

## Morocco Is Irreversibly Committed to Democratic Reform and Good Governance

- In a speech on March 9, 2011, King Mohammed VI announced a broad revision of Morocco's constitution in an effort to consolidate democracy in Morocco, devolve power to the regions, broaden individual freedoms, solidify the rule of law, and strengthen human rights. In the speech, King Mohammed VI announced the creation of an advisory commission tasked with consulting with government and civil society leaders, political parties, trade unions, and youth groups to make proposed reforms for Morocco's Constitution. The speech marked the start of an unprecedented campaign for constitutional reform, culminating in parliamentary elections on November 25 and the establishment of a new government in late December 2011.  
[http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5h0nK8l\\_SJctJBKct7YkOImplhsPw?docId=CNG.9bfa3f79ce20b70cbc21d53796182754.101](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5h0nK8l_SJctJBKct7YkOImplhsPw?docId=CNG.9bfa3f79ce20b70cbc21d53796182754.101)  
<http://moroccoonthemove.wordpress.com/faq-moroccos-2011-parliamentary-elections/>
- Leaders worldwide praised Morocco for its commitment to reform following the March 9<sup>th</sup> speech. The United States said it is "encouraged by the proposals put forward by the king to transform Morocco's democratic development through constitutional, judicial and political reforms." The European Union called the reforms "a major step" signaling "a clear commitment to democracy and respect for human rights." It added that new measures would continue "the Kingdom's already-launched reform process" and advance "separation of powers," "independence of the judiciary," "regionalization," and "equal rights for men and women." French President Nicolas Sarkozy said the advances were "exemplary," and put Morocco on "a path of profound, peaceful and modern transformation." Britain welcomed Morocco's "commitment to reform" and Spain also congratulated the Moroccan leader. The 47-member Council of Europe went so far as to make Morocco its first "partner for democracy" among nations in the region.  
<http://moroccoonthemove.wordpress.com/press-releases-morocco-delivers/>
- After several months of consultation, on June 17 the King announced the drafting of a new Constitution with unprecedented and far-reaching reforms. A national referendum on the proposed reforms took place on July 1 and Moroccans voted overwhelmingly for the changes to the Constitution. The Constitution enshrined several key changes to Morocco's political system, advancing democratization by strengthening the principle of separation of powers and bringing all stakeholders into the political process. The New Constitution:
  - Establishes that the Head of Government will be appointed from the party that wins the most seats in the Parliament in the upcoming elections.
  - Expands the powers of the Head of Government and the Parliament, giving them broad legislative powers.
  - Empowers Moroccans with more control and leadership at the local government level—making local and regional officials directly accountable to voters.
  - Establishes independent agencies to guarantee civil and human rights protections.
  - Establishes an independent judiciary with a newly mandated Constitutional Court.<http://moroccoonthemove.wordpress.com/faq-moroccos-2011-parliamentary-elections/>

This information has been produced by the Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP). [www.moroccoonthemove.com](http://www.moroccoonthemove.com)

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

- Following the successful revision of the Constitution, the King called for national parliamentary elections to take place on November 25, 2011. Certified as free and fair by international observers, the voter turnout in the November elections was 45% - an increase of more than 20% from the last parliamentary elections held in 2007, thus underscoring the support among Moroccans for reform initiated by the King. The Justice and Development Party (PJD) won the most seats, 107; followed by Istiqlal (Independence Party, Morocco's oldest political party) with 60 seats; the National Rally for Independents (RNI) with 52 seats; and the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM), Morocco's newest political party, which ran for the first time in national elections, with 47 seats. In line with the new Constitution, which sought to increase political participation of women and youth, 60 national seats went to women and 30 went to candidates under 40 years old.

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- Also in line with the tenets of the new Constitution, the King appointed Abdelilah Benkirane, leader of the PJD, the party which won the most seats, as Prime Minister and tasked him with forming a government. As the PJD platform focuses on educational reform, fighting corruption, international trade and investment, democracy, and human rights, it is anticipated that the PJD-led government will continue to advance democratic reform in Morocco.

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- The 2011 reforms marked a long-standing tradition of reform in Morocco, where reforms have been underway since the 1990s. A significant hallmark was the open election in 1997 which led to the appointment of an opposition government in 1998. Other reforms under King Hassan II included: freeing of all former political prisoners, the opening of political space for civil society, the establishment of a human rights body to address abuses of the past, and the relaxation of restrictions on freedom of the press and freedom of speech.
- King Mohammed VI has further consolidated, accelerated, and broadened these democratic reforms. In one of his first speeches, the King emphasized the need to create a new relationship between the State and its citizens. His Majesty's staunch commitment to democracy and an active civil society is likewise illustrated in a 2003 speech to the nation, "Indeed, our strength lies in the democratic system we have opted for as an irreversible choice which, coupled with a proactive, committed diplomacy, involving parliament, political parties, trade unions and civil society, will help us in the defense of our just cause."
- Much of what King Mohammed VI has initiated is part of an ongoing process to empower individual citizens and the institutions that represent them. These major achievements include: a series of free and fair parliamentary and local elections; reform of the family code; inclusion of women in national and local elections; the beginnings of the process of regionalization to bring power and decision making closer to local communities; the equity and reconciliation commission dealing with past human rights abuses; the human development initiatives (INDH) to build sustainable futures for Morocco's most disadvantaged communities; sustained efforts to fight illiteracy; the recent upgrading of the institution

responsible for human rights protections; and the recently launch of the process of judicial reform to make the judiciary more independent and professional.

- These initiatives highlight Morocco's democratic transition. As the Washington Post noted, "[Morocco] has over the past decade undergone a slow but profound transformation from traditional monarchy to constitutional monarchy, acquiring along the way real political parties, a relatively free press, new political leaders—the mayor of Marrakesh is a 33-year-old woman—and a set of family laws that strive to be compatible with international conventions on human rights."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/29/AR2009062903455.html?hpid=opinionsbox1>

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