

Morocco's Commitment to Protecting Human Rights

- Morocco is committed to protecting human rights and has made significant advances over the last few decades, becoming a leader in the Arab world on human rights and women's rights issues.
- Civil liberties, including freedom of speech, the press, assembly, and association, are enshrined in Morocco's [Constitution](#).
- Morocco is a [signatory](#) to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Convention against Torture, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. Morocco regularly hosts [UN Human Rights Council Special Rapporteurs](#) and independent human rights experts.

National Human Rights Council (CNDH)

- Morocco reformed its national human rights oversight body in March 2011, when King Mohammed VI announced the establishment of a National Human Rights Council (CNDH) to replace the Advisory Council on Human Rights (CCDH). The creation of CNDH represents more than just a name change. The royal decree creating the [CNDH](#) and Article 161 of the 2011 Constitution established the autonomy of the council and enlarged its investigative and monitoring powers.
- The Council has the [power](#) to:
 - Investigate any allegations of human rights violations;
 - Summon people to give evidence in its investigations;
 - Act as an early warning mechanism to prevent human rights violations;
 - Inspect prison conditions;
 - Establish regional authorities for protecting human rights; and
 - Examine and make recommendations on how to bring legislation in line with the Constitution, international human rights treaties, and international law.
- As part of this latter effort, CNDH regularly publishes advisory [reports](#) on key human rights issues. Recent reports have tackled:
 - [Gender equality](#);
 - [Violence against women](#);
 - [Migration and refugees](#); and
 - [Judicial reform](#).
- CNDH, Morocco's active civil society, and reform-minded government have worked together to address ongoing human rights challenges through societal debate leading to judicial and legislative mechanisms. Since 2011, Morocco has made significant advances in its human rights policies in the areas of migration, women's rights, and the court system.
 - In November 2013, Morocco adopted a [new immigration policy](#) providing protections for migrants and asylum seekers. This policy change was the result of an investigation and subsequent recommendation by CNDH.
 - In January 2014, the Moroccan parliament voted unanimously to [amend the law](#) so that rapists can no longer be exonerated by marrying their victims.
 - In March 2014, the Council of Ministers, chaired by King Mohammed VI, approved the [draft law on military justice](#), forbidding military trials for civilians.

- In August 2015, Morocco [legalized](#) a known anti-regime NGO in the Sahara, part of a series of rulings authorizing previously unrecognized NGOs that marked a step in improving freedom of association in the country.
- These initiatives build on a decades-long commitment to promote and protect human rights. In 1990, the late King Hassan II established the [Advisory Council on Human Rights](#) (CCDH), CNDH's predecessor, to resolve cases of disappearances and arbitrary detentions and to provide compensation for victims and their families.

Moroccan Truth and Reconciliation Commission

- In 2003, the CCDH recommended the creation of an independent body to further investigate past human rights violations in Morocco. King Mohammed VI not only welcomed the recommendation, but personally oversaw the creation of the 17-member Equity and Reconciliation Commission.
- Established by King Mohammed VI in 2004, the Moroccan [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) (IER) was the first truth and reconciliation commission in the Arab world. An independent investigative body created to shed light on past human rights violations that took place in Morocco from 1956 to 1999, the IER examined Morocco's past abuses and studied what permitted them.
- 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.

Women's Rights and Gender Equality

- Under King Mohammed VI's [rule](#), Morocco has also taken the lead among Islamic countries in promoting the rights of women and gender equity. It has made women's rights a priority, working to reconcile conflicting cultural views on the role of women, investing in women's education, and encouraging income-generating activities for women.
- In 2004, 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 for the family with their husbands and equal rights to property upon divorce.
- In 2006, Morocco established a program to train women preachers – or mourchidates, empowering women to play a greater role in their communities. Each mourchidate is assigned to one or more mosques throughout the country, giving basic religious instruction in mosques and providing support in prisons, hospitals, and schools. The program has since been expanded and serves both to spread Morocco's message of tolerant Islam and to augment the role of women in a traditionally conservative domain.
- The 2011 reform of the [Constitution](#) further enshrined women's equality under the law. The Constitution contains eighteen articles relating to women's rights, and Article 19 consecrates the

principle of gender equality in the exercise of all fundamental rights – civil, political, cultural, economic, social, and environmental.

- Quotas to improve women’s political participation have ensured that this issue remains on the legislative agenda. Thanks to quotas, women currently make up [21%](#) of the House of Representatives in the current Parliament, up from [17%](#) in the previous Parliament. And new [laws](#) have increased women’s representation at the local and regional level – with a 27% requirement in Communal Councils and a 1/3 requirement in Regional Councils.

Praise for Human Rights Progress in Morocco

- At the conclusion of a May 2013 [visit](#) to Morocco, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay stated, “Morocco is undergoing an important transition and is setting high standards through its Constitution and laws. In my exchanges with the authorities, including His Majesty King Mohammed VI and various ministers, it was clear that there is the political will at the highest levels to continue efforts to set a firm human rights foundation for Moroccan society.”
- In a statement made at an April 2014 Congressional [hearing](#) on US-Morocco relations, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs at the State Department William Roebuck stated, “We are pleased to see this commitment made concrete in the Moroccan government’s initiative to reform the Military Code of Justice and to exempt civilians from trial by military tribunals through a draft law which has moved to Parliament for approval. We have also remarked on the growing role of the National Council on Human Rights (CNDH) as a credible and proactive defender of human rights, and are encouraged by the Council of Government’s decision to strengthen the CNDH by ensuring that government agencies address complaints directed to it. Both of these measures are important steps forward in strengthening the protection of human rights in Morocco and in realizing the promise of the 2011 Constitution.”

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