



COI Factsheet

Safe Country of Origin concept - Morocco

March 2025



The below factsheet on Morocco was produced in early 2025 by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) in accordance with article 12(2) of its founding Regulation (EU) 2021/2023, and in response to a request from the European Commission (Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs - DG HOME) to support its work on the designation of safe countries of origin at Union level.

This factsheet was peer-reviewed by a range of partners, including the DG HOME (international unit) and the European External Action Service. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also provided valuable input into this process. This factsheet was drafted in accordance with the EUAA COI Methodology, which emphasises the use of diverse sources to ensure factual, balanced and reliable information.

While this factsheet was structured around the defining criteria of a safe country of origin as stipulated in the Asylum Procedure Regulation (EU) 2024/1348, the EUAA (and its partners) played no part in assessing whether such criteria were met for Morocco to be designated as a safe country of origin at Union level. That assessment was performed entirely by the European Commission and was based on a range of relevant and available sources of information.



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COI Factsheet - Safe Countries of Origin (SCO)

Morocco

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Legal and political situation – overview

System of government and political situation

Morocco is a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament and an executive government that derives from it.¹ Islam is the state religion, and Arabic and Amazigh are its official languages.² While the constitution and informal practices grant the King significant authority over political matters,³ Morocco has adopted the 2011 Constitution through a referendum,⁴ which expanded the power of legislature and the role of the head of Government.⁵ Meanwhile, the King is the Commander of the Faithful and commander of the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces.⁶ The current King, Mohammed VI, who has ruled the country since 1999, is a member of the Alaouite Dynasty, which has governed Morocco since the 17th century.⁷ Morocco holds regular elections for parliamentary and local governance.⁸

The status of Western Sahara is a subject of dispute, with Morocco claiming sovereignty over the territory.⁹ The territory is located on the northwest coast of Africa and is bordered by Morocco, Mauritania, and Algeria.¹⁰ Western Sahara's commonly spoken languages include Arabic, Spanish, and French.¹¹ The Polisario Front is a movement that advocates for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. In 1975, the Polisario Front declared the establishment of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), which claims authority over the territory of Western Sahara.¹² While Western Sahara has been listed by the United Nations as a Non-Self-Governing Territory since 1963,¹³ as of mid-2024, the territory is *de facto* administered by Morocco.¹⁴

In April 1991, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 690, establishing the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) with a mandate to implement settlement arrangements and organise a referendum, including the creation of the

¹ Morocco, Chambre des représentants, La Constitution du Royaume du Maroc – 2011, 29 July 2011, [url](#) ; Council of Europe, CODICES, the Constitution, 29 July 2011, [url](#)

² Morocco, Chambre des représentants, La Constitution du Royaume du Maroc – 2011, 29 July 2011, [url](#) ; Council of Europe, CODICES, the Constitution, 29 July 2011, [url](#)

³ Freedom House, Morocco, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

⁴ France, OFPRA, DIDR, Maroc: Les cyberactivistes, 17 June 2024, [url](#), p. 4

⁵ Morocco, Head of Government, Powers of the Head of Government, 2019, [url](#); European Committee of the Regions, Morocco, n.d., [url](#); IDEA, The 2011 Moroccan Constitution: A critical analysis, 2012, [url](#), p. 37, 38

⁶ Morocco, Embassy of Morocco in South Africa, The Political system of The Kingdom of Morocco n.d., [url](#)

⁷ Morocco, Embassy of Morocco in South Africa, A Brief History of The Kingdom of Morocco, n.d., [url](#)

⁸ Freedom House, 2024, Morocco, 2 March 2025, [url](#)

⁹ Morocco, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates, His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God assist Him, delivered, on Wednesday evening, a speech to His faithful people on the occasion of the 49th anniversary of the glorious Green March., 6 November 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰ MINURSO, About, Background, n.d., [url](#)

¹¹ BBC, Western Sahara profile, 28 October 2024, [url](#)

¹² MINURSO, About, chronology of events, n.d., [url](#)

¹³ UN, the United Nations and decolonisation, Western Sahar, 9 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴ EuroMed Rights, Morocco / Western Sahara, n.d., [url](#)

Identification Commission (IDC) to determine voter eligibility.¹⁵ In April 2007, Morocco presented its autonomy plan for Western Sahara, titled ‘Moroccan Initiative for Negotiating an Autonomy Statute for the Sahara Region,’ to the UN Secretary-General, while the Polisario Front submitted its ‘Proposal for a Mutually Acceptable Political Solution that Ensures the Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara.’¹⁶ According to the UN Secretary General report of 1 October 2024, ‘Progress in the political process remained challenging despite the ongoing efforts’ by his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara.¹⁷ On 31 October 2024, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2756, extending MINURSO’s mandate for another year, until 31 October 2025,¹⁸ and continued encouraging Morocco, the Polisario Front, Algeria, and Mauritania to enhance cooperation, build trust, and engage more actively in the political process to advance towards a solution.¹⁹ Meanwhile, France fully supported Morocco’s autonomy plan as the ‘only basis’ for a political solution, while Denmark viewed it as a ‘good basis for an agreed solution’ and Greece considered it a ‘serious and credible’ approach to resolving the dispute.²⁰

Demographics and migration profile

Morocco’s population is estimated at 38.2 million,²¹ which is predominantly Sunni Muslim (98.6 %), with most following the Maliki school of thought. There is also a small Salafist community that follows a non-political, quietist approach. Afro-Moroccans comprise about 10 % of the population, and the country is home to small communities of Shi’a Muslims (several thousand) residing mainly in the north, Jews (4 000 people), and Baha’is (over 350 people).²²

By September 2024, an estimated 5.1 million Moroccans were living abroad, representing 15 % of the total Moroccan population,²³ and generating USD 11.7 billion remittances in 2024.²⁴ As of 2024, there were 1 020 162 Moroccan nationals in France, 711 792 in Spain, 450 557 in Belgium, and 180 879 in the Netherlands.²⁵ The latest data from January 2023 shows that 399 146 Moroccans were legally residing in Italy.²⁶ Morocco remained one of the main

¹⁵ MINURSO, About, chronology of events, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁶ MINURSO, About, chronology of events, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁷ UNSC, report of Secretary-General, situation of Western Sahara, S/2024/707, 1 October 2024, [url](#), para. 1

¹⁸ UNSC, Western Sahara, April 2025 monthly factsheet, 31 March 2025, [url](#)

¹⁹ UNSC, Resolution 2756 (2024), Adopted by the Security Council at its 9771st meeting, S/RES/2756 (2024), 31 October 2024, [url](#), p. 2

²⁰ UNSC, Western Sahara, April 2025 monthly factsheet, 31 March 2025, [url](#)

²¹ UNFPA, World population dashboard, Morocco, 2024, n.d., [url](#)

²² Minority Rights Group, Morocco, updated in July 2024, n.d., [url](#)

²³ TELQUEL, Moroccan diaspora, the great return, 26 September 2024, [url](#)

²⁴ Morocco World News, Moroccan diaspora remittances reached 117.7 billion in 2024, 2 February 2025, [url](#); Diaspora News, Moroccan diaspora remittances reach \$11.7 billion in 2024, 15 February 2025, [url](#)

²⁵ EU DIF, Diaspora engagement map, Morocco, information observed on 3 April 2025, [url](#)

²⁶ Italy, ML, The Moroccan community in Italy, 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 2

countries of origin for migrants to Europe in 2024.²⁷ Additionally, 3.8 % of Moroccan nationals resided in Canada, 3.6 % in the United States, and another 3.8 % in Arab states.²⁸

Morocco remains a country of emigration²⁹ due to various internal challenges³⁰ such as labour market challenges, low participation of women (in the labour market) and rising unemployment,³¹ particularly among youth (27 %), and drought conditions, all of which have sustained migration pressures,³² especially among young people.³³ Moroccans primarily use two key pathways to reach Europe: the Western Mediterranean route, which includes both land crossings into Spanish enclaves Ceuta and Melilla and sea crossings to mainland Spain, and the Western African route, involving dangerous sea journeys to the Canary Islands.³⁴ Morocco's economy grew by 3.4 % in 2023, driven by tourism, manufacturing, and investment, while inflation dropped below 1%. However, challenges like drought and improving private sector development persist.³⁵

In 2022/2023, the number of international protection applications submitted by Moroccan nationals in Europe has increased compared to previous years, rising from 21 898 in 2022 to 30 924 in 2023, before decreasing by 18 % in 2024 to 25 347 applications. Recognition rates for Moroccan nationals have remained low, staying at 5 % in both 2022 and 2023, then dropping to 4 % in 2024.³⁶

As of mid-year 2024, there were an estimated 111 000 third-country nationals in Morocco, including migrants (with regular or irregular status), refugees, and asylum seekers. Among them, 43.5 % were female.³⁷ According to UNHCR, as of 31 December 2024, Morocco hosted 9 094 refugees and 9 784 asylum seekers from over 64 countries, the majority of whom were Syrians (5 399), followed by Guineans (2 956), Senegalese (1 956) and Sudanese (1 484), spread across 81 localities.³⁸ According to Human Rights Watch, as of March 2024, there were 173 600 Sahrawi refugees residing in five camps close to the southwestern Tindouf town in Algeria.³⁹

²⁷ IOM, Yearly Regional Report, Mixed Migration Flows to Europe, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), January – December 2024, [url](#), p. 6

²⁸ Areion 24 News, Le Maroc, un pays aux profondes mutations migratoires, 9 May 2024, [url](#)

²⁹ ICMPD, Migration Outlook, Mediterranean 2023, Seven migration issues to look out for in 2023, Origins, key events and priorities for Europe, 6 February 2024, [url](#), p. 5

³⁰ OECD, Economic Outlook, Volume 2024 Issue 2: Morocco, 4 December 2024, [url](#); ICMPD, Migration Outlook, Mediterranean 2023, Seven migration issues to look out for in 2023, Origins, key events and priorities for Europe, 6 February 2024, [url](#), p. 5

³¹ OECD, Economic Outlook, Volume 2024 Issue 2: Morocco, 4 December 2024, [url](#)

³² ICMPD, Migration Outlook, Mediterranean 2023, Seven migration issues to look out for in 2023, Origins, key events and priorities for Europe, 6 February 2024, [url](#), p. 5

³³ OECD, Economic Outlook, Volume 2024 Issue 2: Morocco, 4 December 2024, [url](#)

³⁴ European Council, Migration flows on the Western routes, 18 March 2025, [url](#)

³⁵ World Bank Group, The World Bank in Morocco, Overview, last updated 4 October 2024, [url](#)

³⁶ EUAA, EPS as of 18 March 2025

³⁷ UN DESA, 2025, International migrant stock 2024, January 2025, 8 October 2024, [url](#), p. 11

³⁸ UNHCR, Morocco, December 2024, n.d., [url](#)

³⁹ HRW, Morocco and Western Sahara, events of 2024, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

International legal instruments

Morocco is a state party to all major UN human rights conventions and actively participates in various UN working groups.⁴⁰ The country ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) on 3 May 1979. It also ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in 1970, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in the same year. The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CPED) was ratified in 2013, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2009.⁴¹ Additionally, Morocco ratified the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW) in 1993.⁴² However, the country has not ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (CCPR-OP2-DP), the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (CRC-OP-IC). Furthermore, Morocco has not accepted the interstate communication procedure under Article 32 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED).⁴³ Morocco is party to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees,⁴⁴ and its additional Protocol of 1967.⁴⁵ Morocco also ratified the 1969 Organisation of African Union (OAU) Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa,⁴⁶ and the African Union Convention for the protection and assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Africa (known as the Kampala Convention) in 2019.⁴⁷

Relations between the European Union (EU) and Morocco are anchored in the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement, signed in 1996 and entered into force on 1 March 2000. This agreement also established a Free Trade Area between the two parties.⁴⁸ Building upon this foundation, the EU and Morocco adopted a Joint Declaration during the 14th meeting of the Association Council in June 2019 focusing on four structural areas: (1) convergence of values, (2) economic convergence and social cohesion, (3) shared knowledge, and (4) political consultation and enhanced cooperation on security at bilateral, regional, and international

⁴⁰ EEAS, Annual report on human rights and democracy in the world, 2023 country update, 29 May 2024, [url](#), p. 54

⁴¹ UN, Human Rights, Treaty bodies, Morocco, information observed on 18 March 2025, [url](#)

⁴² UN, Treaty collection, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 10 December 1984, [url](#)

⁴³ UN, Human Rights, Treaty bodies, Morocco, information observed on 18 March 2025, [url](#)

⁴⁴ UN, Treaty Series. 2. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁵ UN, Treaty Series. 5. Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁶ OAU, Convention, Governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa, 10 September 1969, [url](#), p. 14

⁴⁷ OAU, Kampala Convention, African Union Convention for the protection and assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, (Kampala Convention), 23 October 2009, [url](#), p. 27

⁴⁸ European Commission, Morocco, EU trade relations with Morocco. Facts, figures and latest developments., information observed on 19 March 2025, [url](#)

levels.⁴⁹ Migration and border management are key to EU-Morocco cooperation, with the EU providing financial and operational support. In March 2023, the EU launched a new package of EUR 624 million to support cooperation programmes aiming, among other things, to enhance Morocco's border control, support its green energy transition, and promote social and administrative reforms.⁵⁰

Security situation

Morocco holds a significant strategic geographical position, located at the crossroads of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.⁵¹ Its Royal Armed Forces (FAR) rank seventh in size in the African continent, comprising 200 000 active military forces, 150 000 reservists and 50 000 paramilitaries.⁵²

Morocco employs advanced counterterrorism measures, including surveillance technology.⁵³ In 2024, the National Brigade of Judicial Police referred 32 individuals suspected of terrorism, extremism, and promoting terrorist acts to the relevant prosecution.⁵⁴ In February 2025, Morocco reportedly dismantled a terrorist cell named 'the Lions of the Caliphate in the Maghreb' linked to the Islamic State in the Sahel (EIS) apprehending twelve individuals who were planning attacks.⁵⁵

In June 2024, the European Union-Justice and Counter Terrorism (EU CT-JUST) program was launched in Morocco to support regional stability by enhancing cross-border cooperation and the criminal justice system in combating terrorism and organised crime, with the aim of disrupting terrorist networks and recruiters.⁵⁶

With regards to the security situation in Western Sahara, the first Moroccan troops arrived in El Aaiún (now Laayoune) on 11 December 1975, resulting in clashes with the Polisario Front.⁵⁷ Since then, the territorial dispute between Morocco and the Sahrawi people, represented by the Polisario Front, has continued.⁵⁸

⁴⁹ European Council, Joint declaration by the European Union and Morocco for the fourteenth meeting of the Association Council, 27 June 2029, [url](#)

⁵⁰ European Commission, EU launches new cooperation programmes with Morocco worth €624 million green transition, migration and reforms, 2 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹ SpecialEurasia, Geopolitics of Morocco and the Western Sahar, 22 May 2024, [url](#); RUSI, Morocco as a Strategic Partner in Supporting the Sahel Region's Security, 13 February 2025, [url](#)

⁵² BBC, Voici le top 10 des armées les plus puissante en Afrique, 20 January 2025, [url](#)

⁵³ InfoMigrants, Morocco, a reference point for EU on migrants and fight against terrorism, 23 January 2025, [url](#)

⁵⁴ MAP, Moroccan police dismantled 123 illegal immigration and human trafficking networks in 2024 (Annual report), 25 December 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁵ AP, Morocco says it dismantled Islamic State cell that was planning attacks, 24 February 2025, [url](#); DW, Morocco says it has broken up 'Islamic State' cell, 25 February 2025, [url](#)

⁵⁶ EU South Neighbours, The EU-Just-CT project starts its activities in Morocco, 2 June 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷ MINURSO, About, chronology of events, n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁸ BBC, Morocco country profile, 28 October 2024, [url](#)

As of April 1991, the UN established MINURSO to oversee the peace process in Western Sahara, with its first 100 military observers deployed to Laayoune on 1 September 1991.⁵⁹ As of 2024, the security situation in Western Sahara remained tense but largely stable,⁶⁰ with continued low-intensity hostilities between Morocco and the Polisario Front.⁶¹

The European Union has continued its support for the UN-led peace process, including the efforts of the UN Secretary-General's Personal Envoy,⁶² and encourages the parties to return to the UN-led talks, as well as to promote and protect human rights in Western Sahara.⁶³

Human rights situation

According to the Freedom House report of 2023, civil society organisations in Morocco face various challenges, including legal restrictions and surveillance.⁶⁴ In the same year, Human Rights Watch reported that 'Authorities constrain human rights and independence activists in Western Sahara via harassment, surveillance, and in some cases lengthy imprisonment after unfair trials.'⁶⁵ The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported that it was unable to visit Western Sahara for the ninth year in a row, and that the ongoing restriction of access to direct information and independent monitoring has hindered a full and objective assessment of the human rights conditions in the region.⁶⁶ In 2024, authorities reportedly continued to maintain restrictions on dissent, with some peaceful protests dispersed by security forces.⁶⁷ By mid-2024, the UN OHCHR 'continued to receive allegations relating to human rights violations, including intimidation, surveillance and discrimination against Sahrawi individuals particularly when advocating for self-determination.'⁶⁸

Amnesty International reported that, in 2023, there were allegations of torture and ill-treatment of individuals perceived as critics.⁶⁹ In September 2024, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED) reviewed Morocco's report and recognised the Equity and Reconciliation Commission for addressing violations such as enforced disappearances, torture, and arbitrary detention, mainly incidents that happened between 1956 and 1999.⁷⁰

⁵⁹ MINURSO, About, chronology of events, n.d., [url](#)

⁶⁰ EEAS, Annual report on human rights and democracy in the world, 2023 country update, 29 May 2024, [url](#), p. 58

⁶¹ UNSC, report of Secretary-General, situation of Western Sahara, S/2024/707, 1 October 2024, [url](#), para. 53

⁶² European Council, Joint declaration by the European Union and Morocco for the fourteenth meeting of the Association Council, 27 June 2029, [url](#)

⁶³ EEAS, Annual report on human rights and democracy in the world, 2023 country update, 29 May 2024, [url](#), p. 58

⁶⁴ Freedom House, Morocco, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁵ HRW, Morocco and Western Sahara, events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁶ UNSC, report of Secretary-General, situation of Western Sahara, S/2024/707, 1 October 2024, [url](#), paras. 72 and 73

⁶⁷ HRW, Morocco and Western Sahara, events of 2024, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

⁶⁸ UN GA, Question of Western Sahara, A/79/229, 24 July 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁹ AI, Amnesty International, Morocco/Western Sahara, 2023, n.d., [url](#)

⁷⁰ UN, Experts of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances Commend Morocco on its Transitional Justice Process, Ask Questions on Cases of Disappeared Migrants and on Criminal Investigations into Cases of Enforced Disappearances, 25 September 2024, [url](#)

Prisons in Morocco have been reportedly overcrowded.⁷¹ As of 31 December 2023, the total prison population including those awaiting trial or held in pre-trial detention was estimated to 102 653 individuals.⁷² In 2023, most detained men and women in Morocco faced restrictions on spousal visits.⁷³ During the same period, the General Delegation for Prison Administration and Rehabilitation (DGAPR) in Morocco claimed having expanded its prison health services.⁷⁴ In 2023, Morocco adopted a law on alternative sentencing, which includes, among others, community service and electronic monitoring, and extends alternative penalties to offenses punishable by up to five years in prison, excluding crimes such as corruption, state security offenses, terrorism, military crimes, international drug trafficking, and exploitation of minors or persons with disabilities.⁷⁵

Article 20 of the Moroccan Constitution stipulates that ‘The right to life is the most fundamental right of every human being. This right shall be protected by law.’⁷⁶ Since 1993, Morocco has maintained an undeclared moratorium on the death penalty.⁷⁷ While courts continued issuing death sentences, no execution took place since 1993.⁷⁸ In 2023, the number of persons with death sentence reached 83 individuals.⁷⁹

In 2023, there was some progress in socio-economic rights with a new social assistance law, but education strikes disrupted schooling, judicial reforms remained pending, and challenges to freedom of expression and the media persisted.⁸⁰

Specific profiles

The overview below is a non-exhaustive list of profiles that may face specific human rights concerns.

Journalists

When it comes to press freedom, in 2024 Morocco improved its position, ranking 129th out of 180 countries in the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) World Press Freedom Index, up from

⁷¹ Freedom House, Morocco, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

⁷² ICPR, WPB, Country, Morocco, information observed on 26 March 2025, [url](#)

⁷³ OMDP, Etude de diagnostic des profils socio-économique pénaux et des conditions de détention des femmes au Maroc, August 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 74

⁷⁴ Morocco, General direction for prison administration and Rehabilitation, activity report 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵ Morocco, La Chambre des Représentants adopte à la majorité deux projets de loi relatifs aux peines alternatives et aux établissements pénitentiaires, 25 October 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁶ Morocco, Chambre des représentants, La Constitution du Royaume du Maroc – 2011, 29 July 2011, [url](#); Council of Europe, CODICES, the Constitution, 29 July 2011, [url](#)

⁷⁷ EEAS, Annual report on human rights and democracy in the world, 2023 country update, 29 May 2024, [url](#), p. 53

⁷⁸ AI, Amnesty International, Morocco/Western Sahara, 2023, n.d., [url](#)

⁷⁹ CNDH, 2023 CNDH report: ongoing advocacy for the right to life and the abolition of the death penalty, 5 July 2024, [url](#); MEDIAS 24, Le Maroc compte 83 condamnés à mort (Ouahbi), 2 March 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁰ EEAS, Annual report on human rights and democracy in the world, 2023 country update, 29 May 2024, [url](#), p. 53

144th in 2023. However, despite the improved ranking, RSF noted continued constraints on journalists, especially regarding sensitive topics such as the Western Sahara, the monarchy, corruption, and public protests, with critical coverage often subject to legal action.⁸¹ Despite constitutional guarantees,⁸² in practice the freedom of the press remains constrained.⁸³ In 2023, the government proposed legislation to replace the self-regulated National Press Council⁸⁴ with a committee to ‘reviewing regulatory proposals,’ raising concerns about possible restrictions on new or independent media outlets.⁸⁵

In some instances, journalists critical of the government were subjected to surveillance, which led to reported threats, harassment and defamation.⁸⁶ Some concerns remain over cases involving reports of arrests without warrant, lengthy pre-trial detention⁸⁷ and, at times, ‘short term abductions’.⁸⁸ Additionally, there are situations involving presumed exile following a royal pardon or self-censorship, mainly in Western Sahara.⁸⁹

While five journalists and media workers remained in detention in 2024,⁹⁰ by July 2024, several others were released following a royal pardon.⁹¹ Although the Press and Publications Code abolished prison sentences for journalists,⁹² cases of journalists being prosecuted under the Penal Code on ‘questionable charges of sexual misconduct’ were reported.⁹³

Human rights defenders and activists

While the Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, opinion, and assembly,⁹⁴ human rights activists continued to be targeted in 2023.⁹⁵ In 2024, the UN ‘Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern about the targeting, intimidation and

⁸¹ RSF, Morocco/Western Sahara, 2024, [url](#)

⁸² Morocco, Chambre des représentants, La Constitution du Royaume du Maroc – 2011, 29 July 2011, [url](#); Council of Europe, CODICES, the Constitution, 29 July 2011, [url](#), art. 28

⁸³ Freedom House, Morocco, Freedom on the Net 2024, 2024, [url](#);

⁸⁴ MIPA Institute, Has the Auto-regulation of the press hit a dead end?, 5 June 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁵ Freedom House, Morocco, Freedom on the Net 2024, 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶ Freedom House, Morocco, Freedom on the Net 2024, 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁷ RSF, Morocco/Western Sahara, 2024, [url](#); Freedom House, Morocco, Freedom on the Net 2024, 2024, [url](#); BTI, 2024 Country Report, Morocco, 24 March 2024, [url](#), p. 12, 15, 35; OFPRA, Maroc : Les cyberactivistes, 17 June 2024, [url](#), p. 10

⁸⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Report to the UN CED 27th session for the review of Morocco, 20 August 2024, [url](#), para. 49

⁸⁹ RSF, Morocco/Western Sahara, 2024, [url](#); Freedom House, Morocco, Freedom on the Net 2024, 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰ RSF, Barometer, information observed on 24 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹¹ HRW, World Report 2025, Morocco and Western Sahara, 21 January 2025, [url](#), AP, Morocco releases imprisoned journalists after pardons from King Mohamed VI, 30 July 2024, [url](#)

⁹² Freedom House, Morocco, Freedom on the Net 2024, [url](#)

⁹³ HRW, Morocco and Western Sahara, events of 2024, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

⁹⁴ Morocco, Chambre des représentants, La Constitution du Royaume du Maroc – 2011, 29 July 2011, [url](#); Council of Europe, CODICES, the Constitution, 29 July 2011, [url](#), art. 10

⁹⁵ HRW, Morocco and Western Sahara, events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

surveillance by human rights defenders, student movements, Sahrawi activists and organisations'.⁹⁶ Concerns were exacerbated by reports of cases of family reprisals.⁹⁷

In September 2024, Maloca International, a non-governmental organisation with special consultative status, submitted a report to the UN Human Rights Council expressing concerns raised by human rights organisations regarding the Gdeim Izik case, in which Sahrawi activists were arrested following the 2010 protest camp crackdown. The reported violations include arbitrary detention, denial of legal representation, confessions obtained under torture, and the lack of an impartial judiciary.⁹⁸

With regards to Western Sahara, the UN OHCHR has been advocating for enhanced cooperation with the authorities, in line with the UN Security Council resolution 2654 (2022), to enable UN access to the territory for monitoring visits stating that 'the lack of access to first-hand information and independent, impartial, comprehensive and sustained monitoring of the human rights situation had been detrimental to a comprehensive assessment of human rights in the region'.⁹⁹

Women and girls

While there is no constitutional provision on violence against women,¹⁰⁰ Moroccan laws guarantee women's civil rights,¹⁰¹ including through the 2004 Morocco's Family Code which sets the marriage age at 18 for both females and males, criminalises domestic violence, ensures equal custody rights, and ends male guardianship over women.¹⁰² The law also criminalises femicide,¹⁰³ grants women access to financial and productive resources, freedom of movement, and equal rights to own property and access to justice. Further, since 2016, 'legislated quotas and mechanisms of alternating the sexes on party lists' have strengthened women's political participation at national and local levels.¹⁰⁴ As of February 2024, 24 % of parliamentary seats were held by women.¹⁰⁵ However, between 2021 and 2023, an estimated 9 474 women were reported victims of violence.¹⁰⁶ In addition, over 200 000 clandestine

⁹⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Report to the UN CED 27th session for the review of Morocco, 20 August 2024, [url](#), para. 75

⁹⁷ UNSC, Report of the Secretary-General, Situation in Western Sahara, 3 October 2023, [url](#), para 78; AI, Amnesty International, Targeted crackdown of Sahrawi activists, 19 July 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁸ UN GA, Human Rights Council, Written statement submitted by Maloca Internationale, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status, A/HRC/57/NGO/194, 12 September 2024, [url](#), p. 2

⁹⁹ UN GA, Western Sahara, Working paper prepared by the Secretariat, A/AC.109/2024/17, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ UN Women, Global database on violence against women, Morocco, information observed on 26 March 2025, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ OECD, Social Institutions and Gender Index, Morocco, SIGI country profile, 17 June 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁰² UN Women, Women's Rights Then and Now: "Know our collective history and move forward" - Rabéa Naciri, 24 February 2025, [url](#)

¹⁰³ World Bank, Women, business and the law 2024, 3 June 2024, [url](#), pp. 2-5

¹⁰⁴ OECD, Social Institutions and Gender Index, Morocco, SIGI country profile, 17 June 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁰⁵ UN Women, Morocco, Africa, information observed on 24 March 2025, [url](#); OECD, Social Institutions and Gender Index, Morocco, SIGI country profile, 17 June 2024, [url](#), p. 20

¹⁰⁶ FLDF, Rapport sur la violence fondée sur le genre, 30 juin 2023, [url](#), p. 5

abortions are conducted every year¹⁰⁷ due to the criminalisation of abortion in the country.¹⁰⁸ Abortion is illegal except when the mother's life is at risk, with women facing six months to two years in prison and a fine for attempting or undergoing an abortion outside these exceptions.¹⁰⁹ Marital rape is not clearly defined as a crime, and victims who report rape outside of marriage may face prosecution for engaging in unlawful sexual activity..¹¹⁰

Despite the legal minimum marriage age of 18, child marriage remained common in Morocco as of 2022, with judges able to lower the age for boys and girls¹¹¹ as young as 15.¹¹² The 2004 Family Code designates the father as the default legal representative of a child, even if the mother has custody after a divorce.¹¹³ Women's rights activists continue to advocate for reforms, including equal inheritance and child custody rights, as well as a complete ban on child marriage.¹¹⁴ In December 2024, Morocco reportedly aimed to reform laws on marriage, polygamy and child custody.¹¹⁵ However, Article 490 of the Moroccan Penal Code still prohibits sexual relations outside of marriage.¹¹⁶

LGBTIQ persons

Article 489 of the Moroccan Penal Code prohibits same-sex relations, with prescribed penalties of up to three years' imprisonment and fines.¹¹⁷ Moreover, acts of 'public indecency' are criminalised under Article 483 of the Penal Code, with penalties ranging from one month to two years in prison and a fine.¹¹⁸ In March 2023, the UN Human Rights Council adopted its Universal Periodic Review of Morocco, where the country 'rejected recommendations on [...], combatting discrimination against LGBTIQ people, and decriminalizing consensual same-sex sexual relations between adults'.¹¹⁹ LGBTIQ persons are reportedly subjected to harassment in public and prosecution.¹²⁰ According to the Moroccan activist of the LGBTQ collective Liqaat interviewed in June 2021 by Cedoca (the Documentation and Research Centre of the Belgian Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons), individuals in same-sex relationships are rarely prosecuted specifically under Article 489, but more often face

¹⁰⁷ MEI, Women's Reproductive Rights and Abortion in Morocco: Regulatory Reforms Should Not Miss the Bigger Picture, 31 March 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸ Morocco, Adala, Code Pénal, version consolidée en date du 20 avril 2023, [url](#), art. 449

¹⁰⁹ Morocco, Adala, Code Pénal, version consolidée en date du 20 avril 2023, [url](#), art. 453; AI, Amnesty International, Morocco/Western Sahara, 2023, n.d., [url](#)

¹¹⁰ HRW, Morocco and Western Sahara, events of 2024, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

¹¹¹ UN GA, Human Rights Council, Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/WG.6/41/MAR/2, 29 August 2022, [url](#), para. 52

¹¹² HRW, Morocco and Western Sahara, events of 2024, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

¹¹³ HRW, Morocco and Western Sahara, events of 2024, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

¹¹⁴ DW, Morocco moves to reform underage marriage, 12 December 2024, [url](#); RFI, Morocco moves to reform laws on underage marriage, polygamy and child custody, 28 December 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ RFI, Morocco moves to reform laws on underage marriage, polygamy and child custody, 28 December 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ Morocco, Adala, Code Pénal, version consolidée en date du 20 avril 2023, [url](#), art. 490

¹¹⁷ Morocco, Adala, Code Pénal, version consolidée en date du 20 avril 2023, [url](#), art. 489 ; ILGA World, Data base, Morocco, information observed on 26 March 2025, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ ILGA World, Data base, Morocco, information observed on 26 March 2025, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ Freedom House, Morocco, Freedom on the Net 2024, 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰ BTI, 2024 Country Report, Morocco, 24 March 2024, [url](#)

charges related to immorality, exploitation of minors, promotion of prostitution, unauthorised gatherings, public insult, terrorism, or offenses against public decency.¹²¹

The increased visibility of LGBTIQ individuals in recent years has led to a social backlash, with rhetoric portraying them as a threat to traditional values.¹²² Meanwhile, since 2011, LGBTIQ collectives advocating for rights have emerged in Morocco. As of February 2024, around 13 such organisations were active in Morocco.¹²³

While LGBTIQ-related discussions are accessible online, including on social media,¹²⁴ security forces and religious authorities frequently use offensive language and behaviour towards LGBTIQ communities and state authorities are rarely identified as direct perpetrators of violence.¹²⁵ Lastly, Morocco's legal system does not recognise transgender transition, leading to *de facto* criminalisation under Article 498 of the Penal Code and arrests based on morality laws or gender expression.¹²⁶

Black Moroccans

Black Moroccans predominantly reside in the southern regions of the country representing 10 % of the total population¹²⁷ approximately 3.7 million.¹²⁸ The Moroccan Constitution prohibits discrimination based on colour,¹²⁹ and the Penal Code criminalises incitement to racial discrimination or hatred, including distinctions made on the basis of skin colour, ethnicity, or other personal characteristics.¹³⁰

However, according to a 2024 report by Minority Rights Group (MRG), La Voix de la Femme Amazighe and Tamaynut organisations, Black people in Morocco are often subjected to racial insults in society such as '*Abd*' (slave), '*Khadam*' (servant), and '*Hratin*' (slave descendant, specifically for Black Moroccans), and endure 'social stigma and marginalisation from civic, political, and economic life'.¹³¹ Additionally, Black Moroccans face low representation in the public institutions, and increasing hate speech in media and online.¹³² They also 'face

¹²¹ Belgium, CEDOCA, COI Focus, Maroc, minorité sexuelle, 19 January 2024, [url](#), p. 28

¹²² Outright International, Country overview, Morocco, n.d., [url](#)

¹²³ Arab Reform Initiative, Emergence, Resilience, and Tensions: A Decade of LGBTQ Activism in Morocco, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁴ Freedom House, Morocco, Freedom on the Net 2024, 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁵ ReportOUT, OUT in Morocco, 28 March 2024, [url](#), p. 10

¹²⁶ CAIRO 52, Legal Research Institute, Morocco, information observed on 25 March 2025, [url](#)

¹²⁷ MRG, La Voix de la Femme Amazighe and Tamaynut Organisation, Fact sheet on the situation of black Moroccans, migrants and Amazigh indigenous peoples in Morocco, November 2023, 19 November 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁸ MRG, Morocco, communities, n.d., [url](#)

¹²⁹ Morocco, Chambre des représentants, La Constitution du Royaume du Maroc – 2011, 29 July 2011, [url](#); Council of Europe, CODICES, the Constitution, 29 July 2011, [url](#)

¹³⁰ Morocco, Adala, Code Pénal, version consolidée en date du 20 avril 2023, [url](#), arts 308-5 and 431-1

¹³¹ MRG, La Voix de la Femme Amazighe and Tamaynut Organisation, Alternative report to the Committee on the elimination of racial discrimination, January 2024, n.d., [url](#), p. 4

¹³² UN OHCHR, Experts of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Welcome Morocco's Global Activities to Promote the Convention, Ask about Measures to Prevent Hate Speech and to Preserve Amazigh Language and Culture, 23 November 2023, [url](#)

discrimination in access to services, education, employment, housing, and are commonly targeted with physical violence.¹³³ In its December 2023 concluding observations, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern on increasing racial and xenophobic hate speech, particularly towards Black Moroccans, and the absence of clear data by ethnic origin.¹³⁴

Legal remedies against human rights violations

The Moroccan legal system is based on civil law, with elements of Islamic law applying to matters such as inheritance and family law.¹³⁵ The judicial system includes the Court of Cassation (formerly the Supreme Council), appellate courts, courts of first instance, the Standing Tribunal of the Royal Armed Forces, administrative courts, and neighbourhoods courts (formerly community and district courts), with ultimate review power resting with the Supreme Court.¹³⁶ The independence of the judiciary from the legislative and executive powers is guaranteed by the Constitution.¹³⁷ However, the judiciary is not fully independent, as the king presides over the Supreme Council of the Judiciary, and in practice, courts are often used to target government critics, including dissenting Islamists, human rights activists, anticorruption campaigners, and those opposing Moroccan rule in Western Sahara. Additionally, 'local courts are perceived as corrupt and serving powerful interests.'¹³⁸

The most recent legal reform occurred after the Arab Spring, with the adoption of a new constitution in July 2011,¹³⁹ which prohibited enforced disappearance, torture, and other serious human rights violations, and undertook a broad reform of the justice system by adopting the Code of Military Justice and establishing an independent judicial authority and institutional mechanisms.¹⁴⁰ The Moroccan judicial system is undergoing further reforms, which include updates to the Civil Procedure Code and the introduction of new technologies and procedures aimed at improving access to justice.¹⁴¹

¹³³ MRG, La Voix de la Femme Amazighe and Tamaynut Organisation, Fact sheet on the situation of black Moroccans, migrants and Amazigh indigenous peoples in Morocco, November 2023, 19 November 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁴ UN, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, concluding observations on the combined nineteenth to twenty-first periodic reports of Morocco, CERD/C/FRA/FCO/22-23, 21 December 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁵ Benzakour R, MOROCCO: An Introduction to Dispute Resolution, at Chambers, n.d., [url](#)

¹³⁶ Butera N, and Pillay K, Introduction to the Moroccan legal system, at NYU, Law, GlobalLex, June 2018, [url](#)

¹³⁷ Morocco, Chambre des représentants, La Constitution du Royaume du Maroc – 2011, 29 July 2011, [url](#); Council of Europe, CODICES, the Constitution, 29 July 2011, [url](#), art. 108

¹³⁸ Freedom House, Morocco, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹ Morocco, Chambre des représentants, La Constitution du Royaume du Maroc – 2011, 29 July 2011, [url](#); Council of Europe, CODICES, the Constitution, 29 July 2011, [url](#), art. 108; Butera N, and Pillay K, Introduction to the Moroccan legal system, at NYU, Law, GlobalLex, June 2018, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰ UN, Experts of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances Commend Morocco on its Transitional Justice Process, Ask Questions on Cases of Disappeared Migrants and on Criminal Investigations into Cases of Enforced Disappearances, 25 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴¹ Laachir Y, Justice et protection sociale au Maroc : des réformes à l'épreuve des réalités juridiques., at village de la justice, 24 December 2024, [url](#)

Despite Morocco's ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993, its implementation remains partial, similar to the 2011 Constitution, which, although overwhelmingly approved by referendum, has not fully enforced provisions promoting equality between men and women, as well as for children, regardless of their family situation.¹⁴²

The family law reforms proposed in December 2024 restrict polygamy through judicial approval or contractual clauses, simplify divorce procedures with shared custody arrangements, and maintain the legal marriage age at 18, with limited exceptions permitting marriage at 17, while preserving existing inheritance laws.¹⁴³ Critics suggest that Morocco's proposed family code reforms maintain patriarchal elements by permitting polygamy under certain conditions, allowing judicial exceptions for marriage under 18, and upholding unequal inheritance laws.¹⁴⁴ As of January 2025, the draft law was under parliamentary revision.¹⁴⁵

According to UN experts of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, Moroccan law forbids any form of undisclosed detention, guarantees detainees the right to communicate with their families and access legal representation.¹⁴⁶ In December 2024, the Minister of Justice reportedly announced a decision to abolish the death penalty and pledged to amend the Penal Code accordingly.¹⁴⁷ The decision was welcomed by the Moroccan National Human Rights Council (CNDH).¹⁴⁸

In 2023, Morocco's Ombudsman recorded a 22 % increase in complaints, totalling 7 226 cases, with many focusing on administrative issues, financial concerns, and the aftermath of the Al Haouz earthquake.¹⁴⁹ The current Ombudsman institution was established on 17 March 2011, replacing the Diwan Al Madhalim.¹⁵⁰

In 2024, Morocco's Civil Justice score was 0.50 (out of 1), ranking 78th globally among 142 countries and 6th regionally among 9, reflecting challenges such as limited access to justice, corruption, and discrimination, while performing relatively better in areas like alternative dispute resolution and enforcement; however, a slight decline in its score underlines ongoing issues with accessibility and corruption within the justice system.¹⁵¹

¹⁴² Le Monde, Au Maroc, dernière ligne droite pour le projet de réforme du code de la famille, 11 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴³ RFI, Morocco moves to reform laws on underage marriage, polygamy and child custody, 28 December 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴ The New Arab, Morocco's Family Code reform pleases no one, especially women's rights groups, 30 December 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵ Morocco, Morocco forms drafting commission for family code revision, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶ UN, Experts of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances Commend Morocco on its Transitional Justice Process, Ask Questions on Cases of Disappeared Migrants and on Criminal Investigations into Cases of Enforced Disappearances, 25 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷ MEM, Morocco to vote on abolition of death penalty, 12 December 2023, [url](#); The New Arab, Morocco moves to abolish death penalty, activists demand broad reform, 11 December 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸ CNDH, Morocco's historic vote in favour of the universal death penalty moratorium, 17 December 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹ HESPRESS, Moroccan Ombudsman reports 22% increase in complaints for 2023, 3 January 2025, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰ AOMF, Les membres, MAROC – Médiateur du Royaume, information observed on 4 April 2025, [url](#)

¹⁵¹ World Justice Project, Morocco, information observed on 4 April 2025, [url](#)

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