawi human rights defenders and political activists are reportedly denied access to employment (WGHRWS & Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara, 30 June 2024, p. 3).

In its October 2024 report the UN Secretary-General similarly notes "reports of hindrance, intimidation and harassment against Sahrawi activists advocating for the right to self-determination". Amongst others, Sahrawi human rights defenders faced "targeting, intimidation and surveillance" (UN Security Council, 1 October 2024, p. 11). In October 2023, the UN Secretary-General similarly reports that "OHCHR continued to receive allegations pointing to an increased shrinking of civic space, including through obstruction, intimidation and restrictions against Saharawi activists, human rights defenders and student movements" (UN Security Council, 3 October 2023, p. 13; see also USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 2A).

A joint submission by the Working Group on Human Rights in Occupied Western Sahara and several other organizations to OHCHR dated May 2024 alleges political use of anti-terrorism legislation against Sahrawi activists:

> "Analysis of multiple trials reveals that the Moroccan Penal Code —especially Article 267— is weaponized to silence Sahrawi activists. Paragraphs (1 to 5)[14] of this article allow for the harshest penalties, including life imprisonment, for acts that in many cases are peaceful human rights activities and do not constitute terrorism under international law." (WGHRWS et al., 9 May 2024, p. 4)

> "The systematic review of Sahrawi human rights defenders' cases reveals a comprehensive state strategy to criminalize human rights work in occupied Western Sahara through legal tools, defamation, and repression. Terrorism charges or charges relating to belonging to a criminal organization are employed to break the will of peaceful activists, while media incitement undermines their safety and well-being, and that of their families." (WGHRWS et al., 9 May 2024, p. 5)

[14] See Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, https://natlex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/natlex2/files/download/69975/MAR-69975.pdf

In September 2025, SPS reports that Sahrawi human rights defender Laroussi Faghir "was violently assaulted" by plainclothes police forces in Laayoune. The article also mentions that Moroccan forces besieged "the home of human rights defender Sidi Mohammed Daddach", alongside other Sahrawi activists, who "intended to hold a peaceful meeting" (SPS, 27 September 2025).
In June 2025, the family of imprisoned Sahrawi human rights defender El Hussein Amaadour reports that he was experiencing "severe abdominal pain and a rising fever for several days" (FLD, 23 June 2025). FLD report the following:

> "The doctor at the prison clinic recommended an immediate transfer to an external hospital. However, the prison administration demanded that the human rights defender wear a uniform designated for public law prisoners in order to receive treatment at a hospital. El Hussein Amaadour refused this condition as this uniform is typically assigned to common law prisoners, which would undermine his status as a prisoner of conscience. The human rights defender maintains that he does not want to suffer such humiliation. He also refuses to eat any prison food as he fears that his critical medical conditions stems from poisoned prison food." (FLD, 23 June 2025)

According to FLD, in October 2024, "the Moroccan authorities besieged, threatened to arrest, and expelled the human rights defenders Ahmed Ettanji and Mohamed Mayara from the town of Cape Bojador in occupied Western Sahara while they were in the town for a family visit." Mohamed Mayara is the co-founder of the Sahrawi Association of Victims of Serious Human Rights Violations (ASVDH) and Équipe Média. Ahmed Ettanji serves as the president of Équipe Média (FLD, 7 November 2024; see also UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, 4 April 2025 and SPS, 20 November 2024).

Please also see section 3.4.4 for information on freedom assembly and association.

Transnational repression

Regarding transnational repression, the USDOS mentions that "[h]uman rights organizations reported the government harassed and surveilled human rights activists outside the country" (USDOS, 12 August 2025, section 3e). In October 2024 Freedom House reports that Moroccan security institutions "issued a joint statement in December 2020 announcing that they were pursuing charges against Moroccans living abroad" (Freedom House, 16 October 2024, section C3). A report by Citizen Lab on digital transnational repression, published in December 2024, contains information on the case of journalist Dounia Filali, who had reportedly exposed Morocco's use of spyware against politicians and journalists. The article details a pattern of cross-border harassment, online campaigns by Morocco state-aligned outlets and intimidation of her family, with incidents in China and France (Citizen Lab, 2 December 2024, pp. 36-37). An April 2022 article by Israeli daily newspaper Haaretz contains information on Moroccans abroad, including journalists and activists, targeted by the spyware Pegasus that was allegedly used by the Moroccan state (see Haaretz, 5 April 2022).

3.2.3.2 Treatment of family members of human rights defenders by state actors

According to the written communication by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders to the Government of Morocco, published in April 2025, children of human rights defenders in Western Sahara have, in some cases, reportedly been deprived of scholarships and transportation. Due to their parents' human rights work, a number of well-known activists' children have reportedly been barred from enrolling in institutions outside of Western Sahara. Due to their activism, several young student activists have reportedly been denied scholarships and transportation assistance. (UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, 4 April 2025; see also Mission Permanente du Royaume du Maroc Genève, 7 April 2025).

In October 2023, the UN Secretary-General nots that "[f]amily members of human rights activists and political prisoners also reportedly faced reprisals, intimidation or discrimination, based on their political opinion and advocacy in support of their relatives." Discrimination was reported in access to work, education, social protection, and other services (UN Security Council, 3 October 2023, p. 13).

In the methodology section of an older report, published in July 2022, HRW writes the following:

> "This report examines eight cases of police and/or judicial harassment targeting known Moroccan dissidents, and two cases targeting independent media institutions. In addition to the eight primary individual targets, these cases also involve about twenty 'secondary targets': family members, associates, colleagues, defense witnesses in court cases, and individuals otherwise connected to the primary targets." (HRW, 28 July 2022, p. 26)

In August 2025, the Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders in Western Sahara (CODESA) reportedly "condemned the continued crackdown by the Moroccan occupation on Sahrawi activists and their families" (SPS, 27 August 2025). SPS reports the following:

> "In a statement, CODESA affirmed that the Moroccan occupation forces continue to target Sahrawi human rights activists and their families in retaliation for their anti-occupation stance and their demands for freedom and independence. The forces also persist in blocking international observers from the region to obscure these crimes and violations.
>
> In this context, the organization cited the harassment and violations endured by its members, such as journalist Hassan Zarouali and the family of the late Sahrawi human rights activist Brahim Sabbar, who recently passed away. The organization indicated that after 'surrounding the cemetery where the funeral proceedings for the deceased took place on August 14th, preventing family and relatives from entering, the Moroccan occupation force imposed tight surveillance on the family's home, monitoring and tracking everyone who came to offer condolences.' It also noted the arrest of several Sahrawi activists at its security checkpoint." (SPS, 27 August 2025; see also CODESA, 26 August 2025)

In June 2025, Front Line Defenders reports that the sister of imprisoned human rights defender El Hussein Amaadour was reportedly "subjected to a degrading physical search while visiting him in prison". The search was allegedly ordered by the prison director and involved threats of

denying visitation, along with "verbal abuse of racist and defamatory nature" (FLD, 23 June 2025).

3.2.4 Situation of journalists and other media professionals

According to Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index, Morocco ranked 120th out of 180 countries in the 2025 edition, 129th in 2024 (RSF, undated), and 144th in 2023 (Hespress, 3 May 2023).

According to Amnesty International's annual report covering 2024, journalists, "were subjected to prosecution, digital surveillance and smear campaigns by pro-state media. Several were imprisoned for criticizing the monarchy or publishing what authorities deemed 'false news'" (Amnesty International, 29 April 2025). According to the USDOS' human rights report covering 2024, authorities and other actors harassed and intimidated some journalists, including efforts to tarnish their reputations by spreading "harmful rumors about their personal lives". Journalists reportedly stated that selective prosecutions were used as a means of intimidation and harassment (USDOS, 12 August 2025, section 2a). Similarly, in its report covering 2023, the USDOS also mentions instances of harassment and intimidation against journalists, including through harmful rumours (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 2A).

In May 2025, CPJ reports that two Italian freelance journalists were deported from Western Sahara by Moroccan authorities, describing the incident as "yet another sign of Morocco's repressive media blockade on the occupied Western Sahara" (CPJ, 2 May 2025). According to SPS, with this expulsion "the number of observers and journalists deported from Western Sahara has risen to 311, amid an ominous international silence" (SPS, 28 April 2025).

In November 2024, a court sentenced journalist Hamid Mahdaoui "to 18 months in prison for alleged defamation against the justice minister" and imposed a fine of MAD 1.5 million [approximately USD 152,200 as of November 2024] (HRW, 16 January 2025). In June 2025, the Rabat Court of Appeal upheld the prison sentence. MWN reports the following regarding the case:

> "El Mahdaoui, director of the Badil news site, faced charges of 'disseminating false accusations and facts with defamatory intent, public insult, and slander,' according to articles 443, 444, and 447 of the Moroccan Penal Code. […]
>
> According to El Mahdaoui's defense team, this trial is part of a 'systematic harassment' campaign targeting the journalist for over a year. They claim that beyond Ouahbi's five successive complaints, the renewal of El Mahdaoui's professional press card was denied, which his supporters denounce as 'an obvious attempt to pressure him' into abandoning his critical editorial stance. Many observers contend that the case raises profound questions about press freedom, the use of criminal law to silence criticism, and the complex relationship between political power and journalists in Morocco." (MWN, 30 June 2025; see also Freedom House, 13 November 2025, Key Developments)

In July 2024, 2,476 prisoners, including the journalists Taoufik Bouachrine, Omar Radi and Soulaimane Raisouni were released (Reuters, 29 July 2024) "as part of a mass pardon marking King Mohamed VI's 25 years on the throne" (CPJ, 21 October 2024, see also Amnesty International, 29 April 2025). However, since their release, they have been publicly shamed, stalked, and harassed, while they continue to face the stigma of their sex crime convictions,

"which are widely believed to be in retaliation for their work" (CPJ, 21 October 2024). According to Freedom House, press freedom groups described the cases against them as "fabricated and levied in retaliation for their work" (Freedom House, 2025b, Key Developments in 2024). CPJ notes the following:

> "Bouachrine, Raissouni, and Radi became global icons of the fight for press freedom in Morocco after they were arrested in separate cases between 2018 and 2020 and sentenced to 15, five, and six years respectively on sexual assault and other charges. Media freedom advocates and local journalists told CPJ that the 'morals' charges were intended to dampen public support for the three journalists, known for their critical reporting on the government. […] Compounding the journalists' insecurity is intense harassment, much of it directed by pro-government media, in which the royal family and powerful businesspeople hold stakes. Media companies including Barlamane.com, Chouf TV, and Maroc Medias, published articles about the accusations against Bouachrine, Radi, and Raissouni while ignoring evidence proving their innocence, which the journalists said played a central role in their convictions. Now that the three are out, the smears have started again." (CPJ, 21 October 2024)

Similarly, RSF mentions that the attacks also affected relatives of the released journalists and "included serious accusations such as collusion with foreign powers, corruption, and invasion of privacy." The RSF statement further notes:

> "Most of these attacks are orchestrated via websites specialising in defamation and disinformation, as part of a deliberate strategy of terror aimed at intimidating journalists. Journalists are thus increasingly being victimised by the weaponisation of common law with the aim of discrediting and ultimately silencing them. While journalists are certainly subject to the law like everyone else, it is impossible to ignore the systemic and blatantly unfounded nature of the accusations levied against them." (RSF, 30 July 2025)

Freedom House mentions the arrest of journalist Abdelmajid Amyay in October 2023. in connection with his Facebook page:

> "Amyay was charged with 'publishing false news on social media for defamation purposes' and 'insulting a state official for doing their job'; he was released on bail after one night of detention, pending investigation. Amyay is the editor of a local news outlet, Chams Post, and previously worked with Akhbar al-Yaoum, described as Morocco's 'last independent newspaper,' which shut down in 2021 after its editor and publisher were arrested." (Freedom House, 16 October 2024, section C3)

3.2.5 Situation of government critics or dissidents

Freedom House mentions that between June 2024 and May 2025 online users were "subject to surveillance, arrests, and harassment for their online activities" (Freedom House, 13 November 2025, Key Developments). For the period between June 2023 and May 2024, Freedom House mentions the same (Freedom House, 16 October 2024, Key Developments), and adds that alongside journalists and activists, "ordinary social media users" continue to be subject to arrest and prosecution due to their online activities (Freedom House, 16 October 2024, section C3).

In March 2025, activist Fouad Abdelmoumni was sentenced to 6 months in prison for "insulting public authorities, spreading false allegations, and reporting a fictitious crime he knew did not occur" (Yabiladi, 4 March 2025). The accusations stemmed from a Facebook post that criticized Moroccan-French relations and claimed the government was targeting dissidents with spyware (HRW, 27 March 2025).

Said Ait Mahdi, an activist and president of a leading earthquake-victims' group, was detained in December 2024 and was reportedly charged with "defamation, assault and inciting an unauthorized demonstration," (AP, 14 January 2025) "insult, and spreading false allegations". Three other members of the group were accused of insulting public officials. The group had criticised the government's reconstruction efforts after the September 2023 earthquake (The New Arab, 2 January 2025). In January 2025, a court sentenced Said Ait Mahdi to three months in prison and a fine, while the other activists were acquitted. Civil liberties advocates, including the Moroccan Association for Human Rights, denounced the arrest as arbitrary and politically motivated and called the arrest a "retaliation for his activism on behalf of the earthquake-stricken region and its people" (AP, 14 January 2025). On 4 March 2025, an appeals court increased the sentence to one year for spreading fake news and defamation following a lawsuit filed by local officials (Reuters, 4 March 2025).

In its report on digital media and internet freedom covering June 2023 to May 2024, Freedom House reports the following:

> "Several online users received prison sentences for comments they made on social media during the coverage period. In April 2024, activist Abdul Rahman Zankad was sentenced to five years in prison for 'insulting a constitutional institution' and 'incitement' after criticizing Morocco's normalization deal with Israel in a Facebook post. He was also fined 50,000 dirhams ($4,975). In July 2023, activist Said Boukyoud was also sentenced to five years in prison on charges of 'offending the monarchy' for criticizing normalization with Israel in Facebook posts dating back to 2020. Boukyoud made the posts while living in Qatar; upon hearing that an investigation was opened against him, he deleted the posts and his Facebook account. Despite this, he was apprehended at the airport upon his return to Morocco. […] In April 2024, 20-year-old Dutch-Moroccan influencer Armani Goumani was arrested and placed under a travel ban after appearing on a blind-dating show on YouTube. Goumani, who wore a short skirt in the video, is the subject of an ongoing investigation over 'public indecency,' which is criminalized under Article 483 of the penal code. If charged and found guilty, Goumani faces up to two years in prison." (Freedom House, 16 October 2024, section C3)

The cases involving bloggers Abderrahman Zankad (see also Africanews, 10 April 2024) and Said Boukioud were also mentioned in HRW's annual report covering 2024. The organisation also reports on the arrest and sentencing to prison of blogger Youssef El Hireche for insulting a public official and organized bodies, and "distributing confidential information without the owner's consent" (HRW, 16 January 2025). According to PEN, El Hireche was sentenced to 18 months in prison in May 2024, before being pardoned by the king in July 2024 (PEN America, undated).

In its annual report covering 2023, HRW notes that in July a court handed down a five-year prison sentence to Saïd Boukioud based on his 2020 Facebook posts criticizing "the king's

decision to normalize ties with Israel" (HRW, 11 January 2024). He was found guilty under Article 267-5 of the Penal Code (Africanews, 3 August 2023; see also Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Article 267-5). HRW notes that the organisation previously documented numerous instances in which Moroccan courts convicted social media users on various charges, including libel, false news, insulting or defaming government officials, state institutions, or foreign leaders, as well as undermining national security or the monarchy (HRW, 11 January 2024; see also HRW, 5 February 2020).

Moroccan media also reported on the arrest of influencers and bloggers in connection with defamation accusations (MWN, 10 December 2024; Yabiladi, 25 July 2025; Yabiladi, 30 September 2025).

3.3 Situation of political opposition members

The Moroccan Law No. 36-04 on political parties prohibits the establishment of political parties based on religious, ethnic or regional identity. Furthermore, political parties must not undermine the Islamic religion or the monarchy (Law No. 36-04, 14 February 2006, Article 4). While international observers considered the 2021 parliamentary elections generally free and fair, accusations of vote buying were made (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 3). Freedom House notes that the transparency of electoral processes remains limited (Freedom House, 2024, section A3). The Moroccan Constitution of 2011, introduced in the context of the 20 February Movement inspired by the Arab Spring, formally strengthened the role of parliamentary opposition (El Bazzim, 2024, p. 516). The Constitution grants opposition rights (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Articles 10, 60, 69, 82). However, legal scholar Rachid El Bazzim evaluates this formalization of opposition rights as a "communication revision strategy" aimed at projecting a positive image rather than enabling substantive political reforms (El Bazzim, 2024, p. 521).

Both the Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, a German political foundation affiliated with the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), analyse that Morocco's political landscape lacks a strong and effective opposition that can function as a counterweight to the government (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 3; FES, March 2024, p. 2). According to the country report by the Bertelsman Stiftung (covering the period 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023) the monarchy has used political liberalization strategically to channel and control the landscape of parties, including via the creation of "administration parties" to reduce the influence of genuine opposition (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 16).

> "Opposition parties have become empty shells, unable to put any pressure on the government. On the contrary, they are fully co-opted by the regime. Once a political party leads the government and cannot carry out promised reforms given the political constraints, it loses its popularity and credibility. This has happened to the Party of Justice and Development (PJD), which made many concessions during its decade in power in order not to threaten the king's prerogatives. In the 2021 elections, the party lost nearly 90% of its seats, ceasing to be an opposition to the Makhzen[15] and the royal court. The party's concessions ended up alienating it from its own voters. The monarchy has managed to make the PJD irrelevant." (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 17)

One example of the proximity of a political party to the monarchy is the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM). According to El Bazzim, the party was founded in 2007 based on encouragement by the monarchy. Its mission was to block the rise of Islamist forces and reshape the partisan landscape to consolidate palace control (El Bazzim, 2024, p. 515). In September 2021, the PAM entered the governing coalition with the National Rally of Independents (RNI) and the Independence (Istiqlal) Party (PI) (Hespress, 22 September 2021).

[15] "Morocco's Makhzen represents a supra-state within the state, and includes a network of powerful men in the royal palace, military leaders, and intelligence officers who benefit from surrounding the king, shaping his decisions, and having more clout than elected officials." (Arab Center Washington DC, 4 October 2017)

The 2021 elections resulted in a parliament "mainly composed of pro-palace upper and middle-class technocrats" (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 10).

In reference to the reporting period 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023 the Bertelsmann Stiftung states that the only formal opposition parties considered to be genuinely independent are those on the left (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 17). However, due to poor election results in 2021, the left-wing parties form a relatively small opposition of 26 of 395 seats in the House of Representatives (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 17; Africa elects, undated). Following a failed no-confidence motion brought by the opposition parties in May 2025, observers noted that the outcome underscores the weakness of the opposition and its limited effectiveness, given that it holds less than one-third of the seats in the parliament (Hespress, 18 May 2025).

No information on proceedings against active political opposition members could be found within the time constraints of this report. Only reports on the politically motivated action against the former opposition politician Mohammed Ziane could be found. Mohammed Ziane is a lawyer, former minister for human rights in 1995 and 1996, and founder of the Moroccan Liberal Party (PML) (Africanews, 22 November 2022). In July 2024, Ziane was sentenced to five years in prison on corruption charges (Freedom House, 2025b, Key Developments in 2024). At the time, he was already serving a three-year sentence handed down in 2022 related to eleven charges, including defamation, insult of public officials, adultery and sexual assault (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1). The most recent charges against him were brought after he made press statements from prison in which he criticized King Mohammed VI. Human rights organizations have described the proceedings as politically motivated (Freedom House, 2025b, Key Developments in 2024). As of April 2023, Ziane was held in solitary confinement since November 2022 (Amnesty International, 28 April 2023). In February 2024 Ziane started a hunger strike in order to demand his release; he ended the strike on 16 February 2024 (Le Monde & AFP, 16 February 2024). On 8 May 2025 the court reduced his prison sentence from five to three years (MWN, 8 May 2025).

Freedom House characterizes public opinion as marked by "significant cynicism toward electoral politics—a combination of distrust of party leadership, which is generally seen as corrupt and co-opted, and the widespread understanding that the palace ultimately makes major decisions" (Freedom House, 2024, section B1).

Similarly, the Bertelsmann Stiftung states:

> "Most parties have become 'Makhzanized' and acquiesce to the palace. Citizens find it difficult to distinguish between the deep state, the Makhzen and the powers wielded by the restricted government." (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 17)

3.4 Freedom of assembly and freedom of association

3.4.1 Legal framework

Constitution

Article 29 guarantees freedom of assembly (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Article 29). Articles 12 and 13 of the constitution promote citizens' participation in public life. Article 12 guarantees civic associations' roles, while Article 13 ensures citizens' involvement in preparing, implementing, and evaluating public policies (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Articles 12, 13). Article 139 requires local authorities to establish participatory mechanisms enabling citizens and associations to contribute to enactment and application of development programs (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Article 139; see also ICNL, last updated 8 September 2025).
Morocco is also a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (Centre for Human Rights of the University of Pretoria, 10 May 2021) that governs the right of peaceful assembly in Article 21 (ICCPR, entry into force 23 March 1976).

Freedom of assembly

The main legal framework regulating assemblies in Morocco is the Law on Assemblies enacted in 1958, which was later amended by legislation passed in 2002 (Centre for Human Rights of the University of Pretoria, 10 May 2021; see Law No. 76-00, 23 July 2002 and Dahir No. 1-58-377, 15 November 1958). The General Secretariat of the Government (Secrétariat Général Du Gouvernement, SGG) published a consolidated version of Decree No. 1-58-377 as of 30 July 2025. The Decree includes the amendments by Law No. 76-00 (Dahir No. 1-58-377, with amendments up to 30 July 2025). Law No. 76-00 includes vaguely defined provisions that provide authorities with "significant discretion", and local authorities may prohibit an assembly if they consider it a risk to public security. Organizers of public meetings must "notify the local administrative authorities at least 24 hours in advance and obtain a stamped receipt". Spontaneous assemblies are generally prohibited unless tied to local customs, as for example "weddings, circumcision celebrations, and funerals". Restrictions regarding assemblies include time limits and bans on certain symbols. Violations of the law carry fines and prison terms (ICNL, last updated 8 September 2025). Regarding fines and penalties included by Law No. 76-00, ICNL writes the following:

> "Violations of Law 76 carry criminal penalties. Chapter 9 sets fines of MAD 2,000 to 5,000 (USD $220 to 550 as of September 2025). More serious sanctions apply for infractions such as submitting misleading declarations or attempting to engage participants in undeclared or prohibited demonstrations: fines of MAD 2,000–10,000 (USD 220–1,100) and prison terms of one to six months. Repeat offenses may be punished by one to two months' imprisonment and a fine of MAD 2,000 to 10,000 (USD 220-1,100)." (ICNL, last updated 8 September 2025; see also Dahir No. 1-58-377, with amendments up to 30 July 2025).

Freedom of association

According to the ICNL, "[t]he right to establish associations is governed by the Decree on the Right to Establish Associations" (ICNL, last updated 8 September 2025; see also Dahir No. 1-58-376, with amendments up to 5 March 2009). ICNL further notes:

> "Moroccan law provides for the establishment and registration of associations through a notification process. […] Article 2 of the Decree on the Right to Establish Associations (Decree 1-58-376) [as amended by Decree 1-733-283 of 1973 and Decree 1-02-206 of 2002] states that 'associations can be freely established without prior permission, provided that' the notification process is followed. Under Article 5, associations seeking legal personality must file a notification with the Local Administrative Authority where the organization's headquarters are located. […] Once a complete application has been submitted, the law requires a receipt to be delivered within 60 days. If no response is issued, the association is legally entitled to commence activities. […] Article 3 of the Decree prohibits the formation of associations whose objectives are 'illegal, contrary to good morals, [or which aim] to undermine the Islamic religion, the integrity of the national territory, or the monarchical regime, or call for discrimination.'" (ICNL, last updated 8 September 2025)

Law No. 07-09 amended Article 5 of Dahir No. 1-58-376[16] (Law No. 07-09, 18 February 2009). The requirement to "file a notification with the Local Administrative Authority where the organization's headquarters are located" (ICNL, last updated 8 September 2025) is still contained (Dahir No. 1-58-376, with amendments up to 5 March 2009, Article 5).
In October 2024, Sada, an online journal by Carnegie Endowment, notes the following regarding a bill amending Law 22-01 (see also MWN, 1 November 2024) on criminal procedure:

> "In late August 2024, the Moroccan Government Council approved Bill 03.23, which amends Law 22.01 on criminal procedure to prevent NGOs from initiating legal action against offenses involving public property—particularly cases of embezzlement by elected officials or civil servants—unless such action is requested by the public prosecutor at the Court of Cassation. This draft amendment, still pending parliamentary approval, has ignited significant political controversy." (Sada, 31 October 2024)

In July 2025, Yabiladi, a French web portal for the Moroccan diaspora, reports that "[t]he House of Councillors passed Bill 03.23 by a majority vote". According to the justice minister "the bill seeks to strike a balance between ensuring the prosecution of criminal offenses and guaranteeing the right to a fair trial, including the presumption of innocence" (Yabiladi, 9 July 2025). The new Law No. 03-23 amending and supplementing the Criminal Procedure Code[17] was published in the Official Bulletin No. 7437 on 8 September 2025 (Medias24, 15 September 2025) and will come into force in December 2025 (North Africa Post, 16 September 2025; Law

[16] A version of Dahir 1-58-376 including amendments by Law No. 07-09 was published by the MENA Rights Group (see Dahir No. 1-58-376, with amendments up to 5 March 2009).

[17] For details on the reform of the Criminal Procedure Code please see section 4.2.1

No. 03-23, 13 August 2025). In October 2025, Civicus Monitor, an international network of civil society organisations, notes the following regarding the amendment:

> "Civil society has criticised an amendment to the criminal procedure law (Bill 03.23), which was approved in August 2024. The amendments prevent civil society organisations from initiating legal action in cases involving the misuse of public funds and property, unless requested by the public prosecutor. Previously, NGOs had the authority to initiate legal action against civil servants and elected officials suspected of embezzlement or corruption.' CSOs [civil society organisations] argue that the amendment is 'a significant setback for civil society's role' as it restricts prosecution only to official bodies and thus 'risks marginalising the critical role these groups play in monitoring and exposing corruption.'" (Civicus Monitor, 28 October 2025)

3.4.2 Situation of civil society organisations (CSOs)

Regarding the situation of CSOs, ICNL reports the following in its country overview last updated in September 2025:

> "Associations that work on sensitive issues—such as Western Sahara, the monarchy, or religion—continue to face administrative obstacles and other restrictions, both within and beyond the boundaries of the law. Freedoms of expression and assembly, while guaranteed by the Constitution, are also subject to limitations in practice, including vague legal provisions and discretionary enforcement that can hinder civic engagement" (ICNL, last updated 8 September 2025)

Authorities frequently invoke the "vaguely-worded" Article 3 of the Dahir 1-58-376 (see section 3.4.1) "to refuse to accept the notification of organizations, particularly those linked to Amazigh (native Berber) and Sahrawi (Western Saharan) communities", according to ICNL. Associations that do not possess a registration receipt are effectively deprived of legal personality. Although such associations can function on an informal basis, obtaining legal personality is necessary "to conduct financial transactions, including receiving and managing funds to support their activities." ICNL also mentions that provisions in Dahir 1-58-376 and the Penal Code regarding "membership in groups deemed seditious, violent, or linked to terrorist activities" were used by authorities against civil society actors (ICNL, last updated 8 September 2025). Regarding "barriers to resources" ICNL reports the following:

> "There are few legal barriers to resource mobilization, whether the funding originates domestically or from abroad. The main obstacle for associations is the need to obtain legal registration, without which they cannot conduct financial transactions, as noted above. In addition, associations must secure a separate license to collect donations. While the NGOs Directorate generally approves these fundraising licenses, the requirement adds an administrative burden. Foreign funding is not subject to significant restrictions, and in practice many organizations receive support from international sources." (ICNL, last updated 8 September 2025)

According to the most recent country report by the Bertelsmann Stiftung published in March 2024, Morocco has between 30,000 and 50,000 CSOs. Regarding their situation, the report notes the following:

> "Many, especially those working on human rights issues, face practical impediments. Their members report being subject to surveillance and travel restrictions. Authorities' legal harassment obstructs their work as well. Sometimes non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have their registration denied and their events canceled if they are perceived to pose a threat to public order. In September 2021, the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (Association Marocaine des Droits Humains, AMDH) reported that the authorities had declined to process the administrative formalities for 84 out of 99 AMDH local branches. It was impossible for them to carry out their work. Similarly, in 2022, administrative formalities were denied for some of its local branches, which focus on youth groups and violence against women. At the local level, civil society actors struggle to maintain their independence from the state or political parties. They mostly rely on public funds, which makes it difficult for them to defend their initial goals in favor of their donors' agenda." (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 11)

> "The constitution granted CSOs [civil society organisations] a more formal role in the enactment, implementation and evaluation of public policies. However, state control over CSOs has limited their role in reinforcing public sector accountability and their willingness to question the configuration of political power. The recent crackdown on independent CSOs indicates a strained relationship between the state and civil society. State repression of human rights organizations and activists has increased." (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 39)

In its annual human rights report covering 2023, the USDOS notes the following regarding freedom of association:

> "The constitution and the law provided for freedom of association, although the government sometimes restricted this freedom. The government prohibited or failed to recognize some political opposition groups by deeming them unqualified for NGO status. While the government did not restrict the source of funding for NGOs operating in the country, NGOs that received funding from foreign sources were required to report the amount and its origins to the government within 30 days from the date of receipt. The government denied official recognition to NGOs it considered to be advocating against Islam as the state religion or questioning the legitimacy of the monarchy or the country's territorial integrity. Authorities obstructed the registration of some associations perceived to be critical of the government by refusing to accept their registration applications or to deliver receipts confirming the filing of applications. […]
>
> The Ministry of Interior required NGOs to register before being recognized as legal entities, but there was no comprehensive, publicly available national registry. A prospective organization had to submit its objectives, bylaws, address, and photocopies of members' identification cards to local officials of the ministry. Unregistered organizations could not access government funds or legally accept contributions. The organizations stated local officials' refusal to issue receipts was a violation of the law governing the right of

> association. One of the organizations, the Moroccan Association of Human Rights, reported the ministry had refused to issue it a registration receipt for the last eight years." (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 2B)

The USDOS's report covering 2024 does cover freedom of association only in relation to labour unions and the right to collective bargaining (USDOS, 12 August 2025, section 1b).
Please also see the following report published by the Arab NGO Network for Development in May 2023 for further details regarding CSOs in Morocco:

- ANND - Arab NGO Network for Development: Morocco: Civil Society Organizations: Dynamic and Challenges, May 2023
  https://civicspace.annd.org/uploads/local_reports/Morocco__EN.pdf

3.4.3 Treatment of protesters

Please see section 3.4.4 for information on the situation of protesters in Western Sahara.

According to the annual human rights report of the USDOS covering 2023, "[t]he government generally allowed authorized and unauthorized peaceful demonstrations to occur" (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 2B). The report also provides the following information:

> "Several NGOs complained that the government used administrative delays and other methods to suppress or discourage unwanted peaceful assembly. Security forces intervened on occasion to disband both authorized and unauthorized protests when officials deemed the demonstration a threat to public security. […]
>
> Most protests proceeded peacefully. Security forces were generally present both in and out of uniform at protests, particularly if the protest was expected to address a sensitive issue. In general, officers had procedures to intervene when needed for security purposes, but there were no reports they had done so during the year. Security force tactics did not differ significantly whether the protest was authorized or unauthorized, although the decision on whether to intervene sometimes depended on whether the protest was authorized. Under the auspices of the National Preventive Mechanism against Torture (NPMT), the CNDH [National Council on Human Rights, Conseil National des droits de l'homme] organized trainings with the police to enhance and promote human rights-based methods in the performance of police duties with the most recent training occurring in September." (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 2B)

The USDOS also reports that although the law prohibits arbitrary arrest and guarantees the right to challenge detention in court, police sometimes failed to uphold these provisions, "particularly during or in the wake of protests" (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1D). According to a report by Enass - an online portal focussing amongst others on cultural diversity - police broke up a demonstration by disability rights groups in May 2024, after protesters decided to turn the sit in into a march. The Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH) claims that four protesters were arrested, and several others injured (Enass, 16 May 2024). HRW also reports that security forces used "force against a demonstration organized by disability rights groups outside parliament in May" 2024 (HRW, 16 January 2025). HRW also mentions the use of force against a protest by healthcare workers in July 2024 (HRW, 16 January 2025). English-

language Moroccan online newspaper Morocco World News (MWN) reports the following regarding the protest by health professionals:

> "Widespread outrage erupted on social media on Wednesday after police dispersed a protest by health professionals in Rabat using water cannons. The protest, which saw medical professionals marching toward the parliament to protest the government's failure to honor a previously signed agreement with the Ministry of Health, was abruptly halted by security forces, reportedly resulting in numerous arrests. Videos shared online showed chaotic scenes as police deployed water cannons against the protesting medical professionals. In several clips, demonstrators can be seen holding banners and chanting slogans before being drenched by high-pressure water jets, which caused them to scatter in all directions. These videos have sparked widespread outrage on social media, with many criticizing the authorities for what they saw as a heavy-handed approach." (MWN, 11 July 2024)

In its annual report covering 2024, HRW mentions that "40 Hirak[18] protesters, including leaders Nasser Zefzafi and Nabil Ahamjik, remained imprisoned, serving decades-long sentences after an appeals court upheld their convictions in 2019, despite credible allegations of confessions obtained under torture" (HRW, 16 January 2025).

Protests regarding the war in Gaza

According to the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs (WRMEA), "[s]ince the war in Gaza began in October 2023, thousands have demonstrated almost every Friday to demand that their government sever ties with Israel and withdraw from the U.S.-brokered Abraham Accords[19]" (WRMEA, 2 November 2025). Protests related to Gaza and Israel are reported in October 2023 (Times of Israel, 15 October 2023), December 2023 (Reuters, 24 December 2023), April 2025 (Al Jazeera, 6 April 2025) and July 2025 (AA, 20 July 2025). In April 2025 Al Jazeera reports that "Moroccan authorities tolerate most demonstrations", however, "activists accused of targeting foreign embassies or linking their criticism to the monarchy" were arrested (Al Jazeera, 6 April 2025).

Gen Z 212 protests

On 27 September 2025, a group called Gen Z 212[20] launched protests in several Moroccan cities, including "Rabat, Casablanca, Tangier, Salé, Agadir, Marrakesh, Sidi Eltaibi, and Inezgane" (HRW, 15 October 2025; see also Civicus Monitor, 28 October 2025 and OMCT, 1 October

[18] The Hirak Rif protests began in 2016 in Al-Hoceima following the death of a fishmonger, with demonstrators demanding justice, an end to corruption, and better treatment of the marginalized Rif region, before facing a government crackdown and arrests (The New Arab, 21 August 2024).

[19] The Abraham Accords, signed in September 2020, resulted in the establishment of peace agreements between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and later Morocco (Kateb, 25 April 2025).

[20] The number in the group's name refers to Morocco's international dialling code (BBC, 4 October 2025).

2025). An article by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), a regional non-profit organisation with a focus on human security in Africa, provides an overview of the protests by Gen Z 212:

> "Gen Z 212, the specific manifestation in Morocco, along with Morocco Youth Voice, launched its street demonstrations on 27 September in the capital Rabat and other cities. Demands included better health and education, and an end to government corruption and spending on ostentatious sports events like the 2030 FIFA World Cup and 2025 Africa Cup of Nations rather than on public services. Over the next few weeks, the protests grew and spread, with police arresting hundreds and killing some demonstrators. The marches grew more violent and destructive, showing signs of gaining their own momentum and slipping beyond the organisers' control. Gen Z 212 is an anonymous and rather amorphous entity, so control was always going to be a problem. […] The demonstrations continued to proliferate over the next two weeks, with the killing of several protesters seemingly provoking the demonstrators to greater violence. Banks, police stations and other government buildings were torched and otherwise damaged, though criminals using the cover of protests might have been responsible for some or even most of those." (ISS, 24 October 2025)

At the beginning of October 2025, Amnesty International states that "protesters facing trial, including minors, are currently facing charges under Article 591 of the Moroccan Penal Code, which criminalizes participation in gatherings deemed violent,[21] despite the fact that these protesters were arrested on 28 and 29 September, before any acts of violence were reported" (Amnesty International, 3 October 2025). According to France 24, protests were banned by authorities and forcibly dispersed, including by the use of lethal force, which resulted in three fatalities and left many others injured. The article notes that "[n]early 1,000 people were reportedly arrested, and at least 270 protesters including 39 children, faced criminal charges. Some remain detained" (France 24, 21 October 2025). On 15 October 2025, HRW reports the following:

> "Human Rights Watch geolocated a video posted to social media on October 1 that shows a dark-colored security forces van driving into protesters in a roundabout in Oujda on the night of September 30, before driving away. Another video posted to social media on October 1 and geolocated by researchers shows a dark-colored security forces van drive into a group of protesters roughly 350 meters from the roundabout in Oujda, crushing a man against a wall before backing up and driving away. According to news reports, security forces' car ramming incidents injured at least two people in Oujda that night, including 17-year-old Wassim Eltaibi, whose mother told reporters he required urgent medical care, and 19-year-old Amine Boussaada, whose father said his left leg had been amputated. On October 1, the Royal Gendarmerie used lethal force to quell protests that turned violent in front of a gendarmerie post in Lqliâa, in Agadir, reportedly killing three men and injuring others, including a child. Those reportedly killed include Abdessamade Oubalat, a 22-year-old cinematography student, and a 25-year-old man. In a televised statement on October

[21] Article 591 of the Penal Code criminalises placing objects on roads with the intent to cause an accident or impede traffic (Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Article 591).

> 2, an interior ministry spokesperson sought to justify the use of lethal force, saying that protesters had used stones and allegedly used knives as weapons. He said forces first used tear gas to disperse crowds and then used their firearms 'in self-defense.' […]
>
> Nationwide protests on October 1 also resulted in the injury of 354 people, including 326 public security personnel, and damage to 271 of their vehicles and 175 private vehicles, according to an interior ministry spokesperson. On October 2, violent clashes broke out in Marrakesh between police and protesters, who reportedly damaged three bank branches. The authorities arrested scores of people. Prosecutions against protestors are ongoing. On October 4, the Agadir Court of First Instance reportedly sentenced a man to four years in prison and a fine of 50,000 dirhams (around US$5,400) for 'inciting minor offenses and crimes via social media.' On October 8, the Agadir Court of Appeal reportedly sentenced a man to 10 years in prison for his alleged role in destroying public property during the Lqliâa events, and for alleged violence against security forces. On October 9, the Silla Court of Appeal reportedly sentenced several defendants to up to 20 years in prison for alleged 'acts of vandalism.'" (HRW, 15 October 2025)

Regarding the protests, ISS mentions that "[a] turning point was reached in the second week of October after King Mohammed VI's speech at the opening of Parliament." ISS elaborates:

> "Without mentioning Gen Z 212 or the uprisings, he urged the government to improve healthcare and education. The monarchy is widely respected in Morocco, and the king's remarks were read as an implicit recognition of the legitimacy of the protesters' social demands. After his speech, the Gen Z 212 organisers posted calls for another mass demonstration across the country on 18 October. 'But no one really [showed up],' Francois Conradie, a Morocco-based economist at Oxford Economics, told ISS Today." (ISS, 24 October 2025)

According to MWN, about 100 demonstrators gathered in front of the Parliament in Rabat on 18 October 2025 (MWN, 4 October 2025). The article provides an updated timeline of events (see MWN, 4 October 2025).
On 25 October 2025, the AMDH releases an Arabic language report on the Gen Z protests (see AMDH, 25 October 2025). MWN writes the following, citing information from the AMDH report:

> "The Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH) presented on Thursday in Rabat a preliminary report on the recent 'Gen Z protests' that erupted in several Moroccan cities, revealing that more than 2,000 people have been detained nationwide. According to the association, a total of 2,068 individuals have been arrested and prosecuted in connection with the demonstrations, of whom 1,088 remain in custody, 596 have been released, and 233 have already received judicial sentences. These figures remain preliminary as arrests continue in various regions, AMDH stressed. The association stated that authorities are still detaining individuals based on videos circulating on social media or information gathered by security services on the ground. AMDH's report detailed a wide range of judicial sentences, including four of 15 years in prison, one of 12 years, 31 of 10 years, three of 6 years, and two of 5 years, in addition to hundreds of shorter sentences ranging between one and three years. The association noted that several of these rulings involved minors,

particularly in the northern city of Al Hoceima. 'This rapid issuance of harsh sentences is a message of intimidation to protesters and an attempt to halt demonstrations in line with the adopted security approach,' AMDH said in its statement. The organization expressed deep concern about the ongoing prosecution of over 330 minors, some of whom were interrogated without the presence of their guardians, calling it a 'clear violation of children's rights protected by law.' While several minors have been released and returned to their families, others continue to face serious criminal charges. The report provided details on arrests and prosecutions across several cities. In Rabat, 192 arrests were recorded, while Temara saw 95 arrests, including nine individuals — among them a young woman — who received one-year prison sentences. Five cases were reported in Zagora, with one person still in custody. In Berkane, 51 individuals were arrested, 11 of whom were prosecuted in custody. Three young men received prison sentences — two for two years and one for a year and a half — while 15 minors were referred to social care institutions. In Casablanca, 80 people were arrested, including 44 prosecuted in custody. AMDH said some detainees were linked to highway incidents 'even after proving they were not present at the scene.' The report also raised concerns over violations of fair trial standards. AMDH stated that many detainees were presented before the public prosecutor only after the end of police custody, 'often in difficult conditions,' and that numerous defendants lacked legal representation. The association said some families were not informed of their relatives' arrests until several days later, adding that allegations of torture or ill-treatment had not been independently investigated. AMDH held the Moroccan state fully responsible for the events and the resulting violence, urging independent and impartial investigations to determine accountability. The association also claimed that some defendants were prosecuted despite evidence showing they were not present at protest sites, which it said 'undermines the principles of a fair trial.'" (MWN, 25 October 2025)

3.4.4 Western Sahara

In its annual human rights report covering 2023, the USDOS notes the following regarding freedom of peaceful assembly in Western Sahara:

> "Several human rights NGOs in Western Sahara stated that in recent years the number of submitted applications for permits to hold demonstrations declined because police rarely granted them. In most cases organizers proceeded with planned demonstrations without authorization, and there was no discernible difference in security forces' reaction to authorized or unauthorized protests. In Western Sahara there often was a higher ratio of members of security forces to protesters." (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 2B)

> "There were accusations that security officials subjected Western Sahara pro-independence protesters to degrading treatment during or following demonstrations calling for the release of political prisoners. International and local human rights organizations claimed that authorities dismissed public complaints of abuse in Western Sahara and relied only on police statements. Government officials generally did not provide information on the outcome of complaints." (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1C)

The USDOS's report covering 2024 does not contain information on freedom of assembly and covers freedom of association only in relation to labour unions and the right to collective

bargaining (USDOS, 12 August 2025, section 1b). Regarding the right to protest and freedom of expression and association, the Associació Catalana d'Amigues del Poble Sahrauí (ACAPS) Catalunya & Novact Institute for Nonviolence (NOVACT) - organisations focussing on rights of Saharawi - note the following in their report covering events in 2024:

> "Western Sahara has been and continues to be the scene of serious violations of the right to protest and freedom of expression, through the systematic dissolution of any demonstration, peaceful protest or even private meeting or workshop, the arbitrary detention and criminalisation of persons participating in peaceful mobilisations and the harassment and intimidation of members of political, social, cultural and human rights associations in this territory […]
>
> The bulk of the violations detected consisted of the violent repression of acts of protest and rallies in the streets of the main cities, especially directed against women,[22] due to their role as public and visible leaders of the demands, in most cases with violence and verbal abuse." (ACAPS Catalunya & NOVACT, 6 March 2025, p. 31)

Amnesty International reports the following on incidents in January (see also SPS, 9 January 2024) and February 2024 in Laayoune:

> "Authorities continued to restrict dissent and the rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly in Western Sahara. In January [2024], police violently dispersed a peaceful demonstration by Sahrawi women activists in Laayoune and subjected protesters to beatings. In February [2024], police prevented a press conference on the human rights situation in Western Sahara by the Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders Collective (CODESA) from taking place at the Laayoune home of the organization's president, Ali Salem Tamek." (Amnesty International, 29 April 2025)

These incidents are also mentioned by ACAPS Catalunya & NOVACT, providing further details (ACAPS Catalunya & NOVACT, 6 March 2025, pp. 31-32). The report also mentions the breaking up of "a peaceful gathering in commemoration of the 51st anniversary of the founding of the Polisario Front" on 18 May 2024 in Laayoune, in which women activists were "subjected to verbal and physical aggression by the Moroccan police". In June 2024, another demonstration was broken up by police, reportedly resulting in the injury of activists (ACAPS Catalunya & NOVACT, 6 March 2025, p. 32; see also Civicus Monitor, 28 October 2025).
Regarding freedom of association in 2023, the USDOS reports the following:

> "Authorities routinely rejected the registration applications of Sahrawi human rights groups. According to Amnesty International, Sahrawi human rights activists remained subject to intimidation, questioning, arrest, and intense surveillance that occasionally amounted to harassment." (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 2B)

[22] Please see the following report for further details: Djimi, ElGhalia et al.: Resilience is Resistance: The struggle of Sahwari Women Under Moroccan Occupation, November 2024, available at: Mental Health and Human Rights Info, https://www.hhri.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Resilience-in-Resistance-Report.pdf

ACAPS Catalunya & NOVACT also note that harassment of Saharawi associations and organisations, hindered or prevented "the right to associate and to hold meetings or general assemblies and other activities" (ACAPS Catalunya & NOVACT, 6 March 2025, p. 32). The organisations elaborate:

> "House siege and house raids continue to be commonly used by Moroccan police forces to impede civil and political liberties such as the right to assembly and association. […] Although harassment is constant against the bulk of Saharawi activism, this practice is often used in a very prominent way against the same group of activists and on specific dates, preventing celebrations and private meetings (in homes) and thus violating the civil and political rights of the Saharawi population." (ACAPS Catalunya & NOVACT, 6 March 2025, p. 33)

Ali Salem Tamek, the president of CODESA, reportedly "suffered siege by the Moroccan authorities to prevent private celebrations on important dates". The report lists the anniversary of the Polisario Front in May, and the Gdeim Izik camp in October 2024. In October 2024, electricity was reportedly cut off in the home of another CODESA member "in reprisal for organising a commemoration of the Gdeim Izik camp at his home" (ACAPS Catalunya & NOVACT, 6 March 2025, p. 33). The report mentions several other similar incidents affecting members of Sahrawi organisations (ACAPS Catalunya & NOVACT, 6 March 2025, pp. 33-35).

3.5 Freedom of religion

In a March 2024 query response, Landinfo, the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Center, provides background information[23] on the relationship between the Moroccan state, monarchy, and Islam, based on several sources. The text states that the Moroccan royal family claims descent from the Prophet Muhammad and bases its historical and political legitimacy on the king's position as Commander of the Faithful (Landinfo, 1 March 2024, p. 2; see also Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Article 41). The Moroccan state supports Islam politically and economically and identifies itself as the protector of Morocco's Islamic heritage. Belonging to the Moroccan state and belonging to Islam largely overlap and Moroccans are automatically considered Muslims, by the state and by society, unless they have a Jewish background. In Moroccan context, the state, citizens and religion are closely intertwined. Therefore, for many Moroccans, breaking with Islam, either by converting to another faith or in the form of apostasy, is seen as equivalent to rejecting the Moroccan state itself. King Mohammed VI is a spokesperson for moderate Islam as well as interfaith dialogue and the state keeps a close watch on the development of Islam in Morocco to prevent it from developing in an extremist direction. Islam plays a crucial role for most Moroccans, at the state level and in people's daily lives, and a person who leaves Islam will be met with condemnation and marginalisation from the Muslim community (Landinfo, 1 March 2024, pp. 2-3).

3.5.1 Legal framework

The preamble of the Moroccan Constitution refers to the country as a sovereign Muslim state and stipulates that it grants a predominant status to Islam (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Preamble). Article 3 establishes Islam as the state religion and guarantees the free exercise of religious practices (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Article 3).

The US Department of State's (USDOS) June 2024 annual report on religious freedom, covering 2023, states the following on the legal framework with respect to the Moroccan constitution:

> "The constitution guarantees freedom of thought, expression, and assembly, and the state guarantees every individual the freedom to practice their religion. 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 law prohibits basing a party on a religious, ethnic, or regional identity." (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section II)

[23] Please note that due to a lack of Norwegian language skills the translation from Norwegian has been made using translation tools. There is therefore an increased risk that these translations may contain inaccuracies.

The Moroccan Penal Code (Code Pénal) regulates offences related to religious practices in articles 220 to 223. According to Article 220, anyone who forces others to practise a religion or attend services or prevents others from doing so through violence or threats faces imprisonment of between six months and three years, as well as a fine ranging from MAD 200-500 [USD 22-54 as of December 2025; see also USCIRF, 1 January 2023, p. 23]. The same penalties apply to those who seduce Muslims to convert to another religion, by exploiting a weakness or using health or educational institutions, shelters or orphanages for this purpose (Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Article 220). An April 2024 article by Morocco World News (MWN) notes that "[a]ny attempt to induce a Muslim to convert is considered illegal, forcing foreign missionaries to either limit their proselytizing to non-Muslims or conduct their work discreetly" (MWN, 16 April 2024). In a March 2021 publication on religious freedom in Morocco, the Christian legal advocacy organisation European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) states that "voluntary conversion is not legally repressed" as long as a convert "remains discreet, abstains from evangelisation, and renounces one's right to practice one's faith in established churches alongside foreigners" (ECLJ, March 2021, p. 3).

Obstructing religious practices or deliberately causing disturbances is also punishable by imprisonment and fines (Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Article 221). According to Article 222 of the Penal Code, anyone who is known to be Muslim and ostentatiously breaks the fast during Ramadan without justification shall be punished by imprisonment for one to six months and a fine of between MAD 200 and 500 [USD 22-54 as of December 2025] (Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Article 222). The USDOS Report on religious freedom covering 2023 states that "according to the government, 84 persons were prosecuted for the offense of breaking the fast during the month of Ramadan, of which 74 were convicted" and eight were still on trial at the end of 2023 (USDOS, 26 June 2024, Executive Summary). Article 223 stipulates the punishment for wilfully destroying, damaging, or defiling buildings, monuments, or objects used for religious worship (Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Article 223).

The USDOS annual report on religious freedom, covering 2023, contains further legal provisions that are relevant in context of religious freedom:

> "The constitution and the law governing media prohibit any individual, including members of parliament, who are normally immune from arrest while engaging in their parliamentary duties, from criticizing Islam on public platforms, such as print or online media, or in public speeches. […]
>
> The labor code prohibits discrimination against persons in employment and occupation based on race, religion, national origin, color, sex, ethnicity, or disability, including physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disability. […]
>
> 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. […]
>
> Non-Muslims must formally convert to Islam and be permanent residents before they can become guardians of abandoned or orphaned children. […]
>
> 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. […] The law does not allow Moroccan Christians to be buried in Christian cemeteries or to hold Christian names. The Prison Administration authorized religious observances and services provided by religious leaders for all prisoners, including religious minorities. It also respected the religious dietary requirements for religious minorities. By law, all publicly and privately funded national educational institutions must teach Sunni Islam in accordance with the teachings and traditions of the Maliki-Ashari school of Islamic jurisprudence, with the exception of private Jewish schools, which may teach Judaism without including Islamic education. Foreign-run schools have the choice of including or omitting Islamic religious instruction within the school's curriculum." (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section II)

The above mentioned ECLJ publication states that civil secular marriage is not an option in Morocco and that non-Jewish Moroccan citizens are forced to marry according to the Sunni Islamic tradition to legalise their marriage (ECLJ, March 2021, p. 4).
In Morocco, marriage, divorce, inheritance and child custody are governed by the Family Code, or Moudawana (Centre for Public Impact, 2 May 2016; Le Monde, 17 January 2025), which is based on the principles of Islamic law, the Sharia (Columbia Political Review, 10 June 2025; Medfeminiswiya, 23 January 2025). According to the Family Code, a Muslim woman is not allowed to marry a non-Muslim man, while the marriage of a Muslim man to a non-Muslim woman is legally only possible if she is of Christian or Jewish faith (Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016, Article 39). In 2023 King Mohammed VI initiated a revision process of the Family Code (MWN, 12 March 2024). The initiative aims at including more than 100 amendments to the Moudawana 2004 legal text (DW, 24 December 2024), and several proposals have already been approved by the authorised council, including the proposal that "[s]pouses of different religions are allowed to make bequests or transfer property to each other, since they cannot inherit from one another" (MWN, 24 December 2024). The new legislation has not been implemented within the reporting period (Medfeminiswiya, 23 January 2025; see also MWN, 22 October 2025).

3.5.2 Blasphemy legal framework

According to Article 41 of the Constitution, the King is responsible for ensuring respect for Islam (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Article 41). According to the Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2024 report on Morocco "[t]he law prohibits criticism of Islam and proselytizing Muslims, which are punishable by law. It is prohibited to speak in a manner that undermines Islam" (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 15).
With Law No. 73-15 of 18 July 2016, some provisions of the Penal Code were amended, and new provisions have been added. Among the new provisions was Article 267-5, which criminalises "causing harm" to Islam (Mena Rights Group, March 2022, p. 13, FN 39). As laid down in this Article, anyone who causes harm to Islam or the monarchical regime or who incites others to harm the territorial integrity of the kingdom, shall be punished with imprisonment of

between six months and two years, a fine ranging from MAD 20,000-200,000 [USD 2,161-21,613 as of December 2025], or both. When the offence is committed either by speech, shouting or threats made in public places or meetings, or by posters displayed in public view or by any means fulfilling the condition of publicity, the penalty shall be increased to two to five years imprisonment and a fine of MAD 50,000-500,000 [USD 5,403-54,032 as of December 2025] or both (Law No. 73-15, 18 July 2016; Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Article 267-5).

Law No. 88-13 on the Press and Publishing contains provisions to protect public order (Law No. 88-13, 10 August 2016, Articles 71-74). These provisions apply when a publication, periodical or electronic newspaper causes harm to the Islamic religion, the monarchical regime or the kingdom's territorial integrity, or when the king or royal family are insulted (Law No. 88-13, 10 August 2016, Article 71). As a penalty for this offence, a court may order the suspension of a periodical publication or the blocking of an electronic newspaper or electronic medium (Law No. 88-13, 10 August 2016, Article 104). Furthermore, at the request of the public prosecutor or the relevant government authority, the president of the competent court of first instance may order the seizure of any issue of a periodical publication or the removal of journalistic content and block access to it in the case of an electronic newspaper (Law No. 88-13, 10 August 2016, Article 106).

3.5.3 Application of blasphemy laws

Several sources report on the case of activist Ibtissame Lachgar in 2025 (DW, 4 September 2025; HRW, 11 September 2025; The New Arab, 5 September 2025). Feminist activist Ibtissame Lachgar has been detained since 12 August 2025 and was prosecuted under Article 267-5 of the Moroccan Penal Code for causing harm to Islam. In July 2025 the activist posted a photograph of herself wearing a T-shirt bearing the words “Allah is lesbian” on a social media platform. The image was accompanied by a text describing Islam like any religious ideology as “fascist, phallocratic and misogynistic”. The post had provoked strong reactions on social networks, ranging from calls for her arrest to threats of rape and stoning (RTBF Actus, 27 August 2025; see also France 24, 27 August 2025; see also Le Monde, 4 September 2025). On 3 September 2025 Ibtissame Lachgar was sentenced to 30 months in prison and a fine of MAD 50,000 [USD 5,525 as of September 2025] by a Moroccan court. It is reported that the defence plans to appeal against the decision (Le Monde, 4 September 2025; HRW, 11 September 2025). According to Germany’s international broadcaster, Deutsche Welle (DW), during a court hearing Ibtissame Lachgar had “argued that the message on the T-shirt she wore was political and had no intention of offending Islam” (DW, 4 September 2025). The New Arab, a London-based news website covering Middle East and North Africa affairs, reports that although Ibtissame Lachgar met all the conditions for qualifying for a less severe, alternative sentence, this was not applied (The New Arab, 5 September 2025).

Incidents involving the application of blasphemy laws have been documented prior to the reporting period of this compilation. For example, on 15 August 2022, activist and blogger Fatima Karim was sentenced to a 24-month prison term and a fine under Article 267-5 of the Penal Code. The authorities found her satirical comments about a Quranic verse that she had posted on a social media platform to be insulting to Islam (Amnesty International, 14 October 2022, p. 1). Other convictions for insulting Islam involved Ikram Nazhi, Italian national of Moroccan origin, as well as movie actor Rafik Boubker in 2021 (USDOS, 2 June 2022, section II)

and Mohammad Awatif Kachchach, who was arrested in May 2020. Kachchach, an employee for the Youssoufia city council, was sentenced to six months in prison and a fine of MAD 3,000 [USD 311 as of July 2020] under Article 267-5 of the Penal Code for sharing a cartoon on a social media platform that that was considered to have insulted Islam. Kachchach's legal representative stated that a committee from the Moroccan General Directorate for Territorial Surveillance (End Blasphemy Laws, 28 July 2020), the Moroccan intelligence service responsible for internal intelligence (Bladi, 31 August 2025), had informed the judiciary about the caricature (End Blasphemy Laws, 28 July 2020).

3.5.4 Treatment of religious minorities

The global Christian organisation Open Doors, which is dedicated to support persecuted Christians, in a December 2024 report on Persecution Dynamics in Morocco explains the following regarding the relationship between the Moroccan state and religious minorities:

> "Morocco is keen to emphasize its track record on interfaith dialogue and co-existence. However, this discourse mainly focuses on the relationship between Moroccan Muslims and the tiny Moroccan Jewish community. […] Judaism is the only minority religion officially recognized in the Constitution and Jews have their own religious courts for family matters. Although Islam is the official religion of the state, only Sunni (Maliki) Islam is de facto socially acceptable." (Open Doors, December 2024, pp. 8, 24)

According to the USDOS June 2024 report, some minority religious groups have reported government-related difficulties with their registration requests. The law permits religious groups which are not recognized by the constitution to register as associations (USDOS, 26 June 2024, Executive Summary; section II). Registration as an association is required to access certain benefits, such as tax advantages or eligibility for land and building grants (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section II; see also section 3.5.1). Furthermore, "[t]he government restricted the distribution of non-Islamic religious materials as well as Islamic materials it deemed inconsistent with the Maliki school of Sunni Islam" (USDOS, 26 June 2024, Executive Summary). For legal aspects regarding religious minorities see section 3.5.1.

3.5.4.1 Shia Muslims

According to the CIA World Factbook, less than 0.1 percent of Moroccan Muslims follow the Shia branch of Islam (CIA, last updated 10 December 2025). As of July 2024, the MRG reports that there are no official statistics, "but Shi'a leaders estimate several thousand Shi'a citizens in Morocco, centred in the north of the country" (MRG, updated July 2024). In a December 2023 article, the Moroccan history magazine Zamane refers to Abdellah Rami, a specialist in religious movements. He explains that the Shiite community in Morocco does not count more than 8,000 followers (Zamane, 13 December 2023). A study conducted in 2021 by Matt Buehler, a senior fellow at the nonpartisan US-based institute the Baker School of Public Policy and Public Affairs, and Jonah Schulhofer-Wohl, a senior assistant professor of political science at Leiden University, reports that an estimated 2,000 to 8,000 Moroccans identify with the Shia branch of Islam, drawing upon sources from 2017 and 2019. These encompass both indigenous Moroccan Shiites and individuals who converted to Shia Islam while abroad (Buehler & Schulhofer-Wohl, 2021, p. 471).

The German think tank Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) notes that in Morocco, and other Maghreb states, "Shiite proselytising is attributed to Iran. Shiites are sometimes persecuted or at least viewed with suspicion" (SWP, April 2024, p. 6). Morocco severed ties with Iran in 2009 reportedly due to growing concerns about Shia proselytization. After restoring relations in 2014, Morocco cut ties with Iran again in 2018 amid accusations that Iran was supporting the Polisario Front in Western Sahara (Yabiladi, 2 July 2025b; MEE, 11 May 2018; see also AEI, 3 May 2018). The above-mentioned 2021 study by Matt Buehler and Jonah Schulhofer-Wohl found that around 59 per cent of Moroccans expressed prejudice against Moroccan Shia Muslims in a representative survey, feeling uncomfortable at the prospect of having one as a neighbour (Buehler & Schulhofer-Wohl, 2021, p. 463). The study also found a correlation between an opposition to Iran and prejudices against Shia-Muslims: "Respondents' views about Iran's role in regional international relations seem to carry over into their perceptions of fellow Moroccan citizens who follow Shi'ism" (Buehler & Schulhofer-Wohl, 2021, p. 482). Regarding the attitude of Morocco's government toward its Shiite citizens Buehler and Schulhofer-Wohl, based on several sources, note:

> "Generally speaking, Morocco's regime likely views its Shi'i citizens as a potential domestic political threat. They may be less likely to accept the king's divine right to rule over the citizenry as Commander of the Faithful (Amīr al-Mu'minīn), the cornerstone of the regime's claim to legitimate rule. More broadly, the regime may see them as 'endangering the Sunnite identity of the country' [...]. [T]he existence of Shi'ism has been perceived as a threat to the regime's capacity to sustain a 'Moroccan moral order' based on its control of official Sunni Islam. In part, this explains why legal Islamist movements – such as the Justice and Development Party (PJD) and smaller Salafist groups – that recognize the king's religious leadership have issued public statements and declarations to sensitize the public to the 'sectarian Shi'ite invasion' in Morocco. The regime has also moved to promote this anti-Shi'i discourse, using state television stations like 2M, Al Maghribia, and Al Aoula." (Buehler & Schulhofer-Wohl, 2021, p. 473)

When asked by ACCORD via email about the current situation of Shia Muslims in Morocco, in reference to the 2021 publication by Buehler and Schulhofer-Wohl, and whether there had been any significant developments since then, a published expert on religious communities in Morocco, who wishes to remain anonymous, responded the following to ACCORD:

> "There have been no significant developments in the situation of Shia Muslims in Morocco since 2021. They remain a small, marginalised group in the country who do not have the freedom to practise their Islamic faith freely." (Anonymous expert on religious groups in Morocco, email response to ACCORD, 27 October 2025)

The USDOS 2024 report on religious freedom in Morocco, covering 2023, notes that the government does not "allow Shia Muslim groups to register as associations" and therefore prevents them from observing their religion publicly. The report states that there were no known Shia prayer halls in Morocco and refers to Shia community members (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section II). Sources report that Shia Muslims keep their faith a secret (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section III; Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 15), especially "in areas where their numbers were smaller" (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section III) because they fear discrimination

(USDOS, 26 June 2024, section III; Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 15). Ashura, an important holiday for both Sunni and Shia Muslims (MEE, 12 July 2024), is observed privately by Shiites to avoid harassment (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section III). In many parts of Shia majority countries Ashura is celebrated or observed by marches and processions (MEE, 12 July 2024), but according to the UDSDOS June 2024 report "authorities allowed public Ashura processions for Sunni Muslims but forbade them for Shia Muslims" (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section III).
The 2024 USDOS publication on religious freedom reports on two cases of government action against Shia Muslims. In January 2023, according to press reports, an individual was arrested for attempting to convert his family to Shia Islam. He was convicted of "physical and domestic abuse against his family" and sentenced to imprisonment and a fine. The Court of Appeals later "increased the sentence to two years in prison and banned the individual for five years from seeing his family members identified as victims in the criminal complaint". In February 2023, a Saudi citizen of Shia faith was extradited to Saudi Arabia at the request of the Saudi government, despite concerns raised by more than twenty human rights organisations for his safety, including the risk of torture, due to his faith and his and his family's involvement in protests. Until the end of 2023 the family of the extradited "had not heard from him since his arrival in Saudi Arabia". The human rights organisations claimed that this extradition violated the UN refugee conventions, the Convention Against Torture, and other international agreements to which Morocco is a signatory (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section III).

3.5.4.2 Jews

Figures on the size of the Jewish community in Morocco vary between 1,500 (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section I) and 2,200 (World Christian Database, 3 November 2025[24]). The undated but apparently updated site of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) locates the largest part of the community, currently about 1,000 people, in Casablanca, and some smaller communities in Rabat (400), Marrakesh (250), Meknes (250), Tangier (150), Fez (150) and Tétouan (100).
According to the WJC, "Morocco has the largest remaining Jewish community in North Africa, dating back more than two millennia". At its peak in the 1940s and 1950s the Jewish community counted about 270,000 members (WJC, undated). During World War II, Morocco's Monarch Sultan Mohammed V protected the Jewish citizens of his country from the Nazis and the French Vichy collaborators. After Morocco's independence in 1956 the Sultan ensured equal rights for them (MWN, 27 January 2025). The community decreased in size following mass emigration due to political uncertainty, economic hardship and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 (WJC, undated). There are estimates that under a Zionist programme about half of the Jewish population of Morocco left the country in direction to Israel in the early 1960s (MEE, 3 August 2025).
The 2011 constitution recognizes the country's Hebrew influences as enrichment (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Preamble). Apart from Sunni Muslims "Jews are the only religious groups recognized in the constitution as native to the country" (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section II). Article 2 of Law No. 70-03, the Moroccan Family Code or "Moudawana", states that Moroccan Jews are not subject to its provisions; instead, they are governed by Hebraic Moroccan Family Law (Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016). The Jewish

[24] This figure has been confirmed by the editor of the World Christian Database by e-mail on 3 November 2025.

Personal Status Law contains provisions governing marriage, inheritance and other personal status matters, which are administered by Rabbinical authorities in Jewish family courts. While all other national schools, public or private, are required by law to teach Sunni Islam according to the Maliki-Ashari school of Islamic jurisprudence, private Jewish schools are exempt from this requirement (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section II). According to an August 2025 article in Middle East Eye (MEE), an independently funded digital news organisation covering the Middle East and North Africa, "in 2020, King Mohammed VI approved the rollout of education on Jewish history and culture in primary schools" (MEE, 3 August 2025). The USDOS annual report on religious freedom, covering 2023, notes that there is "[a] standardized curriculum" for elementary schools, which "places the teaching of Jewish culture within the context of both its contribution to Moroccan culture and as a global religion" (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section II). According to a December 2024 report by the global Christian organisation Open Doors, schoolbooks have been adapted in recent years and "many texts deemed offensive towards Christians and Jews have been removed". Open Doors adds that, nevertheless, there is no room for religious pluralism and questions whether the reforms imposed from above are supported at the grassroots level (Open Doors, December 2024, p. 14).

Several sources report on Morocco's support of the preservation and restoration of Jewish cemeteries (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section II; Atlantic Council, 2 December 2022; The Arab Weekly, 24 December 2024; WJC, undated) as well as synagogues (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section II) and Jewish shrines (Atlantic Council, 2 December 2022). In a December 2024 article, the independent English-language publication The Arab Weekly reports that 167 cemeteries have been restored with financial backing of the Moroccan government (The Arab Weekly, 24 December 2024).

In an October 2025 article, the Israeli English-language news website Ynetglobal reports on a "broader national effort to preserve Moroccan Jewish history" by Morocco's government (Ynetglobal, 26 October 2025). The article notes the following:

> "Morocco's Ministry of Youth, Culture and Communication has announced a plan to restore and convert the historic site of Dar Moulay Hachem in Demnat [Demnate is a town in central Morocco, east of Marrakesh, remark ACCORD] into a center dedicated to promoting Hebrew cultural heritage. […] Demnat, once home to a significant Jewish community, no longer has a Jewish population. However, its Alliance Israélite Universelle school remains standing, and the nearby Jewish cemetery was recently renovated with the help of Moroccan authorities. The new center will be situated adjacent to the cemetery." (Ynetglobal, 26 October 2025)

On Jewish infrastructure the WJC on its website on Morocco states:

> "There are synagogues, Mikvaot [pools of water for ritual baths, remark ACCORD] old-age homes, and kosher restaurants in Casablanca, Fez, Marrakesh, Mogador, Rabat, Tetuan, and Tangier. Moroccan Jews are known for making pilgrimages to the tombs of holy sages, and there are 13 such famous and ancient pilgrimage sites that are maintained by local Muslims. […] The Conseil des Communautés Israelites is headquartered in Casablanca, where it works both to coordinate domestic Jewish life and advocate for Jewish communal interests." (WJC, undated)

On the possibility to practice the Jewish religion freely, the USDOS publication reports:

> "Jewish citizens continued to state they lived and could attend services in synagogues in safety but were increasingly concerned about antisemitism after the October 7 Hamas terrorist attack on Israel[25]. They said they were able to visit religious sites regularly and to hold annual commemorations." (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section III)

In 2020, Morocco signed a normalisation agreement with Israel (MEE, 3 August 2025) and bilateral relations between the two countries resumed (Atlantic Council, 2 December 2022). However, tourism and commercial relations had already existed before the normalisation agreement (WJC, undated). Sources report that the normalisation agreement with Israel is opposed by Moroccan public opinion, and this sentiment has increased since the Hamas attack of 7 October 2023 and the subsequent Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, with the Moroccan public overtly supporting the Palestinian cause (MIPA, 15 August 2025; MEE, 3 August 2025). MEE reports that most Jews in Morocco keep a low political profile, however, many of them condemn Israeli actions. There is no reliable data on antisemitism in Morocco, according to MEE, but some Jews in interviews said that they perceived a rise in antisemitism (MEE, 3 August 2025).

3.5.4.3 Baha'i

The Baha'i community in Morocco is small and estimates of its size vary greatly. The June 2024 USDOS Report on International Religious Freedom, covering 2023, refers to estimates by leaders of the Baha'i faith community who speak of "350 to 400 members throughout the country" (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section I). According to the World Christian Database, an online resource compiling demographic and statistical data on religion, 40,000 Baha'is live in Morocco (World Christian Database, 3 November 2025[26]). In March 2025, the Moroccan media platform Marayana, which specialises in social, cultural, and political issues in Morocco and the Arab world, publishes two articles on the Baha'i community in Morocco (Marayana, 26 March 2025a; Marayana, 26 March 2025b). According to Marayana, there are no exact figures on the number of Moroccan Baha'is, because no statistics are available. One of the articles mentions that Baha'is are present in most major Moroccan cities, as well as in some rural areas. They do not live in closed communities but are involved in Moroccan society and identity (Marayana, 26 March 2025b). On 25 November 2025, the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office in Geneva (BIC Geneva), which represents the global Baha'i community at the UN and

[25] On 7 October 2023, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), in a coordinated operation, attacked Israel by land, sea and air from the Gaza Strip on a Jewish holiday marking the end of the thanksgiving festival Sukkot. About 1,200 people, mainly Israeli citizens, were killed in the attack and more than 240 people were taken hostage and brought into the Gaza Strip by at least 1,500 militants violently crossing into Israel (Encyclopaedia Britannica, last updated 31 October 2025, The October 7, 2023, attack).

[26] This figure has been confirmed by the editor of the World Christian Database by e-mail on 3 November 2025.

other international forums, provided information on the situation of the Baha'i community in Morocco in an email response to ACCORD. In this email response the BIC Geneva states:

> "There are several hundred Baha'is in Morocco, with the majority dwelling in the northern cities of Rabat, Casablanca, Tangiers, Meknes and Fez. This number is approximate because in the current context, it is difficult, for various reasons, to have an accurate count." (BIC Geneva, 25 November 2025)

On Baha'i Faith in Morocco the 2020 Freedom of Thought Report by Humanists International, an international NGO campaigning on humanist issues, notes that "Baha'ism is traditionally seen as a heretical deviation from Islam and its members are considered 'apostates'" and states that Baha'is have faced persecution since the 1960s (Humanists International, 22 October 2020). According to the website of the Moroccan Baha'i community, the Baha'i Faith in Morocco dates back to the early 1950s. The site reports on challenges faced by the Baha'i community since the early decades and mentions arrests, trials, convictions, imprisonments as well as societal discrimination during the 1960s and 1980s (Baha'i community of Morocco, undated; see also Marayana, 26 March 2025a). According to members of the Moroccan Baha'i community, the situation for Moroccan Baha'is has changed since and restrictions on religious minorities have decreased as Moroccan society is becoming more accepting of religious difference (Marayana, 26 March 2025a; MWN, 5 October 2017).

The 2024 USDOS report notes that "[m]embers of the Baha'i Faith said they were open about their faith with family, friends, and neighbors" (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section III). A Moroccan Baha'i and journalist told Marayana that "Baha'is practise their rituals and celebrate their holidays freely and spontaneously within their community". However, according to another Moroccan, in contrast to Baha'is in other countries, Moroccan Baha'is celebrate their holidays at home and not in public (Marayana, 26 March 2025a).

No Baha'i places of worship exist in Morocco and "the community would not be permitted to establish one" (BIC Geneva, 25 November 2025). As an unrecognised religious minority, the Baha'i community and its elected institutions, which, according to the BIC Geneva "play an essential role since the Baha'i Faith has no clergy" (BIC Geneva, 25 November 2025), face several restrictions:

> "As matters stand, the community is unable to open bank accounts, rent premises for meetings, or collaborate with municipal social service agencies or most other organizations of civil society. The legal vulnerability of the elected institutions is such that those responsible for the administration of community affairs could be subject at any time to criminal prosecution for such offenses as maintaining an office or receiving and managing funds." (BIC Geneva, 25 November 2025)

Marayana shares the stories of some Baha'is who talked about persistent stereotypes and discrimination and their "hope to have the right to civil marriage", as marriage "is still carried out exclusively according to Islamic law" (Marayana, 26 March 2025b). BIC Geneva also mentions that "the community and its members face restrictions and various forms of discrimination" (BIC Geneva, email response, 25 November 2025) and concludes:

> "In general, as an unrecognized religious minority in Morocco, the existence of the Bahá'í community is tolerated, provided that its members maintain a low profile, gathering in

private homes and minimizing outreach to non-members." (BIC Geneva, email response, 25 November 2025)

3.5.4.4 Christians

Due to a lack of statistical data, several sources only provide estimates of the number of Christians in Morocco. The fact that some Christians practice their faith in private challenges the accuracy of estimates (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section I). According to the World Christian Database, the estimated number of Christians in Morocco is 33,000, which corresponds to a percentage of 0,1 of the Moroccan total population of 38,211,000 (World Christian Database, 3 November 2025[27]). Freedom House provides estimates of a total of 50,000 Christians in Morocco (Freedom House, 2024, section D2).

Sources distinguish between "expatriate" (MEC, 8 February 2016) or "foreign" Christians (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section I; Reuters, 8 June 2018) and "Moroccan" (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section I; Reuters, 8 June 2018; MEC, 8 February 2016) "native" Christians (Reuters, 8 June 2018), or Christian "citizens" (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section; Reuters, 8 June 2018), respectively. Estimates of the number of non-citizen Christians vary between 5,000 and 40,000 (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section I; ICN, 17 July 2020; MEC, 8 February 2016). The largest expatriate Christian community in Morocco is Roman Catholic (Open Doors, December 2024, p. 8). According to foreign resident Christian leaders cited in the USDOS June 2024 report, it consists of at least 30,000 people. Around 10,000 belong to Protestant, and around 3,000 to Greek and Russian Orthodox denominations (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section I).

Estimates of the number of Christian citizens in Morocco vary between 1,500 and 25,000 (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section I; ICN, 17 July 2020; MEC, 8 February 2016). Reuters refers in an article from 2018 to local community leaders giving a figure of 50,000 native Christians (Reuters, 8 June 2018). According to the cultural anthropologist Ayad Ablal as well as Middle East Concern (MEC), an association of Christian agencies and individuals that seeks to promote freedom of religion or belief in the Middle East and North Africa region, many of the Christian citizens belong to Amazigh communities (Ablal, 6 November 2018; MEC, 8 February 2016).

According to the World Council of Churches (WCC), a fellowship of churches from different countries worldwide, Roman Catholicism was introduced by the French and Spanish colonisers in the early 20th century and is still practised by their descendants (WCC, undated (a)). The Coptic Orthodox Church, the Anglican Church and the French Protestant Church, along with the Roman Catholic Church, existed in Morocco prior to the country's independence in 1956 (Open Doors, December 2024, p. 8). Today, the Evangelical Church of Morocco is the largest Protestant community in the country, which is still related to the Reformed Church in France (WCC, undated (a)). The USDOS report covering 2023 states that many of today's non-Moroccan Christians immigrated from sub-Saharan Africa (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section I). They often belong to Pentecostal communities (Open Doors, December 2024, p. 9). Other non-citizen Christians are residents whose families have settled in the country generations ago. Most non-Moroccan Christians in the country live in urban areas in Casablanca, Marrakesh, Tangier and Rabat. Among them are Anglican communities in Rabat, Casablanca and Tangier, a

[27] This figure has been confirmed by the editor of the World Christian Database by e-mail on 3 November 2025.

small Greek Orthodox community in Casablanca and a small Russian Orthodox community in Rabat (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section I).

Christian churches can officially register with the Moroccan government as associations (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section II; see section 3.5.4), which are organised under the Council of Christian Churches in Morocco (Conseil des Eglises Chrétiennes au Maroc, CECM), subject to the acceptance of the Council (WCC, undated (b)). As listed by WCC, the Council's member churches include the Anglican Church in Morocco, the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Church in Morocco, the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria and the Russian Orthodox Church (WCC, undated (b); see also MEC, 8 February 2016; USDOS, 26 June 2024, section II). The Moroccan Association of Protestant Churches (Association Marocaine des Églises Protestantes, AMEP)[28] was established later, and its member churches are also recognised, although their licences must be regularly renewed (MEC, 8 February 2016). The United Nations' Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance reported after her visit to Morocco in December 2018 that some Christian communities faced difficulties in the recognition process or were being denied official status (HRC, 28 May 2019, p. 16).

Unofficial house churches serve Moroccan Christians as an alternative to recognized churches (ICN, 17 July 2020; MEC, 8 February 2016). Open Doors reports that between October 2023 und September 2024, Moroccan police arrested and questioned Moroccan Christians about their activities on a regular basis and forced several Christian house churches to stop meeting. According to Open Doors, Christian immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa are generally marginalized and discriminated against, and, therefore, usually practice their faith in private house churches as well (Open Doors, December 2024, p. 8-9). By contrast, Africanews states in an article from March 2022 that sub-Saharan Christian migrants "are free to worship in churches" (Africanews, 22 March 2022). In June 2025, authorities in Casablanca started to take action against unlicensed house churches (Hespress, 20 June 2025; Morocco24.info, 20 June 2025) "to halt the illegal use of certain private spaces being transformed into churches without legal authorization" (Morocco24.info, 20 June 2025).

Personal status issues in Morocco are governed by Islamic law (Elgoumri, 31 October 2023). Since Christian churches have no jurisdiction over personal status issues in Morocco, Christians must refer to Sharia courts regarding matters of personal status (MEC, 8 February 2016), including marriage (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section II; see also ECLJ, March 2021, p. 4; Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 8). Civil marriage does not exist in Morocco (ECLJ, March 2021, p. 4; see section 3.5.1). Interfaith marriages between Christians and Muslims are only permitted between a Muslim man and a Christian woman (Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016, Article 39; USDOS, 26 June 2024, section II). As conversion to Christianity is not legally recognised in Morocco (Reuters, 31 March 2019; Ablal, 6 November 2018), female converts cannot marry a Christian man unless they marry a Moroccan Christian via an Islamic marriage or a foreign Christian who officially converts to Islam before the wedding (Open Doors, December 2024, pp. 14; 15).

[28] "This association is a grouping of autonomous protestant church communities around the country, which are not part of the historically recognised national protestant church, the Eglise Evangélique au Maroc." (Rabat International Church, undated)

In state schools, Children from Moroccan Christian families are taught in the compulsory subject Islamic religious education. Some private schools allow them to skip the Islamic classes, but private schooling is often expensive (Open Doors, December 2024, p. 14). In contrast, there exist private Christian elementary and high schools in Morocco that Muslim students also attend reportedly because of their high educational quality (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section III).
Since Article 220 of the Penal Code criminalizes proselytization (Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Article 220), both Moroccan and foreign Christians who talk to others about their faith risk criminal prosecution and arrest. As outlined by Open Doors, the government monitors the activities of "advocates for the rights of Christians" (Open Doors, December 2024, p. 7). According to Open Doors, several cases have been reported of non-Moroccan Christians being banned from entering the country or being refused entry because they were allegedly involved in proselytising (Open Doors, December 2024, p. 8). Other sources corroborating information on Moroccan Christian converts regarding entry bans or being refused entry within the reporting period could not be found within the time constraints of this report.
Moroccan Christians (HRC, 18 August 2022, p. 3), particularly converts, do not enjoy the same freedom of religion as foreign Christians (ICN, 17 July 2020; MRG, 31 March 2022, p. 2; Open Doors, December 2024, p. 9) and are even discouraged to attend churches of foreign Christian communities (ICN, 17 July 2020). Christian organizations that are composed of Moroccans are not allowed to perform marriage and funeral services USDOS, 26 June 2024, section II). As stated in reports by USDOS and Open Doors, Moroccan Christians are not permitted to hold Christian names or to be buried in Christian cemeteries (Open Doors, December 2024, p. 14; USDOS, 26 June 2024, section II). Furthermore, they are not permitted to establish new churches. Of the 44 registered churches operating, all belong to foreign Christian communities that hold religious services there without restriction (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section II). Many Moroccan Christians, particularly Christian converts, practice their faith in secret (MWN, 16 April 2024; USDOS, 26 June 2024, section III), for fear of social stigmatization as well as state surveillance, or even conceal it (MRG, 31 March 2022, p. 2; see also ICN, 17 July 2020; USDOS, 26 June 2024, sections II-III; MEC, 8 February 2016). As Ayad Ablal states in his paper from November 2018, conversion to Christianity is considered taboo (Ablal, 6 November 2018).
According to a Christian couple living in Rabat, Moroccans who convert to Christianity might be affected by social pressure and harassment (Reuters, 8 June 2018). According to Open Doors, Moroccan Christian converts face additional pressure and exclusion from their families (Open Doors, December 2024, pp. 7-9). The USDOS report covering 2023, mentions young converts, who still lived with their Muslim families and kept their faith secret out of fear of being expelled from their homes (USDOS, 26 June 2024, section III). According to Open Doors, families might pressure especially young female converts to marry a Muslim or to relocate against their will. Also, mental and physical abuse by family members is reported. Women may be divorced or lose custody of their children as a consequence of their conversion (Open Doors, December 2024, pp. 7-8, 13-15). Other sources corroborating information on Moroccan Christian converts regarding forced marriage, abuse, divorce or loss of custody for children could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

3.6 Situation of women and girls

3.6.1 Discrimination against women and girls

The 2011 Moroccan Constitution guarantees equality between men and women and prohibits all forms of discrimination, affirming the supremacy of ratified international conventions over domestic law. It includes 18 provisions related to women's rights. The preamble enshrines equality, dignity, freedom, and the prohibition of – amongst others – gender-based discrimination (EuroMed Rights, March 2023, p. 3; see also Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011). Morocco ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993 but expressed reservations to some Articles (ESCWA, 2024, p. 1). Morocco also acceded to the Optional Protocol in 2015, however, the "convention is still not adequately implemented", according to EuroMed Rights, a network of human rights organisations (EuroMed Rights, March 2023, p. 3). In its annual report covering 2023, the USDOS writes the following regarding discrimination of women:

> "Despite antidiscrimination laws provided by the constitution, women consistently faced legal inequities. Without legal protections and enforcement of these rights, societal discrimination persisted. Long-standing traditions dictated preferential access to education, health care, and other social services to citizens and certain legal residents when factoring in race, class, sexuality, religion, and disability. Women with physical and mental disabilities could be excluded from education and aid. Whether documented or undocumented, non-Muslim sub-Saharan migrants and refugees were subject to further discrimination." (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6)

In April 2024, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, a German government-funded foundation provides the following overview on women's rights in Morocco:

> "In a regional comparison, Morocco is one of the countries with the most progressive legal systems for women. They enjoy equal access to all functions in political and economic life, at least in legal terms. Although there is anything but parity in management positions, there are numerous female CEOs [Chief Executive Officers], ministers and heads of authorities. A quarter of the parliament is female and a woman has just taken over the office of mayor of the capital Rabat from another woman. Women of legal age have no guardian, enjoy freedom to travel, freedom to choose their profession and can run for all political offices. These supposedly trivial rights cannot be taken for granted in the Arabic-speaking world. In civil and criminal law, however, numerous discriminations and disadvantages against women persist, which are deeply rooted not only in the legal system but also in society." (Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, 9 April 2024)

According to EuroMed Rights, as of 2023, national legislation affecting women's rights were "still not harmonised with Morocco's international commitments" (EuroMed Rights, March 2023, p. 3). Article 19 of the Constitution guarantees equality between men and women in civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights and freedoms (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Article 19; ESCWA, 2024, p. 1). The Criminal Code defines discrimination broadly, covering factors such as sex, marital status, health, disability, or political opinion. However, according to the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

(ESCWA), "there is no normative legislative framework prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination against women" (ESCWA, 2024, p. 1).
EuroMed Rights provides the following information in March 2023 on "[d]e facto discrimination" regarding civil and familial rights:

> "The codes governing civil rights (family code, nationality code, penal code) continue to discriminate against women. Their discriminatory provisions are in contradiction with the spirit of the 2011 Constitution and with Morocco's international commitments. For the effectiveness of women's rights in Morocco, these codes must be subject to a comprehensive reform, giving priority to the Family Code. The provisions of the latter are discriminatory for both women and children, which subjects them (mainly in disadvantaged areas) to a condition of high precariousness. As for the Penal Code, it remains marked by a patriarchal and discriminatory vision in its philosophy, structure and provisions." (EuroMed Rights, March 2023, p. 7)

Morocco ranks 137th out of 148 nations in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report for 2025 (WEF, 11 June 2025, p. 271). MWN notes that "Morocco's very low rankings expose a grim reality for women, with little to no sign of improvement" (MWN, 17 June 2025). In October 2025, Afrobarometer, a Ghana-based survey research network, reported that "[s]urvey findings in Morocco suggest that women continue to face discrimination, harassment, and barriers in various facets of life, both public and private" (Afrobarometer, 28 October 2025).

3.6.1.1 Education

Regarding educational attainment, Morocco ranks 114th out of 148 nations in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report for 2025, up from place 118 in 2024 (WEF, 11 June 2025, p. 271).
A report by the Gender Equity Unit from April 2023 mentions that "[w]omen and girls in Morocco face unequal access to education, delayed preschool education, persistent illiteracy, low school retention, chronic deficits in higher education, and an overall lack of quality education" (Gender Equity Unit, April 2023, p. 4). Simultaneously, in December 2024, MWN reports that women's illiteracy rate dropped from 42.1 per cent in 2014 to 32.4 per cent in 2024. Regarding school enrolment and education levels of adults, the article notes the following:

> "The enrollment of children aged 6 to 11 in school also increased from 94.5% to 95.8%. This growth is especially noticeable among girls in rural areas, where the rate of school attendance for girls in this age group rose from 93.9% to 95.9%. Overall, the number of girls attending school in Morocco has increased from 90% to 95.1%. […] The education levels of adults have also improved. […] However, there remains a gender gap, as 45.7% of men aged 25 or above have at least a high school education, compared to 32.7% of women." (MWN, 23 December 2024)

Regarding adult illiteracy, an August 2024 article by The Independent provides the following information:

> "Figures recently disclosed by Professor Abdelouadoud Kharbouch, Director of the Moroccan National Agency for the Fight against Illiteracy, indicate that the number of beneficiaries of literacy programmes during 2023 reached more than one million people. In addition, over 9 million people have enrolled in literacy programmes since 2014, with 85 per cent being women and 65 per cent hailing from villages and desert regions. […]
>
> Mahjoub Adriush, researcher in education and training systems, acknowledges Morocco's efforts in combating illiteracy. The country's illiteracy rate was around 70 per cent in 1982, dropping to 43.2 per cent in 2004, with World Bank statistics from 2021 showing it had fallen to 24 per cent. […] Adriush further noted that the third indicator revolved around women's education, whether in terms of non-attendance or dropout rates. These challenges stand as significant obstacles for the country in its efforts to eradicate illiteracy." (The Independent, 7 August 2024)

An article published on or after 25 March 2023[29] states that "many children, particularly those in rural areas, do not have access to education." Girls are particularly affected, as numerous families opt to keep their daughters at home to assist with domestic tasks or arrange early marriages for them (Bagration-Gruzinski, undated; see also High Atlas Foundation, 27 May 2019). According to the Education Minister cited by MWN in April 2025, "nearly 280,000 students abandon school each year, with 160,000 dropping out at the middle school level" (MWN, 30 April 2025). A study published in January 2025 (see Ibourk, Aomar & Raoui, Soukaina, 15 January 2025) "explored the specific factors and obstacles contributing to school dropout" in Morocco. The study identified "polygamous family structures, which remain prevalent in certain regions, as one of the factors associated with higher dropout rates" (Yabiladi, 29 January 2025). UNICEF notes in July 2025 that unfavourable social norms, poor management of menstrual hygiene, lack of motivating activities or geographical distance were identified as specific causes of girls dropping out (UNICEF, 16 July 2025). An analysis by researchers of Hassan I University in Settat, on the impact of gender inequalities on education in Morocco, published in May 2024 adds that "[t]raditional gender roles often assign girls domestic responsibilities, limiting their access to formal education. As a result, girls' enrollment rates remain lower than those of boys, especially in rural areas" (Alami Chentoufi et al., 10 May 2024, pp. 20-21). The authors also mention that "[e]conomic constraints pose a significant barrier to girls' education in Morocco, resulting in higher dropout rates compared to boys" (Alami Chentoufi et al., 10 May 2024, p. 21).
In October 2025, the education minister reportedly outlined a plan to curb school dropout rates. An article by Hespress notes:

> "The minister also addressed infrastructure challenges contributing to dropout rates, particularly among girls. 'The absence of sanitary facilities is a real issue,' Berrada said. 'When girls reach a certain age, parents often pull them out of school if proper facilities

[29] The article lists 25 March 2023 as access date in its bibliography.

> are lacking. It may seem minor, but it's a serious problem we must fix urgently.'" (Hespress, 14 October 2025)

According to an Afrobarometer survey[30] published in October 2025, four in ten respondents said "women and girls frequently experience sexual harassment in public spaces, including schools" (Afrobarometer, 28 October 2025).

3.6.1.2 Access to health care

Regarding health and survival, Morocco ranks 136th out of 148 nations in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report for 2025, down from place 131 in 2024 (WEF, 11 June 2025, p. 271). MWN notes that this position points "to persisting issues with access to care and life expectancy" (MWN, 17 June 2025).

Regarding maternal and child health services, an April 2025 article by the World Bank provides the following overview:

> "Over the last few decades, Morocco has made considerable progress in reducing maternal, neonatal, and child mortality rates and improving key maternal and child health and nutrition indicators. However, important gaps remain between rural and urban areas. In rural areas, maternal mortality rates are two and a half times higher than in urban areas (111 versus 45 deaths per 100,000 live births). Similarly, infant mortality is 37 percent higher in rural areas: 26 deaths per thousand live births in rural areas versus 19 in urban areas. […] While access to essential maternal and child health services has improved considerably in Morocco over the last few decades, it remains low in rural areas. Almost all women in urban areas – 96 percent - give birth in a health facility, compared with 73.4 percent in rural areas. The stunting rate for children under 5 is 20.5 percent in rural areas compared to 10.4 percent in urban areas. The lack of proximity to health centers and geographical obstacles can explain these access problems. […] In this context, the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, and UNICEF piloted a new Community Health Model in 2022 to help improve maternal and child health and nutrition in rural areas. The pilot program has been deployed in three priority regions (Beni Mellal-Khenifra, Draa-Tafilalet, and Marrakech-Safi), covering 14 provinces and 56 rural health centers. […] Today, in its pilot phase, this community health program has reached around 285,000 beneficiaries (women and children, between January 2023 and December 2024) who have been referred to maternal and child health and nutrition services." (World Bank, 29 April 2025)

In its March 2023 report, EuroMed Rights notes "palpable progress" in terms of health-related discrimination. However, the report also states the following:

> "[…] women, especially poor and/ or rural women, face many obstacles in accessing health care. The main indicators relating to reproductive health remain below those recorded by

[30] "The Afrobarometer team in Morocco, led by Global for Survey and Consulting (GSC), interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult citizens of Morocco in February 2024." (Afrobarometer, 28 October 2025, p. 2)

countries at a comparable level of development. The proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel remains low, while the maternal mortality rate remains among the highest in the Arab region." (EuroMed Rights, March 2023, p. 8)

Regarding sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, in August 2024, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) refers to a study (see Bermime, Y. & Benzidan, M., 15 September 2022, p. 405) and notes that 26.6 per cent of women surveyed[31] in Morocco said they had engaged in premarital sex. IDRC elaborates:

> "Yet unmarried women and girls cannot access family planning products and services, given that premarital sex is prohibited under Article 490 of the country's Penal Code. As a result, contraceptives are difficult to obtain, leading to unwanted pregnancies and unsafe, illegal abortions, infanticide or child abandonment. Unmarried pregnant women and girls offer but one example of women in vulnerable situations who face significant challenges accessing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services in Morocco. Migrant women are even more at risk; they face discrimination and have little or no access to SRH services. Gaps in the health-care system, religious beliefs, discrimination and the criminalization of premarital sex all contribute to gender inequalities that overwhelmingly leave women and girls at risk. Periodic backlash against migrant populations puts migrant women at even higher risk." (IDRC, 1 August 2024)

3.6.1.3 Access to employment

Regarding economic participation, Morocco ranks 143rd out of 148 nations in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report for 2025, down from place 141 in 2024 (WEF, 11 June 2025, p. 271). MWN notes that "women face significant barriers to decent jobs and career progression" (MWN, 17 June 2025).

According to EuroMed Rights, the Moroccan Labour Code "is the result of many years of struggle for women's rights in the workplace" (EuroMed Rights, March 2023, p. 6). The organisation provides the following overview on the code's regulations regarding women's rights:

> "The preamble stipulates that the law guarantees equal pay, prohibits discrimination in employment and any measure aimed at undermining the stability of employees at work, including on the grounds of maternity or pregnancy. Article 9 confirms and completes the preamble, enshrining the principle of equality between men and women by prohibiting any discrimination against employees on the basis of sex, which has the effect of violating or altering the principle of equal opportunities or equal treatment in employment or in the exercise of a profession. Specific reference is made to discrimination with regard to recruitment, the conduct and distribution of work, vocational training, salary, promotion, the granting of social benefits, disciplinary measures and dismissal. Article 172 lifts the ban on night work for women, thereby repealing a long-standing form of discrimination against women. Concerning protective measures for pregnant women, Article 152 has increased

[31] The survey used questionnaires on social media in March 2019, resulting in 366 respondents (186 females and 180 males) (Bermime, Y. & Benzidan, M., 15 September 2022, p. 404).

> the duration of leave from 12 to 14 weeks, unless more favourable provisions exist. In addition, women have the right to rest during work (Article 161) and to a special room for breastfeeding (Article 162). Furthermore, the employer may not terminate the employment contract of an employee because of pregnancy or complications related to pregnancy (Article 159). Finally, Article 346 enshrines equal pay for both sexes for work of equal value." (EuroMed Rights, March 2023, p. 6; see also Law No. 65-99, 11 September 2003)

Morocco's national unemployment rate dropped to 12.8 per cent in the second quarter of 2025, compared to 13.1 per cent in the corresponding quarter of the previous year. The unemployment rate among women rose to 19.9 per cent, an increase from 17.7 per cent in the previous year (HCP, last update 3 November 2025, p. 3). An MWN article published in August 2025 reports the same numbers and notes that the decline "masks deep inequalities between urban and rural areas, men and women, and different regions" (MWN, 4 August 2025).
A study conducted by Morocco's national statistical institution High Commission for Planning (Haut-Commissariat au Plan, HCP) on women's participation in the Moroccan labour market notes that the labour force participation rate of women fell from 28.1 per cent in 2000 to 19 per cent in 2023, remaining well below that of men (69 per cent in 2023) (HCP, March 2024, p. 1). The results reveal "that the traditional distribution of social roles between the sexes and family responsibilities within the household (assigned socially more to women than to men) profoundly influence women's participation in the labour market". Overall, women have a 73 per cent probability of inactivity, much higher than that of men, estimated at 7.5 per cent. This disparity is even more pronounced among married women, whose probability of being inactive reaches 81.9 per cent (compared to 3.1 per cent for married men), and among young women aged 25 to 34, with a probability of 79.4 per cent (compared to 3.3 per cent for young men) (HCP, March 2024, p. 4). Education is described as a key factor influencing female inactivity. Thus, individuals without a degree have the highest probability of inactivity, with significant differences between men (6.8 per cent) and women (80.8 per cent). Regarding regional distribution, women in the Laayoune-Sakia El Hamra region are the most exposed to inactivity, with a probability of 87 per cent (HCP, March 2024, p. 5). Similarly, in March 2023, EuroMed Rights reported the following:

> "In terms of employment, despite the progress in women's education, Morocco lags far behind in terms of women's participation in the labour market. The jobs held by women are generally precarious and informal. Women are over-represented as family helpers and in unpaid jobs, and under-represented as employers and among the self-employed. […] The reconciliation of private and professional life is also an obstacle." (EuroMed Rights, March 2023, p. 8)

In April 2023, the Gender Equity Unit, funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies, also provides information on female labour force participation noting the following:

> "In a question assessing the level of agreement on the thought that 'men should have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce,' 75% of men and 47% of women agreed; and 35.6% of men disagreed with the statement that 'women can work outside home if she wishes.' These traditional attitudes and beliefs may restrict female employment

> opportunities, preventing women from joining the labor force." (Gender Equity Unit, April 2023, p. 4)[32]

According to the aforementioned Afrobarometer survey, women "are far less likely to have paying jobs" compared to men, and "[t]hree in 10 respondents report that families prevent women from taking jobs" (Afrobarometer, 28 October 2025).

According to the USDOS, the "law required equal pay for equal work, although in practice this often did not occur" (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6). Another report by the HCP, also published in March 2024, mentions a gender wage gap in Morocco, estimated at around 22 per cent. The gap is divided into two components. The first, referred to as the explained gap ("écart expliqué"), accounts for roughly 9 per cent and reflects differences in human capital, such as education level and vocational training. The second portion, about 91 per cent, represents the unexplained gap, attributed to gender-based discrimination within the labour market. This gender discrimination arises both from an advantage in favour of men (46 per cent of the total gap) and a disadvantage affecting women (45 per cent). Discrimination is particularly pronounced among lower-paid workers. For the 60 per cent of employees with the lowest wages, 93 per cent of the pay gap results from discriminatory factors, and among the 40 per cent of higher earners, 79 per cent of the gap is linked to discrimination (HCP, 8 March 2024, p. 6; see also Medias24, 8 March 2024).

3.6.1.4 Inheritance

The USDOS writes the following in its annual human rights report covering 2023:

> "While the constitution guaranteed women the same rights and protections as men in civil, political, economic, cultural, and environmental affairs, laws favored men in property and inheritance. […] Women were legally entitled to a share of inherited property, but a woman's share of inheritance was generally half of what a man would receive. A sole male heir would receive the entire estate, while a sole female heir would receive one-half of the estate with the rest going to other relatives." (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6)

The Fund for Global Human Rights, a charity funding human rights activists, organizations, and movements in more than 90 countries, notes that "Morocco's personal status and family law—the Moudawana[33]—is a legal code that regulates everything from marriage and divorce to inheritance and child custody." The organisation further notes:

> "Since being rewritten in 2004, it has been hailed as one of the most progressive family laws in the Arab world. But implementation of the revised code has left much to be desired, and gender inequality remains entrenched in Moroccan law and society—from widespread child marriage to deeply unequal inheritance rights. […] The law […] entitles women to less inheritance. Female heirs receive half as much inheritance as male heirs, and widows or

[32] The data was extracted from World Values Survey 2011, and averages of the Arab Barometer 2006-2009, 2012-2014, 2016-2017 (Lopez-Acevedo et al., March 2021, pp. 28-29).

[33] See Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016, https://www.refworld.org/legal/legislation/natlegbod/2004/fr/101704

> only daughters must share their inheritance with distant male relatives of their deceased husband or father." (Fund for Global Human Rights, 29 August 2024)

An article published in June 2025 by the Columbia Political Review of the Columbia University notes the following regarding the effects of the 2004 reform in practice:

> "Nearly 20 years later, it has become clear that the reforms were more symbolic than transformative. An idiomatic Arabic phrase حبر على ورق, transliterated as hbr ala-waraq in Moroccan Darija, means 'ink on paper.' The phrase is used to describe something that appears good on paper, but has no tangible effect in practice—an apt reflection of the kind of experience women are having with the Moudawana. Without actual enforcement or accountability, the law is merely decor. And where enforcement fails, judicial enforcement fills the gap—often reinforcing the very patriarchal norms the law claimed to dismantle in the first place. The Moudawana falls short in two central ways: its hollow implementation and the unchecked authority of judges who undermine it. Currently, the Moudawana is simply a gesture towards equality with nothing to show." (Sullivan, 10 June 2025)

In 2023, King Mohammed VI stated that he had instructed the government to undertake another revision of the Moudawana (Sullivan, 10 June 2025), after "several campaigns and advocacy calling for reforms in the country's inheritance laws" (MWN, 26 September 2023; see also Navanti Group, 15 January 2019). In December 2024, the justice minister presented proposed changes to the country's family code, including "reforms on marriage age, legal guardianship, polygamy, divorce procedures, alimony, property transfer, custody, and inheritance" (MWN, 25 December 2024; see also MWN, 24 December 2024). Regarding the planned amendments, Medfeminiswiya, a feminist network active in the Mediterranean region, reports the following in January 2025:

> "This reform has been long-awaited and follows the landmark 2004 reform. It reflects the social developments of the last 20 years in Morocco. Below are the main points.
>
> […] on the question of inheritance, Islamic laws continue to apply. However, during their lifetime, men will be able to make whatever gifts they wish to their daughters. For the first time, such donations will also make it possible to bequeath property to a non-Muslim wife and to children adopted under the kafala system. In the event of the husband's death, the wife will be entitled to keep the marital home: it will be impossible to evict a widowed woman from her home, regardless of the inheritance." (Medfeminiswiya, 23 January 2025)

A November 2025 article by MWN indicates that the reform process is still ongoing, as Justice Minister Abdellatif Ouahbi reportedly pushed for the Family Code reform. The article notes that the reform process is "expected to bring major legal and social changes, especially concerning women's rights, child custody, and post-divorce conditions" (MWN, 4 November 2025).
Regarding women's rights to inheritance of land ESCWA notes that before parliament passing laws to regulate the so- called dynastic lands in 2019 those rights were infringed upon (ESCWA, 2024, p. 3). ESCWA provides the following information:

> "Tribes and village circles termed 'dynasties' used to apply laws based on outdated customs that included depriving many women of the 'dynasties' of their share of the

> inheritance. Law No. 62.17[34] includes provisions that clearly stipulate the principle of equality. According to article 6 thereof: 'members of family groups, male and female, can enjoy the use of the property of the group to which they belong'." (ESCWA, 2024, p. 3)

An article by NuJINHA – a news agency founded by Sweden-based Women's Media Culture Foundation – published in November 2025, mentions "invisible forms of violence" with the most prominent of these being inheritance discrimination (see also Arab Land Initiative, undated). The article also mentions land rights and further states:

> "Despite legal reforms, women face significant challenges in accessing collective tribal lands—ancestral communal lands that form the backbone of rural economic life and a primary source of family income. In most cases, these lands are traditionally managed by men, while women are denied ownership or usufruct rights, despite their daily contributions to agricultural work. Under pressure from women's and human rights movements, Morocco adopted legal reforms allowing women to benefit from collective lands. […] Nevertheless, most women have yet to benefit from this law. Data reveal a significant gap between legal texts and field reality; according to unofficial estimates, women in Morocco own no more than 2.5% of arable agricultural land. […] As part of recent legal reforms, Morocco adopted Law No. 62-17 concerning the administrative supervision of collective tribal lands and their communal properties. This law guarantees women the right to benefit from collective lands and to participate in representative bodies of the community on an equal footing with men. The law aims to reduce the historical discrimination that deprived women of these essential economic resources. […] However, practical challenges remain: many women face difficulties in registering or benefiting from communal lands due to tribal customs, practices of some local officials, and the 'residency' criterion used to determine community membership. Human rights reports indicate that the law's implementation still varies across communities, highlighting the gap between legal rights and field reality. Thus, this reform constitutes a partial victory for women in collective land management: it grants legal equality, yet also underscores the need to monitor implementation and ensure women genuinely access these resources, transforming legal equality into real economic empowerment." (NuJINHA, 19 November 2025)

3.6.1.5 Child custody

Although co-parenting is encouraged during married life, it does not continue in the event of marital breakdown. Article 164 stipulates that custody of the child is shared by the father and mother as long as the marriage remains intact (Chekrouni & Saad Jaldi, March 2024, p. 12; see also Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016, Article 164). In the event of divorce, priority custody (*hadana*) is given to the mother, then to the father, then to the child's

[34] See Law No. 62-17 on administrative supervision of ethnic communities and the management of their property [Loi n° 62-17 relative à la tutelle administrative sur les collectivités ethniques et la gestion de leurs biens], 9 August 2019, https://www.sgg.gov.ma/BO/FR/2873/2023/BO_7258_Fr.pdf. For further details please also see: Gagné, Marie: Morocco - Context and Land Governance, Land Portal Foundation (Ed.), 15 July 2024, https://landportal.org/book/narratives/2024/morocco

maternal grandmother. Failing that, the court decides in the best interests of the child. (Chekrouni & Saad Jaldi, March 2024, p. 12; see also Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016, Articles 163, 171). Article 231 establishes the father as the default legal guardian. However, according to Article 236, if the father is unable to fulfil this role, it is the mother's responsibility to look after the urgent interests of her children (Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016, Articles 231, 236). Mothers are obligated under the Family Code to provide for the family, when the father is wholly or partially unable to provide for his children and the mother has sufficient resources (Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016, Article 199). According to Nouzha Chekrouni and Abdessalam Saad Jaldi from Moroccan think-tank the Policy Center for the New South (PCNS), the financial responsibility incumbent on mothers under Article 199 of the Family Code is not matched by any legal provision granting them automatic legal guardianship (*niyaba shar'iya*) of their children. Regarding alimony, mothers may decide not to divorce, or even accept poor living conditions, because they are unable to provide for their children, knowing that Article 198 of the Family Code states that it is the father's responsibility to provide for his children until they reach the age of majority or, for those continuing their studies, until they reach the age of 25 (Chekrouni & Saad Jaldi, March 2024, p. 12; see also Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016, Article 198).

According to an older report by Mounira M. Charrad from the University of Texas at Austin, the 2004 reforms "give women priority in custody rights, even upon re-marriage or relocation." The author elaborates:

> "Unlike the Mudawwana of 1957-58, the new reforms give women priority in custody rights, even upon re-marriage or relocation. While the father remains the legal guardian of his child even when a mother might be the physical custodian on a day to day basis, children of both sexes can choose a custodian at the age of fifteen (previously, sons remained with a mother until puberty, whereas daughters remained with a mother until marriage) […] Importantly, the 2004 reforms depend greatly on the willingness of judges to arbiter marriage, divorce, and custody to an unprecedented degree (Zoglin 2009). Because the Mudawwana now includes substantial ambiguity with regard to enforcement, responsibility lies with a judge to divide assets, provide mediation, prevent unnecessary polygamy, uphold prenuptial agreements, and ensure that custody decisions are made in the best interests of children. The reforms, though they were designed to achieve greater equality in the family, only protect women and children insofar as they are implemented by the judiciary. Several obstacles prevent women from fully exercising their hard-won rights, but women's advocates continue to promote awareness among ordinary Moroccans." (Charrad, 2012, pp. 8-9)

In June 2025, Kaitlyn Sullivan in her article published by the Columbia Political Review also mentions "unchecked authority of judges" and writes the following:

> "Take divorced mothers in Morocco, for instance, who, under the reformed code, are granted the ability to gain custody of their children. Yet, women report being unable to obtain passports for their children, open individual bank accounts, or approve school transfers without their ex-husband's permission, regardless of whether they have court orders granting primary custody. In many cases, officials at schools and banks refuse to

> honor these orders unless the father is present, exemplifying how legal rights are completely undermined by weak state enforcement. Legal custody can only mean so much under the constraints of a system where guardianship (wilaya) continues to default to the father, formally and informally. The law even goes further in restricting women's autonomy: Article 175 removes a mother's custody if she remarries and her child is over the age of seven. A lawyer specializing in divorce cases, Ali Kettani, says this provision has no basis in the Qur'an, proving that it is not a reflection of religious doctrine. The provision is an institutionalized patriarchal chokehold on legal authority. The lack of rights and support of women in practice reveal the hollow promises in Morocco's 2004 family code reform. On paper, progressive statutes exist, but in practice, they falter because of weak enforcement and patriarchal norms." (Sullivan, 10 June 2025)

As noted in section 3.6.1.4, in December 2024, the justice minister presented proposed changes to the country's family code, including reforms on legal guardianship, alimony, and custody (MWN, 25 December 2024; see also MWN, 24 December 2024). As of November 2025, the reform process is still ongoing (MWN, 4 November 2025).

3.6.2 Gender-based violence (GBV)

Sources report that GBV is "widespread" (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, p. 10), has reached "alarming levels" (DCAF, December 2023, p. 73), and remains "a matter of concern, given its rapid spread […] into all public and private spheres, including information and communication technologies", despite legislation having been passed by the Moroccan government to combat the issue (FLDF, December 2023, p. 28). In its 2023 human rights report on Morocco, the US Department of State (USDOS) notes: "Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: […] extensive gender-based violence, including domestic or intimate partner violence, and sexual violence" (USDOS, 23 April 2024, Executive Summary). In October 2024, Freedom House notes regarding cyber violence:

> "Women activists, journalists, and social media influencers frequently face online gender-based violence. During the coverage period, several activists spoke with the Rutgers Foundation about mounting cases of gender-based violence online, and they asserted that harassment has made it difficult for them to do their work and has forced some to self-censor (see B4)." (Freedom House, 16 October 2024, section C7)

The HCP conducted a survey on the prevalence of violence against women in 2009 and in 2019 (HCP, undated; EuroMed Rights, March 2023, p. 8). The survey is repeated every ten years, according to the HCP website (HCP, undated). In March 2023, EuroMed Rights reports regarding the results of the 2019 survey that

> "[…] the prevalence rate of violence against women is 57%, i.e. more than 7 million women aged 15-74 years (out of 13.4 million) had experienced at least one act of violence in the twelve months preceding the survey.
>
> The domestic context remains the most marked by violence with a prevalence of 52%, followed by places of education (22%), professional environments (15%), cyber-violence (14%) and public space (13%)." (EuroMed Rights, March 2023, p. 8)

Of the 825,000 girls aged 15 to 19 who participated in the 2019 survey, 70.7 per cent had experienced some form of violence within the previous twelve months, including psychological (61.6 per cent), sexual (23.3 per cent), physical (17.1 per cent) and cyber violence (29.4 per cent). The survey found that girls living in urban areas were more affected (75.1 per cent) than those living in rural areas (64.3 per cent) (HCP, March 2025, p. 7). In a report published in November 2024, the Fédération des Ligues des Droits des Femmes (FLDF), a Moroccan women's rights NGO, presents statistical data on cases of violence against women that were received by counselling centres of the network of the FLDF (LDDF-INJAD) and the Women in Solidarity Network between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024. The FLDF reports 9,474 cases between 2021 and 2023, compared to 4,535 cases between 2023 and 2024, noting that these figures do not necessarily indicate an increase or decrease in incidents of violence against women (FLDF, 23 November 2024, p. 6). Regarding cyber or digital violence, Walaw News, an online news platform focussing on Moroccan and Arab news, reports in December 2024 that a "2023 study by Morocco's National Council for Human Rights (NCH) found that 33% of women in the country have experienced digital violence" (Walaw News, 2 December 2024).

Law No. 103-13 of 2018, the first law to address violence against women and violence in intimate relationships in Morocco, defines different types of violence and criminalizes acts of violence previously not covered by the law (Landinfo[35], 28 April 2023, p. 3; see also HRW, 24 October 2024), including sexual harassment and cyber-violence (Landinfo, 28 April 2023, p. 3; The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, p. 14; see also UN ESCWA et al., December 2024, p. 4). Article 1 of Law No. 103-13 defines violence against women as "every act that harms or impairs the bodily integrity of women" (UN ESCWA et al., December 2024, p. 3) and goes on to define physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence against women (Law No. 103-13, 22 February 2018; see also UN ESCWA et al., December 2024, pp. 3-4). Law No. 103-13 of 2018 reportedly also tightens the penalty framework for GBV and introduces new protection mechanisms (Landinfo, 28 April 2023, p. 3).

Sources further report that Law 103-13 has significant shortcomings (HRW, 16 January 2025; Landinfo, 28 April 2023, p. 3; Freedom House, 2023, section G3) and fails to protect all women from all forms of violence (EuroMed Rights, 1 August 2024; DCAF & L'Association Adala, December 2023, p. 73; EuroMed Rights, March 2023, p. 5), "in particular psychological violence, domestic violence and marital rape" (EuroMed Rights, March 2023, p. 5). HRW says that Law 103-13 does not define domestic violence nor spells out the duties of police, prosecutors, and investigating judges in these types of cases. According to HRW, this law also makes it harder for victims of domestic violence to access protections (HRW, 16 January 2025; HRW, 24 October 2024). In its 2023 report, Freedom House notes that while this law "criminalized domestic violence and forced marriage, and imposed more stringent penalties on those convicted of rape", critics faulted it "for failing to outlaw spousal rape, not providing a clear definition of domestic violence, and not mandating the government to provide greater support for survivors" (Freedom House, 2023, section G3). In its April 2024 report, the USDOS notes that the "law did not specifically define domestic violence against women and minors, but the general prohibitions of the criminal code address such violence" (USDOS, 23 April 2024,

[35] Please note that due to a lack of Norwegian language skills the translation from Norwegian has been made using translation tools. There is therefore an increased risk that these translations may contain inaccuracies.

section 6). Amina Lotfi, former president of the Democratic Association for the Women of Morocco (ADFM) cited by EuroMed Rights in August 2024, notes that Law 103-13 "omits measures of protection, reparation, and sanction" (EuroMed Rights, 1 August 2024). According to NGOs Landinfo[36] met in Morocco in early 2023, the law is only an adjustment to certain Penal Code provisions and not a complementary, comprehensive law (Landinfo, 28 April 2023, p. 3). In that regard, the Advocates for Human Rights and Mobilizing for Rights Associates (MRA) note in June 2025 that rather than being "a comprehensive law with criminal and civil provisions, the law only has 18 articles and is limited to minor reforms to the Penal Code and Code of Penal Procedure, merely increasing penalties for existing criminal offenses in cases of spousal or other family relationships" (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, p. 11).

Regarding Penal Code provisions related to sexual assault or rape, the Advocates for Human Rights and MRA note in June 2025 that Law 103-13 reportedly did not reform these offences and rape was "still defined as 'the act whereby a man has sexual relations with a woman against her will', essentially requiring physical injuries as proof of resistance" (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, pp. 11-12; see also UN ESCWA et al., December 2024, p. 4). Regarding spousal rape, sources note that it is neither criminalized in Morocco's Penal Code nor in Law 103-13 (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, p. 11; HRW, 24 October 2024; Freedom House, 2023, section G3). HRW reports in October 2024 that the UN considered "Morocco's position on marital rape to be 'ambiguous,' as it is sometimes prosecuted under rape or other laws but is not in itself criminalized" (HRW, 24 October 2024). The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN ESCWA) and other authors note in a December 2024 publication that "marital rape can sometimes be criminalized under rape or other laws" (UN ESCWA et al., December 2024, p. 4). In April 2024, the USDOS notes regarding rape and spousal rape: "The law punished rape with prison terms of five to 10 years; when the survivor was a minor, the prison sentence ranged from 10 to 20 years. Spousal rape was not a separately enumerated crime. But spousal rape was at times subsumed within a different charge, such as 'assault and battery' or a related crime, allowing for prosecution" (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6). HRW reports that the Tangiers Court of Cassation in October 2024 overturned a 2019 conviction of a man for raping his wife, which had been the country's "first ruling to explicitly criminalize marital rape", thereby effectively annulling a "critical legal precedent criminalizing marital rape" (HRW, 24 October 2024).

With regard to domestic violence cases, The Advocates for Human Rights and MRA state the following:

> "Women experiencing domestic violence face challenges obtaining a medical certificate with the duration (attesting to injuries resulting in 21 or more days of incapacity caused by the violence) legally necessary to bring a criminal complaint for assault. According to local NGOs, most certificates issued range from 1 to 20 days, which does not allow for the perpetrator's arrest." (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, p. 14; see also Landinfo, 28 April 2023, p. 5)

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In an April 2023 report, the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre Landinfo notes[37] that it can be a tedious administrative process to obtain the relevant documentation (Landinfo, 28 April 2023, p. 5).

Law 103-13 reportedly conflicts with other laws, including the Penal and Family Codes, including with provisions that criminalize extramarital sexual relations and adultery (Landinfo, 28 April 2023, p. 4). Sources note that these Penal Code provisions (Articles 490–493) impede women from reporting violence in such relationships (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, pp. 14-15; see also DCAF & L'Association Adala, December 2023, p. 33), leaving them unprotected and without remedy or reparation (Amnesty International, 27 March 2023). The Advocates for Human Rights and MRA highlight that these provisions cause female survivors of violence or rape to fear prosecution, effectively enabling violence against women (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, pp. 14-15; DCAF & L'Association Adala, December 2023, p. 33). In a December 2023 report, FLDF notes regarding the legal situation concerning GBV:

> "Despite the gains achieved with the promulgation of the Family Code, the amendment of the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, as well as the enactment of the Violence against Women Act, the lack of coherence between these laws in terms of substance and procedure on the one hand, and the lack of convergence of these laws with public policies on the other, have aggravated the psychological and socio-economic impacts of violence on women and their children, which in turn are fuelled by the persistence of legal violence." (FLDF, December 2023, p. 31)

Law 103-13, furthermore, according to the Advocates for Human Rights & MRA report, "creates numerous exceptions" in GBV cases by providing for the termination of prosecutions and the cancellation of judgements in case the victim waives her rights (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, p. 14).

Referring to meetings with local NGOs in early 2023, Landinfo notes[38] that so-called "honour killings" are not a cultural phenomenon in Morocco. Landinfo further explains that the killing of a family member arouses public horror and results in the perpetrator being prosecuted (Landinfo, 28 April 2023, p. 10). UN ESCWA et al. note in December 2024 that the law "does not provide for excuses or mitigating circumstances in cases of 'honour crimes'" (UN ESCWA, December 2024, p. 4; see also Landinfo, 28 April 2023, p. 10). Landinfo adds that women still might face reactions from family members if they transgress social norms, including various forms of social control and physical violence (Landinfo, 28 April 2023, p. 10). UN ESCWA et al. further elaborate:

> "However, the Criminal Code (article 418) stipulates mitigating circumstances for so-called 'crimes of passion', for example, when the husband or wife benefits from a reduced sentence when the male or female partner is killed in the case of adultery. The reduced

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> sentence also applies to the head of the family accused of assaulting or beating a person he found in his home having illegal sex." (UN ESCWA et al., December 2024, p. 4)

Freedom House notes in its 2024 report that, generally, "[d]omestic violence is rarely reported or punished due to social stigma, though Moroccan NGOs offer support to domestic-violence survivors" (Freedom House, 2024, section G3). According to the Landinfo report[39], only a low percentage of cases of violence against women are reported in Morocco, while fewer are investigated and few of the investigated cases are heard in court. The source notes that mainly serious cases led to a prosecution, while acts defined as misdemeanours rarely did (Landinfo, 28 April 2023, p. 8). The USDOS notes in that regard in April 2024 with reference to local NGOs that "survivors did not report most sexual assaults to police, due to social pressure and the concern that society would most likely hold the survivors responsible rather than the perpetrators" (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6).

Regarding sexual harassment, Afrobarometer notes that over four in ten surveyed citizens[40] "say women 'often' or 'always' experience sexual harassment in public spaces such as in markets, on the street, or in public transport" (Afrobarometer, 28 October 2025, p. 8). The source further notes:

> "If women and girls report discrimination or harassment in public spaces such as workplaces or schools, a majority (62%) of citizens say they are 'somewhat likely' (40%) or 'very likely' (22%) to be believed […]. However, more than one-third (35%) say such complaints will probably not be taken seriously. […] Even if a slim majority of Moroccans do not view discrimination and harassment as widespread, fully three-fourths (75%) say the police and courts need to do more to protect women and girls from these threats, including 28% who say they need to do 'much more'." (Afrobarometer, 28 October 2025, pp. 9-11)

Morocco has not yet signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also called Istanbul Convention (EuroMed Rights, March 2023, p. 1). UN ESCWA and other authors note that Morocco has adopted the Marrakesh Declaration in 2020 to combat violence against women, a "unified initiative launched by the National Union of Women of Morocco". It "includes a set of integrated commitments for various ministries and public institutions concerned with the issue of violence, assault or gender discrimination" and aims to encourage these parties "to take concrete action to eliminate violence against women". Furthermore, the government has adopted a national strategy to combat violence against women and girls by 2030. This strategy is based on the four pillars of protection, prevention, prosecution and judicial follow-up (UN ESCWA et al., December 2024, pp. 1-2). Additionally, the government has extended the "the country's first National Action Plan on the UN Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda

[39] Please note that due to a lack of Norwegian language skills the translation from Norwegian has been made using translation tools. There is therefore an increased risk that these translations may contain inaccuracies.

[40] "The Afrobarometer team in Morocco […] interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult citizens of Morocco in February 2024" (Afrobarometer, 28 October 2025, p. 2).

through 2026", which includes the key priorities of protecting women from violence and ensuring legal protections for women and girls (MWN, 26 September 2025).

3.6.3 Early/forced marriage

CEDOCA, the research unit of the Belgian Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS), notes in a March 2023 report on forced marriage in Morocco that the unit has found little information on the forced marriage of adult women, with the exception of marriages arranged in the context of rape to safeguard the family's honour. CEDOCA further explains that almost all available sources address the issue of forced marriages in Morocco from the perspective of early marriage (CGRS-CEDOCA, 3 March 2023, p. 11). Regarding forced marriage, in December 2024, Open Doors reports cases in Morocco of Christian women of Muslim origin, particularly young women, forcibly removed from their social environment (usually by their families), taken to another location, and isolated and/or forced into marriage (Open Doors, December 2024, p. 13).

Article 19 of the Moroccan Family Code stipulates that the legal minimum age for marriage is 18 years (Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016, Article 19; see also BAMF, 12 December 2024, p. 3). However, marriage below the age of 18 is legally still possible (BAMF, 12 December 2024, p. 3; UN ESCWA et al., December 2024, p. 6; DCAF & L'Association Adala, December 2023, p. 33), with Article 20 of the Family Code allowing for exceptions to the minimum age (Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016, Article 20; see also CEDAW, 13 November 2024, pp. 1-2;). HRW reports in January 2025 that "families can request approval for girls as young as 15 to marry" (HRW, 16 January 2025; see also USDOS, 12 August 2025, section 3b). In a December 2024 report, UN ESCWA et al. note that the "elements and conditions of a void marriage mentioned in Article 57 of the Family Code do not contain any provisions regarding the marriage of minors" (UN ESCWA et al., December 2024, p. 6). In a June 2025 submission to the UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), The Advocates for Human Rights, and Mobilizing for Rights Associates (MRA) note:

> „Child marriage of girls has not been abolished. Articles 20, 21 and 22 of the Family Code continue to allow marriage of girls under 18 when 'justified' and after receiving authorization by the Family Affairs judge. The Family Code provides no minimum age below which authorization to marry may never be granted." (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, pp. 7-8)

Judges can authorise marriages below the age of 18 (HRW, 16 January 2025; USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6) following a medical examination or social inquiry ("enquête sociale") (Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016, Article 20; see also DCAF & L'Association Adala, December 2023, p. 33) supposed to assess the minor's fitness for marriage, based on the minor's economic, social, cultural and mental abilities (BAMF, 12 December 2024, pp. 3-4). Article 20 of the Family Code stipulates that in order for a marriage to a minor to be realised, additionally, the parents or legal guardian of the minor have to give their consent and a detailed explanation of the motivation for the marriage must be provided (Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016, Article 20; see also BAMF, 12 December 2024, pp. 3-4). In

their June 2025 submission to the HRC, the Advocates for Human Rights and MRA with reference to various sources note in that regard:

> "The authorization of child marriages of girls remains the rule rather than the exception. […]. Judges often issue authorization to marry minors based on their own cursory visual examination of the girl's physical appearance and determination that she is capable of assuming 'marital responsibilities,' rather than resorting to the required medical or social expertise. Reasons advanced by judges for authorizing underage marriage include saving family honor, avoiding scandal, protecting the girl's chastity and preventing her from debauchery, or as a solution to poverty. Some do not even substantiate their decisions in writing. Corruption among public actors and the ease with which medical certificates attesting to the minor girl's 'maturity' can be obtained are also factors allowing circumvention of the law." (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, pp. 8-9)

In a December 2023 report, DCAF and the Association Adala report with reference to a government study from 2021 that in practice, only 12 per cent of married minors profited from a social inquiry carried out by a social assistant, while 88 per cent were only interviewed by a judge (DCAF & L'Association Adala, December 2023, p. 33). In a March 2023 report, EuroMed Rights notes that judges most often authorize marriages of minors "on the basis of the child's capacity to procreate", adding that "[t]his practice has continued to increase each year" (EuroMed Rights, March 2023, p. 4). In its aforementioned December 2023 report, FLDF notes that while "Article 20 of the Family Code does not specify a minimum age for marriage", it does also "not oblige the court to resort to medical expertise and social investigation, nor does it define the notion of interest; it does not either require that the local jurisdiction be used when submitting the application". The source further explains that Article 20 does also not "provide for any sanctions in the event of non-compliance with the provisions on underage marriage; what's more, the court's authorization is not subject to appeal" (FLDF, December 2023, p. 28) as stipulated in the article's second paragraph (Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016, Article 20). Regarding marriage recognition and child marriage, FLDF notes:

> "Although article 16 considers the marriage certificate to be the acceptable means of proof of marriage and has authorized the exception of examining an action for recognition of marriage for a transitional period of 15 years, experience has confirmed that the second paragraph of this article[41] has become a rule and a means of circumventing the provisions relating to polygamy and forced marriage of girls." (FLDF, December 2023, p. 28; see also Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016, Article 16)

In its 2023 annual report on human rights, the USDOS states that "[f]ourteen percent of Moroccan girls were married before the age of 18" (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6). In an undated entry on its website, Girls not Brides, an international network of over 1,400 civil

[41] According to paragraph 2 of Article 16, if a marriage certificate is not available, the court may consider all types of evidence as well as expert opinions when deciding whether to recognise the marriage (Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016, Article 16; see also FLDF, December 2023, p. 35).

society organisations from more than 100 countries committed to ending child marriage, reports that 1 per cent of girls were married by the age of 15 while 14 per cent were married by the age of 18 (Girls not brides, undated). In its annual report for 2024, the USDOS notes that "[d]uring the first half of the year, 6,685 requests for underage marriages were submitted, with 3,930 of them approved" (USDOS, 12 August 2025). In an October 2025 article, MWN reports with reference to an Official Bulletin that "Moroccan courts received 16,790 requests for child marriage in 2024, with girls making up the overwhelming majority of cases" (MWN, 22 October 2025). The article further elaborates:

> "According to the data, 16,501 requests (about 98%) involved girls, while 254 involved boys. The report also shows that over 64% of requests were approved by judges […].
>
> While the total number of child marriage requests dropped slightly compared to 2023, from around 20,000 to 16,790, the approval rate remains high. This shows that the practice continues to be widely tolerated in many parts of the country, with loopholes keeping the practice alive.
>
> Most of these marriages involved minors aged 16 and 17, with only a small number of cases concerning girls younger than 15. Rural areas remain disproportionately affected, representing around 78% of all requests, compared to just 22% in urban regions.
>
> Educational status also plays a role, the report indicates. Over 90% of child marriage requests were made by minors who were not in school, showing a clear link between education dropout and early marriage." (MWN, 22 October 2025)

In the June 2025 report, The Advocates for Human Rights and MRA, with reference to the Public Prosecutor, note that in 2019, 27,623 child marriage applications were received, compared to 84,855 adult marriage applications (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, p. 8). The source further notes:

> "The number of child marriages is even higher when taking into account the number of marriage recognition acts, as it is recorded that 5,031 couples registered their verbal marriage years after their original marriage. As a result of this recognition procedure set by Article 16 of the Family Code, around 15% of marriage recognitions involve child marriage." (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, p. 8)

In March 2025, the Moroccan HCP publishes a report on violence against children based on an HCP survey conducted in 2019.[42] The report notes that six out of ten girls who were married or divorced have been victims of early marriage (married before turning 18) with a prevalence rate of 67.2 per cent in rural areas, compared to 59.6 per cent in urban areas (HCP, March 2025, pp. 10, 33). The report further explains that almost half of the overall 63.2 per cent of women and girls, who were married or divorced and had become victims of early marriage,

[42] The HCP survey takes a quantitative approach and is based on direct interviews using questionnaires with a sample of 12,000 girls and women, and 3,000 boys and men, aged between 15 and 74 years. The sample represents various social strata and regions of the country (HCP, 19 January 2021, p. 19).

belonged to an older generation, particularly women aged 60 and older. However, the phenomenon of early marriages reportedly remained relevant for younger generations, with a significant persistence in certain segments of the population (HCP, March 2025, pp. 33-34). According to a 2019 UN Women report, child marriages are particularly prevalent in certain regions, including Azrou, Midelt, Beni Mellal, Marrakesh, Azilal und Casablanca (UN Women, 2019, p. 53).

In December 2024, the justice minister presented proposed changes to the country's family code, including reforms on marriage age (MWN, 25 December 2024; see also MWN, 24 December 2024; see also MWN, 22 October 2025). An October 2025 MWN article notes that child marriage remained "one of the most debated issues" in that process. The article goes on to explain:

> "In December last year, the Higher Council of Ulemas[43] approved several provisions that the committee tasked with reviewing the family code presented. These include setting the marriage age at 18 for both boys and girls, with the only exception being minors aged 17, but under specific, strictly controlled conditions." (MWN, 22 October 2025)

After the September 2023 earthquake in Morocco's Atlas Mountains, sources reported on men promoting the marriage of underage girls online (Al Jazeera, 18 September 2023; The New Arab, 24 October 2023). However, according to Maryam Montague, a facilitator from Project Soar (PS), a Moroccan charitable association and NGO, cited in a New Arab article, this was not "the greatest concern" in the affected region. Montague, who reportedly asked many girls affected by the earthquake whether they had heard about cases, says that none of the girls had responded that she had (The New Arab, 24 October 2023).

3.6.4 State protection

Law No. 103-13 of 2018 (see section 3.6.2) established measures against violence toward women (HRW, 16 January 2025), but a EuroMed Rights' March 2023 report highlights that the law is insufficient regarding protection, reparation, and sanctions, particularly concerning domestic violence issues such as marital rape and fraud (EuroMed Rights, March 2023, p. 5).

The Advocates for Human Rights and Mobilising for Rights Associates (MRA) highlight in a June 2025 report that Law No. 103-13 does not adequately protect women victims or prevent future violence. Furthermore, protective measures provided under the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code[44] are reportedly limited to criminal rather than civil responses and only become available after a criminal prosecution is initiated or a conviction is secured. These

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[43] The Higher Ulema Council (Conseil supérieur des Ouléma) as specified in the Constitution, is the sole body enabled to comment on religious consultations (Fatwas) before they are officially agreed to. It is presided by the King (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Article 41).

[44] Law No. 03-23, published in the Official Bulletin on 8 September 2025 amends and supplements the Criminal Procedure Code (MWN, 14 September 2025; see also Le Matin (Morocco), 15 September 2025). The law which comes fully into effect on 8 December 2025 (Hespress, 13 September 2025; Le Matin (Morocco), 15 September 2025) reportedly expands "victims' rights, particularly for women and children affected by violence, through legal and social support and informing them about the outcome of their cases" (Africa Legal, 16 September 2025). For further information on Law No. 03-23, please see section 4.2.1.

measures are non-mandatory, left to judicial discretion, and often ineffective. The source further notes that "[i]n addition to requiring the victim to file a criminal complaint, these measures come too late in the process – only after a prosecution has been launched or a conviction handed down. Most cases never get that far, leaving the majority of victims unprotected" (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, p. 13). EuroMed Rights further explains that the criminal legislation "does not allow easy access for indigent women to protection institutions or to legal and judicial assistance" (EuroMed Rights, March 2023, pp. 5-6). Regarding rape, EuroMed Rights further notes that the relevant provisions introduce a hierarchy between married and unmarried victims, or virgins and non-virgins. The report elaborates that "the crimes of rape and 'indecent assault' are described as 'offences against family order and public morality'" (EuroMed Rights, March 2023, p. 6).

According to The Advocates for Human Rights and MRA, few GBV cases "reach the law enforcement or justice systems due to failures of these systems to investigate crimes of violence, protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable" (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, p. 10). Law No. 103-13 reportedly lacks provisions for the reporting, investigation, and prosecution of violence against women, or which "create obligations and procedures for law enforcement and justice system personnel" (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, p. 13). These issues also concern sexual harassment cases, where "clear standards of what constitutes 'proof'" also prevent relevant provisions from practical application (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, pp. 14-15). The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA elaborate:

> "Policies and procedures thus remain unclear and inconsistent, hindering the process of responding to VAW [Violence Against Women] cases. […] The lack of clear standards of evidence hinders investigation and prosecution of VAW crimes. Article 286 of the Code of Penal Procedure provides that, 'Crimes can be proven by any means of proof,' leaving it to judges' discretion to assess evidence based on their 'intimate conviction.' Additionally, local NGOs report that most often there is inadequate evidence collection by local law enforcement and justice system actors, who place the burden of bringing proof of violent crimes onto the victim." (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, p. 13)

In their December 2023 report, DCAF and L'Association Adala report that the Moroccan justice system's response to GBV is characterized by under-reporting, disappearance of complaints, and ineffective sanctions, fostering a sense of impunity among perpetrators (DCAF & L'Association Adala, December 2023, p. 73). The Advocates for Human Rights and MRA report reveals that in 2023, of the 102,034 women who resorted to the GBV units in courts for help, only 4,321 cases led to court hearings and 850 resulted in social investigations (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, p. 10). The 2019 HCP survey on violence against women revealed that major reasons hindering complaints include reliance on conflict resolution by consent, family intervention, fear of retaliation, and feelings of shame, particularly related to sexual violence (HCP, 9 December 2019). Women also face numerous obstacles in reporting sexual harassment cases, even with legislative progress (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, p. 14). DCAF and L'Association Adala highlight that rural and Amazigh women from disadvantaged backgrounds generally encounter challenges in filing complaints or accessing justice in GBV cases (DCAF & L'Association Adala, December 2023, p. 73).

With reference to a meeting with MRA in Rabat in early 2023, Landinfo reports[45] that there is no mechanism in place for the Moroccan police or gendarmerie to automatically follow up on a GBV case when a woman subjected to violence requests assistance. The police will only become involved if there is a serious threat to the woman's life or health, and they can only enter private homes if there is a risk of loss of life. In cases of domestic violence, the victim will therefore usually have to contact the authorities herself to receive help. According to MRA quoted by Landinfo, the fragmented responsibility in GBV cases resulting from Law 103-13's unclear definitions, such as those regarding roles and responsibilities in GBV investigation and prosecution procedures, means that women who report violence often have to "run from office to office" ("løpe fra kontor til kontor") (Landinfo, 28 April 2023, p. 7). In its annual report for 2023, the USDOS notes:

> "According to local NGOs, survivors did not report most sexual assaults to police, due to social pressure and the concern that society would most likely hold the survivors responsible rather than the perpetrators. Some sexual assault survivors also reported police officers at times turned them away from filing a police report or coerced them to pay a bribe to file the report by threatening to charge them with consensual sex outside of marriage, a crime punishable with up to one year in prison. Police selectively investigated cases; among the minority brought to trial, successful prosecutions were rare. According to a March 2023 report from the CNDH [National Council on Human Rights; Conseil national des droits de l'Homme], impunity for violence against women persisted, driven partly by deficiencies in the judicial system that included the lack of women in the judiciary, as well as the gap between reports by victims of violence and legal action to pursue accountability for perpetrators of said violence. […] Police were slow to act in domestic violence cases, and the government generally did not enforce the law and sometimes returned women against their will to abusive homes. Police generally treated domestic violence as a social rather than a criminal matter. Physical abuse was legal grounds for divorce, but few women reported such abuse to authorities. (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6; see also Landinfo, 28 April 2023, p. 7; DCAF & L'Association Adala, December 2023, p. 73)

The Advocates for Human Rights and MRA note in their June 2025 report that "[l]aw enforcement officers are not empowered by law or policy to remove violent offenders from the home and hence rarely do so. In the majority of cases, NGOs report that women and children must flee the home and seek shelter elsewhere" (The Advocates for Human Rights & MRA, 25 June 2025, p. 13). UN ESCWA elaborates in that regard:

> "Law No. 103.13 allows protection orders that prohibit a person convicted of the offence of harassment or sexual assault, abuse, or violence against women or minors from contacting or approaching the victim or communicating with her. Violations of protection orders or preventive measures may result in imprisonment or fines. The law requires that

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> a criminal case be instituted against the perpetrator for the woman to obtain a protection order." (UN ESCWA, December 2024, p. 4)

In its report for 2023, the USDOS notes regarding services for victims of GBV:

> "The law required the DGSN [General Directorate for National Security], Prosecutor General's Office, Supreme Judicial Court, and Ministries of Health, Youth, and Women to have specialized units that coordinated with one another on cases involving gender-based violence. These specialized units received and processed cases of gender-based violence and provided psychological support and other services to victims. Several NGOs provided hotlines, shelter, resources, guidance, and legal support to survivors of domestic violence. There were reports, however, that these shelters were not accessible to persons with disabilities.
>
> Courts maintained 'victims of abuse cells' that brought together prosecutors, lawyers, judges, women's NGO representatives, and hospital personnel to review domestic abuse cases, including child abuse, to provide for the best interests of women or children." (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6)

Landinfo notes[46] that these specialised units provide for first points of contact, offering victims legal, medical and psychological assistance. 440 contact points responsible for referring victims of violence to the nearest intake unit reportedly exist in police stations throughout the country. However, with reference to meetings with MRA and ADMF in early 2023, Landinfo states, these intake units do not always function as intended since, due to a lack of resources, a police officer, investigating judge or doctor, who already has other duties, is often appointed, and no independent unit is established. In many rural areas, such intake units do not exist at all, and women have to travel to the nearest larger city to receive assistance in GBV cases (Landinfo, 28 April 2023, p. 6). With reference to meetings with several NGOs in early 2023, Landinfo reports that the support system for women who are exposed to violence is very limited in Morocco and the authorities have no statutory responsibility to offer protection in the form of shelters or other housing facilities (Landinfo, 28 April 2023, p. 8). In its July 2024 submission to CEDAW, the Moroccan government notes that "civil society associations, through partnerships with the Government and relevant organizations, play a key role in providing care for women victims of violence by allocating financial support for the establishment and development of listening and counselling centres for women victims of violence, especially in rural areas" (Kingdom of Morocco, 30 July 2024, p. 4). With reference to a January 2023 meeting with the NGO Droit et Justice in Casablanca, Landinfo notes that the practical operation of the aid apparatus is largely left to civil society organisations. However, due to insufficient funding, assistance services for victims of GBV are reportedly not sufficiently developed compared to existing needs, and shelters are reported to be lacking or to exist only "on paper". With reference to the MRA, the report states that in cities of a certain size, there are typically one or two NGOs that run shelters. These shelters are often small, consisting of one or two rooms

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(Landinfo, 28 April 2023, p. 9). According to the government's statement to CEDAW, "[s]ome 105 multifunctional institutions for the care of women in difficult situations and women victims of violence have been established and equipped at the regional and local levels" (Kingdom of Morocco, 30 July 2024, pp. 4-5). Day centres run by local organisations offering legal guidance, psychosocial support and follow-up are reportedly more widespread than shelters and present in most Moroccan cities (Landinfo, 28 April 2023, pp. 8-9).

Sources reported on the "We are all with you" (*Kolona Maak*) service, which was established in 2020 (Kingdom of Morocco, 30 July 2024, pp. 3-4; BAMF, 12 December 2024, p. 4). The service "listens to, supports and counsels women and girls who are victims of violence and women in difficult situations" (Kingdom of Morocco, 30 July 2024, p. 3). The government has made the following notes regarding the platform:

> "The service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through a direct telephone number (8350) and a smart application that can be downloaded for free onto mobile devices. The Office of the Public Prosecutor reacts to complaints and grievances submitted through the 'We are all with you' telephone hotline and provides the National Union of Moroccan Women with lists of those assigned to work at the Office. The Public Prosecution, through the women's and children's support units, responds to cases that it receives from the Union." (Kingdom of Morocco, 30 July 2024, pp. 3 – 4; see also BAMF, 12 December 2024, p. 4)

3.7 Situation of persons of diverse SOGIESC

3.7.1 Legal framework

Article 489 of Morocco's Penal Code criminalizes sexual relations between persons of the same sex as "lewd or unnatural acts" (ILGA World, undated) and punishes those acts with up to three years of imprisonment and a fine of MAD 1,000 [USD 110 as of December 2025] (Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Article 489). According to the Moroccan LGBTQI+ organization Nassawiyat, Articles 483 and 484, which criminalize acts that are considered an "affront to public decency" are also used to prosecute LGBTQI+ people even in the absence of evidence of illegal acts (Nassawiyat, May 2025, p. 15; see also Penal Code, with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Articles 483-484). The Moroccan Family Code does not recognize the marriage between persons of the same sex (Nassawiyat, May 2025, p. 15, see also Law No. 70-03, with amendments up to 4 February 2016, Article 4). The Moroccan legislation does not provide laws that protect people from discrimination based on their gender identity or sexual orientation by state or non-state actors (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6). This means that LGBTQI+ people have no legal pathway against discriminatory exclusion in employment, education, and health services (Nassawiyat, May 2025, p. 15). At the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review held in 2023, several delegations recommended the decriminalization of consensual same-sex relations through the repeal of Article 489 (HRC, 6 January 2023, p. 21). However, Amnesty International reports:

> "On 24 March 2023, Morocco accepted some recommendations from the UPR [Universal Periodic Review] on promoting gender equality and combating violence against women, but […] rejected recommendations on decriminalizing consensual sexual relations between adults of the same sex and introducing measures to combat discrimination against LGBTI people." (Amnesty International, 6 April 2023)

Transgender and intersex persons

Transgender persons in Morocco have no legal pathways to change their names or gender on official documents. As a joint submission by the Moroccan Coalition for Gender and Sexual Diversity for the 41st session of the UPR Working Group in 2022 states:

> "Transgender people in Morocco face alarming degrees of violence and are deprived from many fundamental human rights. Moroccan authorities do not allow transgender persons to obtain identity documents congruent with their gender identities and expressions. Furthermore, access to safe gender-affirming healthcare is impossible, which directly harms the mental and physical health of transgender people." (Trans Dynamics et al., November 2022, p. 3)

In 2021, Morocco passed Law No. 36-21 of which Article 28 allows intersex persons to change the assigned gender (Law No. 36-21, 14 July 2021, Article 28). The law states:

> "The declaration of the birth of the hermaphrodite is supported by a medical certificate specifying the sex of the new-born, and the civil registry record is written upon this basis. If there is a change in the sex of the hermaphrodite in the future, it is changed by virtue of a ruling issued by a competent court." (Trans Dynamics et al., November 2022, p. 9)

Even though the law was presented as progress for LGBTQI+ rights, it was criticised for using the discriminatory term "hermaphrodite" (Amnesty International, 29 March 2022) and for its pathologization of intersex bodies "by requiring a medical authority to assign them within a binary male/female category" (Trans Dynamics et al., November 2022, p. 9). Furthermore, trans rights organizations criticised the absence of consultations with intersex or transgender groups during the legislative process (Amnesty International, 29 March 2022).

3.7.2 Treatment by State-actors

Human Dignity Trust, a London-based organisation defending the human rights of LGBTQI+ people, states that Article 489 has been enforced in recent years, with LGBTQI+ persons being frequently arrested (HDT, 17 December 2024). According to USDOS citing the Moroccan government, the authorities prosecuted 441 individuals for same-sex activities during the first half of the year 2023 (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6). Information on the number of persecutions in the years 2024 and 2025 could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

On 8 December 2023, the Belgian country of origin information unit CEDOCA conducted a telephone interview with an activist of the Moroccan LGBTQI+ collective Liqaat. The activist explained that, although Moroccan authorities do take legal action against LGBTQI+ persons, they rarely invoke Article 489 to avoid publicity. Instead, they put forward other reasons, such as debauchery, prostitution, promotion of prostitution, sexual deviance, unauthorised assembly, or insult. According to the interviewee, LGBTQI+ persons may also be accused of belonging to criminal gangs or being involved in terrorism. Furthermore, it was stated that the application of the law varies considerably from region to region. While for example in the Oriental region, the authorities convict under Article 489 and enforce prison sentences, in Rabat LGBTQI+ persons are convicted on other grounds and are usually released quickly. The Liqaat activist stated, that most of the arrested individuals were denounced by their neighbours or by the *moqadem*, an Interior Ministry official, who reports incidents in their district of responsibility. Following another telephone interview on 4 March 2025, the activist stated that the situation had not changed as the persecution and conviction of LGBTQI+ person continued (CGRS-CEDOCA, 9 April 2025, pp. 12-13).

The NGO report of the Moroccan Coalition for Gender and Sexual Diversity dealing with human rights violations based on SOGIESC describes that transgender and gender diverse people are regularly profiled and persecuted under Article 489, with gender expression often interpreted as indication of "sexual deviancy" (Trans Dynamics et al., November 2022, p. 4). According to research by the Moroccan LGBTQI+ Akaliyat Association[47], transgender and non-binary persons are twice as likely to face harassment and mistreatment by the authorities than other individuals of the LGBTQI+ community (Akaliyat Association, 16 May 2020, p. 2). More recent information on the harassment and persecution of transgender and gender-diverse people could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

[47] The study was conducted with members of the LGBTQI+ community in Morocco. The data was collected in the cities Agadir, Casablanca, Marrakech and Rabat with 400 individuals being interrogated of whom 248 completed the questionnaire entirely (Akaliyat Association, 16 May 2020, p. 1).

According to the 2024 report by USDOS on the state of human rights in 2023, many LGBTQI+ people were afraid to report harassment to the police, as same-sex activities are prohibited, and police assistance largely depended on individual officers' personal attitudes toward the LGBTQI+ community (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6). A 2024 research report by the UK-based international LGBTQI+ organization ReportOUT revealed that 40 per cent of the participants[48] viewed abusive behavior by police towards individuals with diverse SOGIESC as common, while nearly 63 per cent perceived such conduct was also very widespread among religious authorities (ReportOUT, 19 May 2024, p. 31).

In November 2023, a minor who had been raped by a muezzin (an authority figure in a mosque), was sentenced to six months in prison under the accusation of being gay. He also received a fine of MAD 20,000 [approximately USD 2,150 as of December 2025]. The perpetrator was charged with an eight-year prison sentence (Washington Blade, 11 December 2023).

On 10 August 2025, the Moroccan LGBTQI+ activist Ibtissame Lachgar was arrested based on a social media post, where she posted a photo of herself wearing a T-shirt with the slogan "Allah is lesbian" (BAMF, 25 August 2025, p. 7), and was convicted on charges of blasphemy on 3 September 2025 (HRW, 11 September 2025). For further information on blasphemy legalisation, please see section 3.5.2, for more details on the case of Ibtissame Lachgar see section 3.5.3.

3.7.3 Treatment by non-state actors

The LGBT Equality Index[49] (Equaldex), which measures the status of LGBTQI+ rights, laws, and freedoms as well as public attitudes towards LGBTQI+ people, rates Morocco with 13 points (100 being the most equal), ranking it 165th out of 197 countries (Equaldex, undated). The Afrobarometer's 2024 survey[50] published in May 2025 indicates that the majority of Moroccan society rejects homosexuality. Nearly 80 per cent expressed a total rejection of LGBTQI+ people, and only 2.5 per cent showed acceptance towards the community (Afrobarometer, 20 May 2025, p. 84; see also MWN, 24 May 2025).

According to a CEDOCA meeting with activists of Liqaat in Rabat on 14 October 2024, socio-economic factors were considered not to be relevant regarding societal perception, as traditional perceptions are found within all socio-economic milieus (CGRS-CEDOCA, 9 April 2025, p. 18). The Norwegian country of origin unit Landinfo states[51] in a 2024 report with reference to older sources that experiences of LGBTQI+ people differ depending on the city,

[48] The research report is based on collected data of Moroccan partner organizations from 1 March to 30 April 2023. 60 Moroccan LGBTQI+ individuals completed the survey, the majority living in cities and aged between 19 and 24 years old (ReportOut, 19 May 2024, pp. 23-25).

[49] "Equaldex's Equality Index is a rating from 0 to 100 (with 100 being the most equal) to help visualize the legal rights and public attitudes towards LGBTQ+ […] people in each region. The Equality Index is an average of two indexes: the legal index and the public opinion Index." (Equaldex, undated)

[50] From 11 to 29 February 2024 1,200 Moroccan citizens over the age of 18 were contacted for the survey. The response rate was 32,66 per cent (Afrobarometer, 20 May 2025, p. 4).

[51] Please note that due to a lack of Norwegian language skills the translation from Norwegian has been made using translation tools. There is therefore an increased risk that these translations may contain inaccuracies.

neighbourhood and social class. Large cities such as Rabat, Casablanca and Marrakech offer more anonymity than rural areas (Landinfo, 5 July 2024, p. 8).

In discussing factors influencing social perceptions of homosexuality, the Liqaat activist noted that very effeminate or transgender men are often seen as "possessed by the devil or sick" ("comme étant possédé par le démon ou malade") and thus relatively tolerated in society. In contrast, men with a masculine appearance face strong rejection by family and close circles if their homosexuality is revealed (CGRS-CEDOCA, 9 April 2025, p. 17).

Several sources describe a discriminatory climate against SOGIESC persons (BAMF, July 2024, p. 2; Trans Dynamics et al., November 2022, p. 8; MWN, 3 December 2024). Anti-LGBTQI+ attitudes are displayed in "educational curricula, media representations, discourses of religious and political leaders, and the continued repression of state authorities" (Trans Dynamics et al., November 2022, p. 8). Public opinion on LGBTQI+ issues, was reportedly also evident at the 2024 Marrakech International Film Festival. The festival's LGBTQI+ agenda, which included the screening of a film portraying an intimate scene between two men and an interview with an openly gay filmmaker discussing his experiences, sparked a national debate (MWN, 3 December 2024).

On 28 July 2023, the minister of Justice, Abdellatif Ouahbi, in the TV show "Soual Mobachir" expressed concerns about the "growing influence of homosexuals" and warned of "serious consequences". In June 2023, he reiterated that homosexuality could not be legalized in a Muslim country like Morocco (Bladi, 2 August 2023).

According to Freedom House, LGBTQI+ people face "harsh discrimination and occasional violence" (Freedom House, 2023, section F4). Several reports state that LGBTQI+ people face discrimination in all aspects of their lives, such as employment, access to health care (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6; Nassawiyat, May 2025, pp. 32-33, 41, see also ReportOUT, 19 May 2024, p. 29), education (Nassawiyat, May 2025, p. 31; ReportOUT, 19 May 2024, p. 30), housing (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6; ReportOUT, 19 May 2024, p. 30) and psychological care services (Nassawiyat, May 2025, p. 41). According to ReportOUT, LGBTQI+ people from lower-income groups face more discrimination (ReportOUT, 19 May 2024, p. 20). Furthermore, LGBTQI+ people experience social exclusion including rejection from their family (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6; Nassawiyat, May 2025, p. 28). ReportOUT describes that "[i]n danger of violence and stigmatization and social exclusion, a majority of SOGIESC individuals live their SOGIESC identities in secrecy" (ReportOUT, 19 May 2024, p. 10). Living openly often subjects them to violence and social marginalization (ReportOUT, 19 May 2024, p. 35).

Both the ReportOUT and Nassawiyat reports state that a high percentage of LGBTQI+ members encountered violence (ReportOUT, 19 May 2024, p. 10; Nassawiyat, May 2025, pp. 23-24). According to the Nassawiyat report, 55 per cent of people interviewed in Casablanca, 60 per cent in Tetouan, and 80 per cent in Agadir indicated that they had experienced verbal, psychological or physical violence (Nassawiyat, May 2025, pp. 23-24). In the study of ReportOUT, 83.3 per cent of the respondents reported to have experienced online abuse, 66.6 per cent reported verbal abuse, 46 per cent reported threat of violence, 31.6 per cent reported threat of sexual attacks, 26.6 per cent reported violent attacks, 23.3 per cent reported sexual attacks, and 13.5 per cent reported police violence (ReportOUT, 19 May 2024, p. 10). For the Liqaat activist, who was interviewed by CEDOCA on 8 December 2023, the most common forms of violence are rejection and exclusion from the family (CGRS-CEDOCA, 9 April 2025, p. 20). According to ReportOUT 27.1 per cent of their study participants reported having been

subjected to violence by family members because of their identity, including psychological and physical abuse (ReportOUT, 19 May 2024, p. 30).

According to Freedom House, the LGBTQI+ community is targeted by “online campaigns of harassment” (Freedom House, 16 October 2024, section C7).

The international NGO Outright International and the USDOS report that civil society organizations that work on LGBTQI+ topics face difficulties registering officially (Outright International, undated; USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6). Nevertheless, the platform Arab Reform Initiative explains that since 2011, several LGBTQI+ collectives have emerged. As of 2024, there are around 13 active ones (Arab Reform Initiative, 2 February 2024).

3.8 Situation of racial or ethnic minorities

The Amazigh are considered Morocco's main indigenous community. Estimates of their share of the total population vary widely. According to the Minority Rights Group (MRG), the Amazigh people constitute between 40 and 60 per cent of the population (13.3 to 20 million people) (MRG, updated July 2024). According to the non-governmental human rights organisation International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), official census data from 2024 indicate that 24.8 per cent of the population speaks Tamazight, the language of the Amazigh people. However, Amazigh associations claim that up to 85 per cent of Moroccans are of Amazigh origin (IWGIA, April 2025, p. 93). MRG estimates that approximately 90,000 Sahrawis live in Morocco and about 190,000 in Western Sahara (MRG, undated). In addition to the aforementioned ethnic minorities, Morocco has a significant Black population. The size of this racial minority is difficult to determine as there is no official statistical data. According to MRG, estimates suggest that around 3.7 million Black Moroccans live in the country, accounting for around ten per cent of the nation's entire population (MRG, updated July 2024).

A joint submission by MRG, La Voix de la Femme Amazighe, a Moroccan non-governmental organisation focused on the rights of Amazigh women, and Tamaynut, a Moroccan non-governmental organisation promoting the rights of Amazighs, to the 111th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) claims that, although the Constitution and Penal Code contain provisions addressing racial discrimination, Morocco still lacked a specific anti-discrimination law (MRG et al., 27 October 2023, p. 3).

However, the 2024 report by USDOS on the state of human rights in 2023 states:

> "The law provided for the protection of members of racial or ethnic minority groups against violence and discrimination. The government enforced the law effectively. The government prosecuted eight cases of discrimination during the first half of the year, of which three resulted in acquittals and two in convictions, with three still in process at year's end." (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6)

Morocco has neither ratified the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No. 169, also known as the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, nor has it adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (IWGIA, April 2025, p. 94).

3.8.1 Amazigh

Article 5 of the 2011 Moroccan Constitution officially recognises the Amazigh identity and declares the Amazigh language to be 'an' official language of the state, alongside Arabic, which remains 'the' official language (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Article 5). However, it took several years before Organic Law No. 26-16, which was meant to outline the procedure for enforcing Tamazight's official character and integrating it into education and other essential elements of public life, was ultimately approved by parliament in 2019 (IWGIA, April 2025, p. 94; Organic Law No. 26-16, 12 September 2019). The joint submission to the 111th session of the CERD criticises the law for significant shortcomings, including implementation periods ranging from five to 15 years, depending on the provision (MRG et al., 27 October 2023, p. 7; Organic Law No. 26-16, 12 September 2019, Article 31).

According to MRG et al., Tamazight continues to hold a secondary status (MRG et al., 16 November 2023, p. 1). For instance, Law No. 38-15 states in Article 14 that "[t]he Arabic

language remains the language of judgments, pleadings and the writing of judgments before the courts […]" (MRG et al., 27 October 2023, p. 7; see also Law No. 38-15, 14 July 2022, Article 14). In addition, Article 30 of Law No. 26-16 provides for the use of Tamazight interpreters in legal proceedings (Organic Law No. 26-16, 12 September 2019, Article 30). However Amazigh activists argue that the mere provision of interpretation services does not constitute genuine official recognition. Therefore, they criticise the insufficient implementation of Tamazight's official status (MRG et al., 27 October 2023, p. 7). Subsequently, MRG et al. highlight the deficient implementation and limited promotion of Tamazight in schools:

> "Tamazight teaching continues to be largely marginalised, inadequate as well as still optional across primary schools in Morocco, although its status of official language prescribes that it should be guaranteed as language of instruction on an equal footing with Arabic." (MRG et al. 27 October 2023, pp. 7-8)

On 24 January 2023, Morocco's House of Representatives passed a proposal that added Tamazight as a requirement for citizenship, in addition to or instead of Arabic (The New Arab, 2 March 2023; see also Moroccan Nationality Code, with amendments up to 16 May 2024, Article 11). Despite formal legislative prioritization of Amazigh identity and language, the IWGIA claims that the situation of Amazigh people has not really changed (IWGIA, April 2025, p. 94). Several sources state that despite the increased representation of Amazigh culture in the elite, media, and politics, the majority of Amazigh people was socially, economically, and politically marginalized (Freedom House, 2024, section B4; see also USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 6; see also Bertelsmann Stiftung 19 March 2024, p. 15). As Freedom House notes:

> "Amazigh and other communities that do not identify with the dominant Arab culture tend to face educational and economic disadvantages." (Freedom House, 2024, section F4).

MRG et al. emphasize that the issue of land rights is central to the rights of the indigenous Amazigh. Several laws, all adopted in 2019, regulate and allow the sale of collective land to public or private investors (MRG et al., 27 October 2023 pp. 11, 16, FN lvi; see also Law No. 62-17, 9 August 2019; Law No. 63-17, 9 August 2019; Law No. 64-17, 9 August 2019). Regarding this legislation MRG et al. further explain:

> "[The legislation] grant[s] full power to the Ministry of Interior to demarcate collective lands (also known as Soulaliyate), without consultation or cooperation with the Amazigh peoples, and to sell, transfer or lease millions of hectares of Amazigh land to foreign or national investors, individuals as well as private and public extractive companies, provided signature of a so-called community representative ('Nouab') actually appointed by local authorities, at the expense of indigenous peoples' socio-economic rights and interests." (MRG et al., 27 October 2023, p. 11)

According to the concluding observations on the 19th to 21st periodic reports of CERD, Amazigh women, and in particular Soulaliyat women, were disproportionately affected by dispossession of collective lands and forced displacement (CERD, 21 December 2023, p. 6). Soulaliyat women are tribal women from diverse ethnicities living on communal land (War on Want, 14 August 2020).

On 9 August 2023, the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, Human Rights Watch and other civil society organisations call for the immediate release of Nasser Zefzafi from his detention. Zefzafi was a leader of the 2016 Hirak movement, which demanded socioeconomic justice for the Amazigh Rif region (HRW, 9 August 2023).

3.8.2 Sahrawi in Western-Sahara

The Bertelsmann Stiftung reports that "many Sahrawis reject Moroccan nationality and claim their right to self-determination" (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 7). For more background information on the Western Sahara-Morocco conflict, see also section 2.1 and section 3.4.4 of this report).

Most reporting covers the situation of Sahrawis in Western Sahara, where several sources describe discrimination by state authorities based on their ethnicity and because of their political opinion for supporting self-determination (WGHRWS & The Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara, 30 June 2024, p. 3; ASVDH et al., 10 November 2023, pp. 5-6).

In a joint communication to the Moroccan government, published 20 March 2025, eight UN Special Rapporteurs condemn Morocco's ongoing repression and racial discrimination against Sahrawi human-rights defenders and advocates for self-determination in the occupied territory (OHCHR, 20 March 2025). The Sahrawi Association for Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations

Committed by the Moroccan State (ASVDH), the Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders Collective (CODESA) and the Working Group on Human Rights in the Occupied Territory of Western Sahara (WGHRWS) state in reference to the UN Special Rapporteurs communication:

> "According to the communication, Moroccan authorities have systematically suppressed Sahrawi calls for self-determination, often through acts that violate international law and basic human rights. Sahrawis are reportedly subjected to racial profiling, land expropriation, denial of adequate housing, surveillance, and police brutality. Meanwhile, Moroccan settlers receive government support, access to land, and public investment in housing and infrastructure." (ASVDH et al., 2 June 2025, p. 3)

According to ACAPS, a Catalan NGO that advocates for the human rights of Sahrawi people, and NOVACT, an NGO, which is dedicated to peacebuilding, Sahrawis faced higher rates of unemployment, especially those who are publicly claiming the right for self-determination (ACAPS Catalunya & NOVACT, 6 March 2025, p. 39). This finding could not be verified by official census data, as the data on unemployment does not differentiate by ethnicity.

In June 2024 WGHRWS and the Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara published a joint submission to the UN resolution A/RES/78/234. The resolution is a call for concrete action for the elimination of racism and the submission reports that "Sahrawi workers are deprived of their trade union rights, and the unions they establish are not recognized. Moroccan labour unions operating in the occupied territories discriminate against Sahrawi workers in all sectors" (WGHRWS & Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara, 30 June 2024, p. 3).

On 1 October 2024, the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Western Sahara also expressed concern about the conditions of Sahrawi prisoners, noting reported human rights violations against the Gdeim Izik group (UN Security Council, 1 October 2024, p. 11), who have remained imprisoned since 2013 (Freedom House, 23 January 2014, section E).

3.8.3 Black Moroccans & sub-Saharan migrants

Black Moroccans constitute a racial minority within Morocco, primarily residing in the southern regions (Arab Reform Initiative, 28 August 2020). They are differentiated from sub-Saharan African migrants, though both groups face systemic racism and discrimination from state and non-state actors. Black people in Morocco have been marginalized for centuries and are often subjected to racial slurs like "Abd" (slave), "Khadam" (servant), "Hratin/ Haratin" (slave descendant, to address specifically black Moroccans) (MRG et al., 27 October 2023, p. 4; El Hamel, 2013, p. 4). However, political scientist Katharina Natter from Leiden University notes that the term 'Haratin' refers to a "[b]lack, sedentary ethnic group living across southern Maghreb" but has acquired a discriminatory connotation over time, as "Black Moroccans are often associated with the country's history of slavery". This neglects the fact that the Haratin did not originate from sub-Saharan Africa as slaves but rather have settled in Morocco prior to the trans-Saharan slave trade (Natter, 2019, p. 98, FN 113).

Another Black Moroccan ethnic group is the Gnawa. The historian Chouki El Hamel elaborates:

> "The term *gnawa* refers to black people from West Africa as well as their religious/spiritual order and musical style. In the case of ethnicity, sources consistently agree that the Moroccan Gnawa were originally black slaves freed over time under various circumstances […]. Over many generations beginning with their initial forced presence in Morocco, the Gnawa created acceptance within the Moroccan social landscape while at the same time maintaining their ethnic and group solidarity." (El Hamel, 2013, p. 270)

The abovementioned 2023 joint submission to CERD elaborates the discrimination Black people faced in Morocco:

> "Black Moroccans as well as Black sub-Saharan African migrants and refugees continue to suffer from discriminatory treatment and abuse on the basis of their skin colour, national origin, nationality, or lack thereof, or immigration status, as a result of systemic and structural racism pervading Moroccan society and institutions." (MRG et al., 27 October 2023, p. 3)

The joint submission further states that Black Moroccans faced discrimination in access to housing and employment and have often been targets of physical violence. Additionally, they experienced marginalisation in political and public life with limited representation in official positions (MRG et al., 27 October 2023, p. 4)

Racist and xenophobic stereotyping of Black people were amplified through online hate speech campaigns. Several media articles report about nationalist, anti-migration and anti-Black rhetoric targeting Black Moroccans and in particular sub-Saharan migrants (Africa News, 10 August 2025; The New Arab, 2 March 2023; The New Arab, 8 March 2023). According to a submission by the Moroccan association Antiracist Group for the Accompaniment and Defence of Foreigners and Migrants (Groupe antiraciste d'accompagnement et de défense des étrangers et migrants, GADEM) to the 111th session of CERD, racial profiling and arbitrary arrests occurred in regions near border areas and in major cities such as Rabat. GADEM further reports systematic displacement operations within Moroccan territory targeting Black non-Moroccan nationals (GADEM, 27 October 2023, p. 7).

3.9 Trafficking in persons

In its 2023, 2024, and 2025 reports on trafficking in persons, the USDOS classifies Morocco as Tier 2, indicating that the government "does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so" (USDOS, 29 September 2025; USDOS, 24 June 2024; USDOS, 15 June 2023). The Geneva-based Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) in 2025 published a report which states that human trafficking "is entrenched in Morocco" as the country functions as a source, transit and destination zone (GI-TOC, 10 November 2025, p. 3).

Moroccan Law No. 27-14 criminalises human trafficking and prescribes penalties of five to ten years of imprisonment and a fine of MAD 10,000-500,000 [approximately USD 1,080-53,840 as of December 2025] if the victim is an adult, and 20 to 30 years imprisonment plus a fine of MAD 200,000-2,000,000 [approximately USD 21,540-215,350 as of December 2025] if the victim is a child (Law No. 27-14, 25 August 2016, Articles 448.2, 448.4). In 2019, the National Commission for Coordination of Measures to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Person (CNCLT) was established (UNODC, 24 July 2025) with the participation of the National Human Rights Council of Morocco (CNDH) (CNDH, 12 March 2025). According to the 2025 USDOS report (reporting period April 2024 to March 2025), the commission was administered by the Ministry of Justice. The report adds that "civil society and international organizations reported the anti-trafficking commission had inadequate resources and personnel to effectively coordinate the government's anti-trafficking efforts" (USDOS, 29 September 2025). On 23 March 2023, the Moroccan government launched the National Plan on Combating and Prevention of Human Trafficking 2023-2030, accompanied by a National Referral Mechanism for the identification and protection of victims (L'Economiste, 24 March 2023; Government of Morocco, 23 March 2023; IOM et al., 10 May 2024, p. 2). The CNCLT accompanies the 2023-2026 implementation plan in coordination with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) (IOM et al., 10 May 2024, pp. 2-3).

Law No. 03-23 introduced 2025 amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code (Law No. 03-23, 13 August 2025; see also Medias24, 15 September 2025). The reform includes the redefinition of Article 108 of the Criminal Procedure Code**,** which regulates the concept of serious offences and criminal dangerousness, providing a legal basis to prioritise trafficking in person crimes within the Moroccan penal system (Hespress, 4 October 2025; see also Law No. 03-23, 13 August 2025).

According to the USDOS, in 2024, Moroccan authorities investigated 204 suspects in new trafficking cases and continued investigations in 268 ongoing cases from previous years. Furthermore, the government initiated 213 prosecutions of suspected traffickers in 2024 (USDOS, 29 September 2025). In comparison, in 2023, 79 new trafficking cases were investigated, 119 suspects were arrested, and the authorities initiated the prosecution of 171 alleged traffickers (USDOS, 24 June 2024). Moroccan authorities continued to penalise persons, particularly undocumented migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, for offences such as immigration violations or prostitution offences that were the direct result of their circumstances as victims of trafficking. This reportedly led to distrust of authorities and contributed to a reluctance to report cases of human trafficking (USDOS, 29 September 2025; USDOS, 24 June 2024).

In 2024, 452 potential trafficking victims could be identified by the authorities, of whom 229 were confirmed as victims. In 2023, 169 trafficking victims had been confirmed (USDOS,

29 September 2025). According to the report on trafficking in persons by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC), of the 169 detected victims in Morocco in 2023, 52 were men, 44 women, 28 boys and 45 girls. Furthermore, the report states that among the trafficking victims, 128 were subjected to sexual exploitation, eight to forced labour and 34 were trafficked for other purposes, including trafficking for begging, slavery-like practices and forced crime (UNODC, December 2024, p. 20).

The 2025 GI-TOC report states that human trafficking within Morocco mainly occurred in domestic work, construction, agriculture and sex trade (GI-TOC, 10 November 2025, p. 3). According to the USDOS, Moroccan women were exploited in sex trafficking and Moroccans living in rural areas "are increasingly vulnerable to exploitation by sex and labor traffickers" as income sources were limited due to severe drought (USDOS, 29 September 2025). Traffickers and sometimes parents subjected Moroccan children to exploitation in the form of sex trafficking and forced labour, such as domestic servitude and forced begging. Furthermore, drug traffickers forced children to participate in the production and transportation of drugs within Morocco (USDOS, 29 September 2025; see also USDOL, September 2025, p. 1). Boys were reportedly subjected to forced labour in artisanal workshops, textile production, and construction, while girls from rural areas were recruited for domestic service in urban centres. In the aftermath of the September 2023 earthquake, traffickers reportedly exploited children in the affected areas for sex and labour trafficking (USDOS, 29 September 2025). A social media campaign emerged encouraging men to marry young girls in the affected rural communities under the pretext of providing assistance (MWN, 13 September 2023). The USDOS further notes that foreign nationals from Europe and the Middle East engaged in extraterritorial commercial sexual exploitation of children in Moroccan cities. For instance, tourists exploited children for sex trafficking in Tangier, specifically in vacation rentals that are owned and overseen by European nationals (USDOS, 29 September 2025).

Furthermore, foreign migrants were vulnerable to human trafficking, as the USDOS states:

> "Documented and undocumented foreign migrants, especially women and children, are highly vulnerable to forced labor and sex trafficking in Morocco and as they transit through Morocco to reach Europe. Traffickers exploit undocumented migrants who voluntarily use smugglers to enter Morocco. In 2022, the government tightened border restrictions with Europe, which observers reported increased the vulnerability to trafficking of undocumented migrants in Morocco who could not return home." (USDOS, 29 September 2025)

Criminal networks reportedly operated in Oujda on the Algerian border and in northern coastal cities, exploiting undocumented migrant women through sex trafficking and forced begging (USDOS, 29 September 2025). In addition, the report on child labour in Morocco covering 2024 states that "children transiting through Morocco are vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation and forced begging" (USDOL, September 2025, p. 2).

Moroccan adults and children were also exploited abroad, particularly in Europe and the Gulf States, notably the United Arab Emirates and Oman (USDOS, 29 September 2025; GI-TOC, 10 November 2025, p. 3). With reference to media reports, the USDOS states that "Moroccan workers in Spain's agricultural sector are subjected to forced labor and, at times, sexual abuse" (USDOS, 29 September 2025). In France, Moroccan victims reportedly experienced forced labour in vineyards (USDOS, 29 September 2025; see also L'Humanité, 30 September 2025).

Another transnational trafficking network operated with countries in Southeast Asia. According to the USDOS, Moroccans were fraudulently recruited for work in Burma, Laos, and Cambodia, transiting through Thailand; "once they arrive, traffickers confiscate the victims' passports, subject them to inhumane conditions, and force them to conduct online scams operations" (USDOS, 29 September 2025).

On 4 November 2025, a Moroccan court handed down the first ruling against a person accused of recruiting young Moroccans to work in a scam compound in Asia. The victims were lured to Thailand by an online job advertisement and trafficked to online scam centres in Myanmar. They reported witnessing torture and degrading treatment. The suspect was sentenced to five years' imprisonment and a USD 107,300 fine for human trafficking (AP, 4 November 2025).

The USDOS states that the government increased its victim protection efforts. However, both the 2024 and 2023 USDOS reports note that referrals of identified victims to shelters and services remained inconsistent due to uneven application of identification procedures, leading to the underutilisation of available trafficking shelters (USDOS, 29 September 2025; USDOS, 24 June 2024). In 2024, the government provided shelter for 34 victims, medical assistance for 53 victims, psycho-social assistance to 14 victims and legal assistance to 156 victims in criminal proceedings and 40 in civil cases (USDOS, 29 September 2025). In 2023, the government provided shelter for 11 victims, medical assistance for three and unspecified service measures for 39 victims. According to USDOS, the government did not publish information about the services provided to 116 additional victims beyond legal assistance (USDOS, 24 June 2024). While the government reportedly expanded specialised shelter and service availability, the USDOS observes continued underutilisation of these facilities. The government reportedly collaborated with NGOs, international organisations and donors to establish additional shelters, with plans to operate one in each of the 12 provinces (USDOS, 29 September 2025). In 2024, the Ministry of Justice inaugurated a shelter in Fès for victims of human trafficking, particularly designed for women and girls (Le Desk, 3 August 2024). The USDOS elaborates:

> "The government continued to rely heavily on NGOs and international organizations to provide assistance to victims and provided some financial assistance to organizations assisting child labour and child trafficking victims, but it did not otherwise report providing financial resources to organizations assisting trafficking victims" (USDOS, 29 September 2025).

4 Rule of Law

4.1 Arrest procedures and detention

4.1.1 Arbitrary arrests

Freedom House notes in its 2024 Freedom in the World report that "[p]olice frequently violate legal and procedural safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention" (Freedom House, 2024 section F2) while, according to the 2024 report by the Bertelsmann Stiftung, covering the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023, "[p]olice frequently resort to arbitrary arrest and detention" (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 14). The USDOS observes in 2025 covering 2024 that "[s]ignificant human rights issues included credible reports of […] arbitrary arrest or detention" (USDOS, 12 August 2025, Executive Summary). Moreover, the USDOS points to reports on restrictions on freedom of expression and the media, including "unjustified arrests" of journalists in 2024 and 2025 (USDOS, 12 August 2025, Executive Summary; USDOS, 23 April 2024, Executive Summary).

The Moroccan NGO Jossour Forum of Moroccan Women explains that according to Article 23 of the 2011 Constitution, "arbitrary or secret detention and enforced disappearance are among the most serious crimes, and their perpetrators are subject to the maximum penalties" (Jossour Forum of Moroccan Women, July 2024, p. 7; see also Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Article 23). The USDOS similarly notes that arbitrary arrest and detention are prohibited by law, and every person has the right to challenge in court the lawfulness of their arrest or detention. However, "while the government generally observed these requirements, observers indicated that police did not always respect these provisions or consistently observe due process, particularly during or in the wake of protests" (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1D). The source continues to explain that

> "[u]nder the penal code, any public official who ordered an arbitrary detention could be punished by demotion and, if it was done for private interest, by imprisonment for 10 years to life. An official who neglected to refer to his superiors a claimed or observed arbitrary or illegal detention could be punished by demotion." (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1D; see also Penal Code with amendments up to 5 July 2018, Articles 225, 227, 228)

Under certain circumstances, the police are reportedly legally entitled to conduct arrests without warrants but are obliged to submit evidence of the alleged crime to the prosecutor immediately (USDOS, 12 August 2025, section 2c). The Bertelsmann Stiftung states in its March 2024 report covering the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023 that "[t]he security apparatus continues to be largely unaccountable, as officials are rarely investigated for arbitrary detention or torture" (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 40).

Some sources point to specific population groups reportedly facing arbitrary arrest, including LGBTI persons (Amnesty International, 29 April 2025) and refugees, asylum seekers and migrants (Amnesty International, 29 April 2025; ACAPS, 6 March 2025; CERD, 21 December 2023, p. 8). Several sources report on the arbitrary detention of Western Saharans (Saharawis) (ACAPS Catalunya & NOVACT, 6 March 2025, p. 28; International Council Supporting Fair Trial and Human Rights, 26 August 2024, p. 2; The Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara & Working Group on Human Rights in the Occupied Territory of Western Sahara, 20 August 2024, p. 17; ACAPS Catalunya & NOVACT, 27 June 2024, p. 23; Amnesty

International, 24 April 2024). Saharawis reportedly also experience "short-term enforced disappearances" by authorities "kidnapping Sahrawis and then releasing them at varying intervals ranging from several hours to days, weeks, and even months" (The Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara & Working Group on Human Rights in the Occupied Territory of Western Sahara, 20 August 2024, p. 17). According to ACAPS Catalunya & NOVACT, arbitrary arrests remained a "continuing practice" in Western Sahara in 2023, targeting activists, defenders and journalists (ACAPS Catalunya & NOVACT, 27 June 2024, p. 23). That source notes that 10 men and 6 women were arbitrarily arrested or detained in 2023 (ACAPS Catalunya & NOVACT, 27 June 2024, p. 24) and 14 individuals in 2024 (ACAPS Catalunya & NOVACT, 6 March 2025, p. 28). In October 2023, the UN Human Rights Council's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) released an opinion concerning the case of 18 Saharawi activists who had been detained in the context of the dismantling of Gdeim Izik protest camp in November 2010. The WGAD qualified the detentions arbitrary and called on the authorities for their immediate release, an "enforceable right" to seek compensation and an independent investigation into the circumstances of their detention as well as "appropriate measures" against those responsible for violating their rights (HRC, 11 October 2023, p. 17). Nevertheless, no action has reportedly been taken as of 8 August 2025 (Al-Basher Foundation for Development, 2 September 2025, p. 3).

Other cases, where the WGAD found an individual's detention to be arbitrary, included the cases of Saharawi journalist Khatri Dadda (HRC, 14 February 2024, p. 15), Saharawi activist Al-Hussein Al-Bashir Ibrahim (also known as Lahoucine Amaadour) (HRC, 26 February 2025, p. 15) as well as political activist and leader of the Hirak El-Rif movement (see above, section 3.4.3) Nasser Zefzafi (HRC, 25 October 2024, pp. 15-16; MENA Rights Group, last updated 2 September 2024). Nasser Zefzafi remains in detention as of July 2025 (HRC, 22 July 2025, p. 12; FIDH et al., 29 July 2025). Khatri Dadda and Al-Hussein Al-Bashir Ibrahim remain in detention as of September 2025 (Al-Basher Foundation for Development, 2 September 2025, p. 4).

In May 2024, Alkarama, a Geneva-based human rights organisation with a focus on the Arab world, announces that it submitted the case of former human rights Minister and founder of the Moroccan Liberal Party (PLM), Mohamed Zian, to the WGAD for consideration. Alkarama claims that he was arbitrarily detained in 2022 and sentenced to 3 years in prison without "the guarantees of due process and fair trial" (Alkarama, 23 May 2024). Similarly, the London-based Al-Quds Al-Arabi newspaper quotes the Moroccan Association for the Support of Political Prisoners describing Mr. Zian's arrest in a statement as arbitrary (Al-Quds Al-Arabi, 18 November 2024).

Arbitrary detentions in the context of youth protests in September/October 2025

In October 2025, several sources report about security forces arbitrarily detaining participants in youth-led protests that began in late September 2025 (MWN, 6 October 2025; BBC, 4 October 2025; Amnesty International, 3 October 2025; FLD, 3 October 2025; HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement et al., 1 October 2025). The protests reportedly erupted in the context of a series of incidents in public hospitals (MWN, 6 October 2025) including the death of eight women in the maternity ward of a public hospital in Agadir in mid-September, which according to some reports could have been prevented had there been better conditions

and sufficient medical staff (BBC, 4 October 2025). Protests are coordinated by a group of young Moroccans called Gen Z 212[52] via the social media platform Discord, and the movement's demands include, among others, better public health care, education and access to jobs (MWN, 6 October 2025; BBC, 4 October 2025). According to a preliminary report by the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (Association Marocaine des Droits Humains, AMDH), 2,068 persons have been arrested and prosecuted in the context of the protests, including minors and often "in violation of fair trial standards" (MWN, 25 October 2025; see also AMDH, 25 October 2025).

4.1.2 Detention conditions

According to the USDOS covering 2023, authorities are entitled to deny a detainee's access to counsel or family members for the first 24 hours of dentation (extendable by 12 hours if the Prosecutor's Office permitted), or for the first 96 hours in case of detention under terrorism-related laws. The USDOS notes that these limits were "not consistently" respected and "most reports of abuse stemmed from police interrogations during these initial detention periods". Also, the requirement to notify family members of an arrest immediately after the initial period, was "not always" respected by the police (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1D). The USDOS further explains:

> "At the conclusion of the initial detention period in police custody, a detainee had to appear before a prosecutor, who could issue provisional charges and order additional investigation by an investigating judge in preparation for trial. The investigating judge had four months, with a possible one-month extension, to interview the individual and determine what charges, if any, to file. An individual could be held in detention or released during this phase. At the end of this period, the investigative judge had to either file charges, decline to file charges and drop the case, or release the individual pending additional investigation and a later determination of whether to file. Authorities generally respected these timelines." (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1D)

Several sources mention the issue of overcrowding in Morocco's prisons (CNDH, 29 May 2025, p. 9; ASF, 30 September 2024; Justice Trends, 28 June 2024; USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1C; CNDH, 8 March 2024; Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 15; Raseef22, 11 June 2023). According to the National Human Rights Council (CNDH), a "constitutional institution for the promotion and protection of human rights" (CNDH, 29 May 2025, p. 2), a total of 105,911 prisoners, including 2,498 women, were held in the country's 77 existing prisons as of 27 May 2025 (CNDH, 29 May 2025, pp. 8-9).

According to Shakib Al-Khiyari, a human rights activist quoted in 2023 by Raseef22, the main factor contributing to prison overcrowding was the high number of pre-trail detainees whose share of the total prison population was 41 per cent as of June 2023 (Raseef22, 11 June 2023). As of 31 December 2024, that share amounted to 31.79 per cent, according to data from the country's General Delegation for Prison Administration and Reintegration (Délégation générale de l'administration pénitentiaire et de la reinsertion, DGAPR) (L'Opinion, 30 June 2025).

[52] A reference to the country's international dialling code, according to the BBC (BBC, 4 October 2025).

The Bertelsmann Stiftung notes in its March 2024 report that "[p]retrial detainees can be held beyond a one-year limit and even longer without valid justification" (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 14). The USDOS explains that prosecutors can demand up to five two-month extensions of pretrial detention and that "[i]n some cases, defendants were held in pretrial detention for longer than their eventual sentence, particularly for misdemeanors" (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1D). The source further notes that "according to government sources and NGOs, prison overcrowding was due in large part to an underutilized system of bail or provisional release, a severe backlog in cases, and lack of judicial discretion to reduce the length of prison sentences for specific crimes" (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1C), as well as "lack of plea bargaining as an option for prosecutors; rare use of mediation and other permitted out-of-court settlement mechanisms; and the absence of legal authority for alternative sentencing, among other issues" (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1D). Al-Khiyari, the human rights activist quoted by Raseef22, points to an "excessive reliance" on pretrial detention – by law an "exceptional measure" that in Morocco "the judicial management makes […] the norm" (Raseef22, 11 June 2023).

The Brussels-based international NGO Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF) notes that overcrowding is "exacerbated by the criminalisation of drug use" and explains that apparently the illegal possession and use of banned substances – offences punishable with prison sentences of two months to one year – is "the leading causes of imprisonment" (ASF, 30 September 2024; see also ASF, 27 June 2024, p. 30).

Morocco World News (MWN) quotes from a joint report on the country's prison system in 2023 by the Moroccan Prisons Observatory (OMP) and ASF, describing the challenges related to overcrowding, including the spread of diseases, "cramped" cells and lack of basic services (MWN, 28 November 2024). The CNDH notes that overcrowding "significantly undermines" inmates' rights to health, hygiene and education (CNDH, 29 May 2025, p. 9, see also Medias24, 29 March 2025; Justice Trends, 28 June 2024). One source points out that overcrowding sometimes also leads to physical altercations between inmates (Justice Trends, 28 June 2024). Moreover, the joint OMP and ASF report mentions the ongoing presence of mentally ill persons in the prison system where they are not provided with the necessary specialised care (MWN, 28 November 2024).

In a March 2024 statement, the CNDH recommended measures such as "the rationalization of pre-trial detention, implementation of conditional release and acceleration of the adoption of draft law on alternative punishment" to reduce overcrowding in prisons (CNDH, 8 March 2024). The mentioned law, Law 43.22 on Alternative Penalties, which introduced, among others, alternative penalties for offenses punished with imprisonment of less than five years, was officially implemented in August 2025 (MWN, 22 August 2025; Telquel, 22 August 2025; see also Law No. 43.22 on Alternative Penalties, 24 July 2024, pp. 5327-5334).

In some older prisons, pretrial detainees and convicted persons are reportedly not held separately but share the same facilities (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1C). Women prisoners are held in separate units in altogether 43 mixed prisons. As of 31 December 2023, there were no female-only prisons, according to information by the DGAPR (APT, December 2024, p. 2).

The USDOS states in its 2024 human rights report covering 2023 that the DGAPR "reported no discrimination in access to health services or facilities based on gender for women prisoners" while "[s]ome officials reported that women inmates often had difficulty accessing gender-specific health specialists such as obstetricians and gynecologists" (USDOS, 23 April 2024,

section 1C). In its December 2024 report on the situation of women in prison, the Swiss-based NGO Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT) notes that in some of the prisons visited, Morocco's National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture (National Preventive Mechanism, NPM) observed a lack of medical and nursing staff, while according to the DGAPR, prisons without permanent doctors are covered by mobile medical teams, agreements with doctors and telemedicine (APT, December 2024, p. 6). In terms of general access to health care, The USDOS notes that

> "[l]ocal NGOs asserted that prison facilities did not provide adequate access to health care and did not accommodate the needs of prisoners with disabilities. The DGAPR reported that a nurse and a psychologist examined each prisoner on arrival and prisoners received care upon request." (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1C)

In its May 2025 report, the CHDH acknowledges that they "identified also challenges related to access to healthcare in prisons (for example, insufficient medical services and delays in appointments with doctors), despite efforts made to overcome them" (CNDH, 29 May 2025, p. 10). A university diploma in prison medicine was reportedly launched in February 2025 (MWN, 19 February 2025).

The CNDH explains that it has "a quasi-judicial mandate to handle complaints either at its own initiative or upon complaints it receives" (CNDH, 29 May 2025, p. 2). According to the USDOS, the CNDH and the DGAPR "investigated allegations of inhumane conditions. The CNDH and the DGAPR maintained a system of 'letterboxes' in prisons for prisoners to submit complaints without censorship regarding their imprisonment" (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1C).

Moreover, in terms of safeguarding the rights of persons deprived of their liberty, the CNDH indicates that it conducted 814 protective visits to penitentiary institutions between 2019 and the end of 2023 (CNDH, 29 May 2025, p. 9).

4.1.3 Use of torture and inhuman, cruel or degrading treatment

Morocco is a state party to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), ratified in 1993, and to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT), ratified in 2014. Moreover, national law provides for the prohibition of torture, including the Constitution (Article 22) and the Penal Code (Articles 231-1 to 321-8). A National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) was established in 2018, the respective mandate was given to the CNDH (Prison Insider, 2025; see also ECPM et al., 2023, p. 122).

The CNDH/NPM has the prerogative to conduct regular and unannounced visits in places of deprivation of liberty at its own discretion. Moreover, it has the right to get unrestricted access to information on the treatment of persons deprived of liberty and their detention conditions. It also has the right to monitor the detention conditions of persons deprived of their liberty and to make recommendations (ECPM et al., 2023, p. 86). Between 2020 and 2024, the CNDH/NPM reportedly conducted 166 preventive visits – i.e., visits aimed at preventing "practices likely to lead directly or indirectly to any form of torture and ill-treatment" – to a wide range of places

of deprivation of liberty[53] across the country. According to the source, 85 per cent of recommendations made by the CNDH/NPM on the basis of such visits have been put into practice (CNDH, 29 May 2025, p. 7).

In its 2024 human rights report covering 2023, the USDOS indicates that "[t]he government permitted some NGOs with a human rights mandate, as well as the CNDH, to conduct unaccompanied prison monitoring visits". The CNDH reportedly conducted 81 such monitoring visits through June 2023 as well as 14 visits between January and June 2023 to prisons in Western Sahara, including eight in Laayoune-Sakia "with the stated goal of preventing practices likely to lead directly or indirectly to torture or mistreatment and engaging with authorities on human rights obligations" (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1C).

Nevertheless, the Bertelsmann Stiftung and the USDOS note that that despite the legal ban on torture, there were reports that it continued to be used (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 15; USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1C; USDOS, 12 August 2025, section 3a). In its 2024 report covering 2023, the USDOS further elaborates:

> "Government institutions and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) received reports regarding mistreatment of individuals in official custody. The Public Prosecutor's Office received six complaints alleging torture and 47 complaints of excessive violence in the first half of the year. Two complaints were being prosecuted, 22 were closed, and 23 remained under investigation as of September, the most recent information available at year's end. The government did not provide any information on how many officers were prosecuted for using excessive violence." (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1C)

According to a report by the presidency of the Public Prosecutor's Office quoted by Le Matin (Morocco), prosecutors received 187 complaints on allegations of violence, 84 complaints on allegations of ill-treatment and 13 on allegations of torture in 2023. Moreover, prosecutors ordered 300 medical examinations of individuals brought before the Public Prosecutor's Office (Le Matin (Morocco), 7 March 2025). In the period January to June 2024, the Public Prosecutor's Office reportedly received six complaints alleging torture, two of which were closed and four continued to be investigated as of October 2024 (USDOS, 12 August 2025, section 3a).

In its 2025 human rights report, Amnesty International quotes Akaliyat, an LGBTI rights organisation, saying that LGBTI people continued to experience ill-treatment in detention (Amnesty International, 29 April 2025). The same source notes in a previous report covering the human rights situation in 2023 that "[a]uthorities tortured and otherwise ill-treated some individuals perceived as critics", including a Saharawi man who was filmed speaking in favour of self-determination (see below). Moreover, at least five persons were denied the right to read and write in prison, including the writer and human rights defender Rida Benotmane (see also section 3.2.3.1), human rights lawyer Mohamed Zian, and the journalists Taoufik Bouachrine, Omar Radi and Soulaiman Raissouni (Amnesty International, 24 April 2024) (for the latter three, see also section 3.2.4). Prison authorities reportedly prohibited Radi from discussing politics

[53] According to the CNDH/NPM, this included "local and central prisons, police custody centers, Gendarmerie Royale stations, child protection centers, elder care facilities, court docks, psychiatric centers" and others (CNDH, 29 May 2025, p. 7).

with his parents, threating to deny him the right to phone calls in case of non-compliance. Taoufik Bouachrine was reportedly denied medical care when he refused to wear a prison uniform during a hospital visit (RSF, 14 June 2023) and submitted to additional punitive measures after his family made a public statement on the issue (RSF, 19 May 2023). In March 2024, RSF quotes from a statement by the family of Soulaimane Raissouni describing the "arbitrary and degrading measures" he was submitted to, including the confiscation and destruction of his books and correspondence, and "the guards' degrading habit of filming him half-naked inside the prison" (RSF, 5 March 2024). The three journalists were released in July 2024 after having been pardoned by the King (IFJ, 30 July 2024).
In an August 2023 article on NGOs calling for the release of Hirak movement leader Nasser Zefzafi, HRW notes that "[a]ccording to sources close to him, Zefzafi's health continues to deteriorate in prison as authorities prevent him from receiving sufficient medical treatment" (HRW, 9 August 2023).

Treatment of Saharawi activists

In a March 2023 statement, Amnesty International observes that "[t]orture and other ill-treatment continue in Morocco with impunity, particularly against Sahrawi activists", with four "Gdeim Izik prisoners" (see above, section 4.1.1) being held in solitary confinement since 2017 (Amnesty International, 24 March 2023, p. 1). In April 2023, a Saharawi man, Abd El Tawab El Terkzi, was reportedly arbitrarily detained for 90 minutes and tortured by law enforcement officers after having spoken in favour of self-determination for the Saharawi people in a video of a Spanish tourist (Amnesty International, 24 April 2024; see also ASVDH et al., 15 August 2023, p. 3). In a May 2023 communication to the Moroccan authorities, several UN Special Procedures mandate holders[54] point to reports on deteriorating detention conditions of Saharawi activists Al-Hussein Al-Bashir Ibrahim, Khatri Dadda, and Naama Asfari, including being transferred to prisons far away from their families, not receiving adequate medical care, and, in case of Khatri Dadda and Naama Asfari, facing restrictions to their phone calls in terms of length (two and five minutes, respectively), frequency and the ability to speak unsupervised (UN Special Procedures mandate holders, 24 May 2023, pp. 2-4). Likewise, the Geneva-based NGO Maloca Internationale points to ill-treatment and isolation of detained Saharawi activists:

> "Saharawi political prisoners face severe discrimination, degrading treatment, and are often held in deplorable conditions. The lack of fair trials and the use of torture and ill-treatment to extract confessions are common practices.
>
> Many detainees are transferred outside of the occupied territory during their pre-trial detention or sentencing, in direct violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the transfer of protected persons out of the occupied territory.

[54] Including the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, and the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (UN Special Procedures mandate holders, 24 May 2023, p. 1).

> These transfers not only isolate prisoners from their families and communities but also place them in environments where they are more vulnerable to abuse." (Maloca Internationale, 12 September 2024, pp. 2-3).

In his October 2024 report to the UN Security Council, the Secretary-General states that

> "[m]embers of the Gdeim Izik group continued to be dispersed and held in prisons outside of Western Sahara while serving lengthy prison sentences. The continued isolation, irregular contact with family members and discriminatory treatment by the prison administration have reportedly had adverse impacts on the prisoners' physical and mental health." (UN Security Council, 1 October 2024, p. 11)

FIDH reports in June 2025 on the deteriorating health of Mohamed Lamin Haddi, imprisoned since 2010 in the context of the dismantlement of the Gdeim Izik camp. He has reportedly been held in isolation since 2017 in a windowless subterranean cell and without adequate medical care (FIDH, 18 June 2025). Another member of the Gdeim Izik group, Sidi Abdallah Abbahah, has reportedly been held in solitary confinement for seven years, cut off from contact with his lawyer, and has faced threats and intimidations by prison guards when announcing a protest hunger strike (SPS, 6 May 2025), while Saharawi prisoner Hametu Lakweiri has reportedly been denied medical treatment and transfer to a facility closer to his family and has also been submitted to mistreatment from the prison administration (SPS, 28 January 2025).
The Geneva-based MENA Rights Group notes in April 2023 in the context of the HRC's Universal Period Review (UPR) and UN member states' human rights-related recommendations that while "Morocco accepted most recommendations related to the prohibition of torture [….], most of these recommendations have not been implemented and Morocco's record on these issues remains highly concerning" (MENA Rights Group, 10 April 2023).

4.2 Trial procedures

4.2.1 Legal protections and due process

Independence of the Judiciary

The constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco establishes a judiciary independent of the legislative and the executive power (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Articles 107-112) and names the King as the guarantor of this independence (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Article 107).
Notwithstanding constitutional provisions, several sources note that the judicial system operates under the influence of the monarchy (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 13; Freedom House, 16 October 2024, section C1; USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1E; MENA Rights Group, 10 April 2023). The MENA Rights Group, an NGO promoting fundamental rights in the Middle East and North Africa, explains that "[t]his [is] mainly because the King is the sole chair of the Supreme Council of the Judiciary" (MENA Rights Group, 10 April 2023; see Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Article 115). The Supreme Council of the Judiciary ("Conseil supérieur du pouvoir judiciaire") is, among other things, responsible for upholding the guarantees granted to judges, particularly concerning their independence, as well as matters of appointment, promotion and retirement (Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 29 July 2011, Article 113). Regarding the Supreme Council and the independence of the courts the Bertelsmann Stiftung observes the following:

> "The court system is not independent of the monarchy. The king presides over the Supreme Council of the Judicial Power, which determines the compliance of lower court decisions with the law. The council consists of elected judges and senior judges. The king also appoints five members, with most of the appointment process controlled by the king. The executive dominates the council and most of the judicial matters. The courts are commonly used to punish political opponents, activists, and critics of the Moroccan political system and the government. Trials for speech-related charges are regularly used to intimidate and silence critical journalists, internet commentators, and protesters." (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 13)

According to Freedom House, courts often make decisions based on recommendations from the security forces and "fail to produce fair and balanced rulings" (Freedom House, 16 October 2024, section C1; see also MENA Rights Group, 10 April 2023). The USDOS 2024 Country Report on Human Rights Practices, which covers 2023, quotes human rights activists claiming that "trials sometimes appeared politicized in cases involving the status of the monarchy, Western Sahara, Islam as it related to political life, and national security" (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1E).

Trial Procedures

The abovementioned April 2024 USDOS report notes that "[t]he law provided for the right to a fair and public trial with the right of appeal, and the judiciary generally enforced this right, but NGOs reported significant concerns with fair trial guarantees in some high-profile cases"

(USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1E). Sources report that dissidents (MENA Rights Group, 10 April 2023) like journalists and human rights activists have been affected by unfair trial proceedings (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 35; see also MENA Rights Group, 10 April 2023) and that the judiciary is "used to punish dissenting voices" (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 35).
The USDOS report furthermore provides the following details regarding trial procedures:

> "Authorities at times denied lawyers timely access to their clients, and in some cases, lawyers met their clients only at the first hearing before the judge.
>
> Authorities were required to provide an indigent defendant with an attorney in cases where the potential sentence was greater than five years, but these defense attorneys often were poorly paid and were not properly trained. If a defendant did not have an attorney when a trial began, the judge could ask any attorney present to represent the defendant, often resulting in inadequate representation. At times NGOs provided attorneys for vulnerable individuals (minors, refugees, victims of domestic violence), who frequently did not have the means to pay. Access to NGO resources was limited and available only in larger cities.
>
> The law permitted defense attorneys to question witnesses and present their own witnesses and evidence, but some judges reportedly denied such defense requests. Several NGOs noted arbitrary limits on defendants' access to case files presented a significant challenge to effective legal representation. Defendants had the right to refuse to participate in their trial, and a judge could decide to continue the proceedings in the defendant's absence while providing a detailed summary to the defendant.
>
> The law forbade judges from admitting confessions made under duress without additional corroborating evidence, but NGOs reported that judges sometimes decided cases based on forced confessions. NGOs reported that authorities often pressured investigators to obtain confessions to expedite prosecution." (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1E)

In a Human Rights report covering 2022 Amnesty International mentions that courts had violated fair trial standards by relying on identical police records for several defendants and restricting their access to legal counsel. Furthermore, judicial authorities had neglected to examine claims from defendants that their "confessions" were obtained through torture (Amnesty International, 27 March 2023). According to the Bertelsmann Stiftung, "[p]risoners can be denied access to their case files. This obstructs their ability to prepare their defense adequately" (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 15).

Reform of the Criminal Procedure Code

On 8 September 2025, Law No. 03-23 was published in the Official Bulletin, Morocco's official gazette. Law No. 03-23 amends and supplements the country's Criminal Procedure Code (MWN, 14 September 2025; see also Le Matin (Morocco), 15 September 2025; Medias24, 15 September 2025; see also Law No. 03-23, 13 August 2025) and will come fully into effect three months after its promulgation, on 8 December 2025 (Hespress, 13 September 2025; Le

Matin (Morocco), 15 September 2025; Express TV, 26 November 2025). Africa Legal, a legal media platform focusing on Africa, highlights several significant reforms introduced by the new legislation in a September 2025 article:

> "Some of the key reforms to the Code of Criminal Procedure include:
>
> - mandating suspects be informed of their rights during detention and enabling them to contact a lawyer and access translation services when necessary;
> - reducing reliance on pre-trial detention and limiting it to the most urgent cases, alongside activating modern precautionary alternatives;
> - expanding victims' rights, particularly for women and children affected by violence, through legal and social support and informing them about the outcome of their cases;
> - enhancing fair trial guarantees by securing defense rights and ensuring the right to a trial within a reasonable time, while expanding access to legal aid;
> - establishing a National Observatory for Crime, a scientific body that will analyse patterns in criminal activity, help inform policy decisions, and provide lawmakers with reliable data to shape future reforms." (Africa Legal, 16 September 2025)

After the Bill for Law No. 03-23 was initially introduced, civil society organisations and human rights groups expressed concerns regarding specific provisions, notably Articles 3 and 7. They requested that the proposed reforms be submitted to the Constitutional Court for further review prior to enactment. However, this request was not granted (Africa Legal, 16 September 2025; see also Hespress, 13 September 2025; Amnesty International, 29 April 2025). In a July 2025 article the French newspaper Le Monde explains that Article 3 of the new Criminal Procedure Code limits the filing of complaints for alleged embezzlement of public funds to the prerogative of the public prosecutor at the Court of Cassation and based solely on reports from the administration or state bodies. Article 7 restricts the right of associations to become civil parties in such cases, making it dependent on prior authorisation by the Minister of Justice (Le Monde, 11 July 2025; see also Africa Legal, 16 September 2025). The Moroccan newspaper Le Matin (Morocco) reports that the fact that only officially recognised public-interest associations with prior authorisation will be able to file a civil suit is by some perceived as a political filter (Le Matin (Morocco), 15 September 2025). The International Center for Not-For-Profit Law (ICNL), which works to improve the legal environment for civil society and public participation, reports that in June 2025 Moroccan civil society organisations found that Articles 3 and 7 of the then-draft law would weaken their possibilities to fight corruption and to defend public funding, and pose "a serious threat to democratic transparency and public accountability" (ICNL, 8 September 2025).

4.2.2 Corruption

Transparency International, an international NGO working to fight corruption, rates 180 countries in its Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), which measures how experts and businesspeople perceive levels of public-sector corruption (TI, 6 February 2025a). On the CPI scale, where "0" indicates that a country is highly corrupt and "100" that it is perceived as "very clean", Morocco scores 37 in 2024 and ranks 99 out of 180 countries (TI, 6 February 2025b).

Another indicator on corruption is provided by the World Justice Project (WJP), an international civil society organisation dedicated to advancing the rule of law worldwide. WJP evaluates countries using its Rule of Law Index, which is based on "people's perceptions and experiences of the rule of law" (WJP, 28 October 2025, p. 2). The Index includes the factor "absence of corruption", which considers the misuse of public office for personal gain (WJP, 28 October 2025, p. 13) through "bribery, improper influence by public or private interests, and misappropriation of public funds or other resources" (WJP, 2025). Morocco is ranked 92nd out of 143 countries within the "absence of corruption"-factor, achieving a score of 0.42 (WJP, 2025) on a scale where "1" indicates a high level of absence of corruption and "0" indicates a low level of absence of corruption (see WJP, 28 October 2025, p. 10).

There are several legal provisions and other instruments to fight corruption. Section IV of the Moroccan Penal Code covers corruption and influence trafficking, imposing penalties of two to five years' imprisonment and fines of MAD 2,000-5,000 [USD 216-540 as of December 2025] for those found guilty of these offences (Penal Code, 5 July 2018, Articles 248-256-1). The National Authority for Probity, Prevention, and Fighting Corruption (INPPLC), which "is in charge of initiating, coordinating and overseeing the implementation of policies to enhance transparency and fight corruption", began operating in 2018 (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 23 February 2022, pp. 36-37). MWN reports on a national hotline for reporting bribery (MWN, 22 October 2025).

In its March 2024 report the Bertelsmann Stiftung observes that even though the law does provide penalties for officials who are involved in corruption, those are not always implemented, which leads to impunity. Corruption is seen as a common problem in Morocco, as weak oversight makes it difficult to eliminate it, even at the highest levels of power. In addition to the executive and the legislative branch, the judicial branch is also affected by corruption (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 14). NGOs have reportedly stated that the independence of the judiciary is weakened by corruption (USDOS, 23 April 2024, section 1E).

On the law combatting corruption the Bertelsmann Stiftung notes:

> "The law on anti-corruption was adopted in 2021. The law broadened the definition of corruption to include conflicts of interest, embezzlement of public funds, and corruption within public administrations and agencies. However, there has been no clear indication that the political will exists to combat corruption effectively." (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 19 March 2024, p. 14)

On the controversy regarding Articles 3 and 7 of the new Criminal Procedure Code, which deal with complaints for alleged embezzlement issues and will come fully into effect on 8 December 2025, please see section 4.2.1.

Several sources report on corruption cases in politics and the judicial sector. According to the French news radio station Radio France Internationale (RFI), 30 deputies of the Moroccan parliament are being prosecuted or have been convicted for corruption, embezzlement or other financial crimes since 2021. The implicated members of parliament belong to the ruling coalition parties as well as to the opposition parties. RFI also mentions that for some these cases indicate that the justice system is finally taking action (RFI, 11 August 2025). In August 2025 Maroc Diplomatique, an independent Moroccan online media outlet, reports of convictions of judges and lawyers in Tétouan for selling judgments and puts it in context of a

broader cleanup effort (Maroc Diplomatique, 12 August 2025; see also Hespress, 4 December 2025).

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