

Morocco is Committed to Protecting Human Rights

- Morocco is committed to protecting human rights throughout the Kingdom and has undertaken a number of initiatives to promote and protect the human rights of all of its citizens. Through recent programs to improve human rights, Morocco is making great strides and has become a leader in the Arab world on human rights and women's rights issues.
- Morocco is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, Convention against Torture, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women.
<http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/newhvstatbytreaty?OpenView>
- In 1990, the late King Hassan II established the Advisory Council on Human Rights (CCDH) to resolve cases of disappearances and arbitrary detentions and to provide compensation for victims and their families. In 2003, the CCDH recommended the creation of an independent body to further investigate past human rights violations in Morocco. The current king, Mohammed VI, not only welcomed the recommendation, but personally oversaw the creation of the 17-member Equity and Reconciliation Commission.
<http://www.ccdh.org.ma/spip.php?article391>
- Established by His Majesty King Mohammed VI in 2004, the Moroccan Truth and Reconciliation Commission (IER) was the first truth and reconciliation commission established in the Arab world. The Commission works to advance compensation work initiated by the Advisory Council on Human Rights (CCDH). It is an independent investigative body established to shed light on past human rights violations that took place in Morocco from 1956 to 1999. The IER's mission is to not only answer questions about Morocco's past, but to study the causes that permitted the abuses. Morocco can then use these lessons to construct a stronger, open and more democratic future.
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61702.htm>
- The IER Commission received more than 22,000 applications, from which 16,861 victims, victims' family members, and witness accounts were presented to the Commission, some in publicly televised hearings. 23,676 Moroccan victims have received compensation checks totaling \$193 million. The King has also accepted all of the IER recommendations and has encouraged the government to pass the necessary reforms to implement them.
<http://www.ictj.org/en/news/press/release/654.html>
- In the last few years, Morocco has also taken the lead among Islamic countries in promoting the rights of women and gender equity. The Government of Morocco has criminalized sexual harassment and endorsed a new family code. In 2004, based on the unprecedented initiative of King Mohammed VI, Morocco approved the *moudawana*, one of the most progressive laws on women's and family rights in the Arab world. The new law raised the age of marriage for girls from 15 to 18 and gave wives joint responsibility of the family with their husbands,

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Additional information is available at the Justice Department in Washington, D.C.

notably in the area of equal rights to property upon divorce. These moves help to secure women's participation in society and politics to reinforce their power and eliminate gender discrimination in private and public affairs.

http://www.globalrights.org/site/DocServer/Moudawana-English_Translation.pdf?docID=3106

- Associations such as the *Democratic Association of Moroccan Women* (ADFM) work in conjunction with the government to ensure the proper execution of the new family law and continue to be instrumental in the advancement of women's rights in general.
<http://www.adfm.ma/index.php?lang=en>
- In 2006, 50 women preachers or *mourchidats* graduated from a Moroccan government-sponsored training program as a part of a campaign launched by King Mohammed VI to strengthen state-controlled mosques while undermining radical clerics who preach extremism. Morocco's move is unprecedented in the Arab/Muslim world. Each *mourchidat* is assigned to one of the more than 33,000 mosques in Morocco. While they do not lead prayers (this task is still reserved exclusively to men), the *mourchidats* will give basic religious instruction in mosques and provide support in prisons, hospitals, and schools.
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/shows/morocco/video.html>
- Beyond the promotion of women's rights, the government of Morocco has subsequently worked hard to promote reform in others aspects of society while maintaining and promoting the rule of law. The Moroccan riot police unit (GUS), established in response to the Casablanca terrorist attacks of 2003, was disbanded by the national security forces in October 2006 under criticism of its handling of protests and demonstrations.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/6059938.stm>
- The government has also worked to ensure equal treatment of all members of society. UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Secretary General of the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed an enhanced cooperation agreement at UNHCR headquarters in Geneva on July 20, 2007. The agreement raised the status of the UNHCR office in Rabat to a full-fledged representation so as to "focus on the protection of refugees within broader mixed migratory movements affecting Morocco and the North African region." Morocco was the first country on the African continent to receive UNHCR staff in 1959 and to allow UNHCR to open an honorary delegation in 1965.
<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/UNHCR/b83ecfdcf1165ec95cd88fef7ad10b33.htm>
- Morocco has continued to support the work of the Moroccan Advisory Council on Human Rights (CCDH). The CCDH announced on July 26, 2007 the inauguration of an office in Laâyoune, the major population center in the Sahara. The office provides the local population with a center for debate and open dialogue. Its mandate is shared by the CCDH and *Diwan al Madhalim*, a policy of His Majesty King Mohammed VI initiated in 2001 to consolidate Moroccan government bodies that are entrusted "to correct inequality, uphold rights and safeguard freedoms."
<http://www.ccdh.org.ma/spip.php?article282>
http://www.diwan-almadhalim.ma/anglais/index.php?id_page=1&id_sous_page=0
- Moroccan human rights leaders have been recognized worldwide for their advocacy. Dr. Latifa Jbabdi, champion of women's and human rights in Morocco, won a seat in the

legislative elections of September 2007. Dr. Jbabdi is a former political prisoner, member of the Advisory Council on Human Rights (CCDH), member of the Truth and Reconciliation (IER) Commission and President of the Feminine Action Union (UAF). Jbabdi was honored in 2005 by the Washington, DC-based *Vital Voices* organization for her extensive contributions to the advancement of global women's rights.

http://www.vitalvoices.org/desktopdefault.aspx?page_id=242

- Aïcha Eich Channa, a Moroccan women's rights advocate and founder Solidarité Féminine, an organization that provides training and care to unwed mothers, was awarded the 2009 Opus Prize for her commitment to social justice. Eich Channa is the first Muslim recipient of the award. The Opus Prize is a \$1 million faith-based humanitarian award given annually to recognize unsung heroes of any faith tradition, anywhere in the world, solving today's most persistent social problems. It is the world's largest faith-based, humanitarian award for social innovation. Supported by the King of Morocco, the work of Eich Channa is an example of how civil society and government are working together to promote human rights in Morocco.
http://www.opusprize.org/winners/09_Ech-Channa.cfm
http://thecatholicspirit.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2750&Itemid=27
- As a testament to its commitment to human rights, Morocco recently reformed its human rights governing body. In March 2011, His Majesty King Mohammed VI announced the creation of a National Human Rights Council (CNDH) to replace the CCDH. The creation of CNDH represents more than just a name change. The royal decree creating the CNDH establishes the autonomy of the council, enlarges its investigative and monitoring powers, and reinforces its pluralistic composition. The decree grants the council the power to investigate any allegations of human rights violations, to summon people to give evidence in its investigations, and to act as an early warning mechanism to prevent human rights violations. It also grants the council the power to visit detention centers and inspect prison conditions, establish regional authorities for protecting human rights, and examine means to bring legislations in line with international human rights treaties and international law. The CNDH is also tasked with enriching the debate on human rights throughout the Kingdom and providing an annual report, as well as special thematic reports, to the King.
<http://www.cndh.ma/?lang=en>
- Human rights leaders in Morocco have praised the creation of the new council, noting that, "the new group is a clear sign of political desire to entrench democracy and human rights."
http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2011/03/16/feature-01
- Since March 2011, the CNDH has been active in monitoring human rights at the local, regional, and national levels. In accordance with the CNDH founding law, it has established regional commissions that are mandated to receive complaints about any allegations of human rights violations. Of the 13 regional commissions, two are located in the Western Sahara, including one in Laâyoune and one in Dakhla. The regional offices in Laâyoune and Dakhla have organized a number of seminars and training sessions for NGOs and civil society on human rights protection and promotion.
<http://www.ccdh.org.ma/spip.php?rubrique20&lang=en>

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