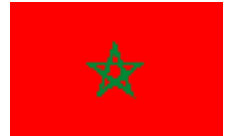


# COUNTRY PROFILE: MOROCCO

August 2008



## BASIC FACTS

- Population of 34,343,219 (2008 est.), area of 446,550 sq km.
- Life expectancy at birth – 69 years (men), 74 years (women)
- Total adult literacy rate – 52.3%.
- GDP per capita – US\$ 1,730 (Nominal - 2006 estimate), US\$ 4,600 (PPP - 2007 estimate)

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT:

The Kingdom of Morocco is the most westerly of the North African countries known as the Maghreb. Strategically situated with both Atlantic and Mediterranean coastlines, but with a rugged mountainous interior, Morocco stayed independent for centuries while developing a rich culture blended from Arab, Berber, European and African influences.

In 1788, about a century after the Arab conquest of North Africa, successive Moorish dynasties began to rule in Morocco. In the 16th century, the Sa'adi monarchy, particularly under Ahmad Al-Mansur (1578-1603), repelled foreign invaders and inaugurated a golden age. In 1860, Spain occupied northern Morocco and ushered in a half century of trade rivalry among European powers that saw Morocco's sovereignty steadily eroded; in 1912, the French imposed a protectorate over the country. A protracted independence struggle with France ended successfully in 1956. The internationalized city of Tangier and most Spanish possessions were turned over to the new country that same year, after Sultan Mohammed became king. He was succeeded in 1961 by his son, Hassan II, who ruled for 38 years. After his death in 1999 Hassan was succeeded by his son, who became King Mohammed VI. Gradual political reforms in the 1990s resulted in the establishment of a bicameral legislature, which first met in 1997.

Morocco virtually annexed Western Sahara during the late 1970s, but final resolution on the status of the territory remains unresolved, and a guerrilla war with Algerian-backed pro-independence forces ended in 1991. UN efforts have failed to break the political deadlock. To the north, a dispute with Spain in 2002 over the tiny island of Perejil revived the issue of the sovereignty of Melilla and Ceuta. The small enclaves on the Mediterranean coast are surrounded by Morocco and have been administered by Spain for centuries.



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

## AT A GLANCE:

- Full name: The Kingdom of Morocco
- Population: 34.3 million
- Capital: Rabat
- Largest city: Casablanca
- Area: 710,850 sq km (274,461 sq miles) (including W Sahara)
- Major languages: Arabic (official), Berber, French, Spanish
- Major religion: Islam
- Life expectancy: 69 years (men), 74 years (women)
- Monetary unit: Dirham = 100 centimes
- Main exports: Minerals, seafood products, citrus fruit
- GDP per capita: US \$1,730 (World Bank, 2006)
- Internet domain: .ma
- International dialling code: +212

## **POLITICS:**

Morocco is a de jure constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament. The King of Morocco, can dissolve government and deploy the military, among other prerogatives. Opposition political parties are legal, and several have been formed in recent years.

Morocco's history after independence and at the beginning of the reign of Hassan II was marked by a period of political tensions between the monarchy and opposition parties. During the last decade of the rule of King Hassan II, and especially under the reign of Mohammed VI, many new laws and codes concerning all aspects of life are being or have been passed, most notable of which was the creation of the Mudawana, a family code which represented the first unique initiative of its kind in the Arab and Muslim world. The code gives women more rights.

In mid-February 2007, a study published by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies called "Arab Reform and Foreign Aid: Lessons from Morocco" concluded that Morocco provides a valuable lesson in political and economic reform.

## **ECONOMY:**

According to the African Development Bank, the GDP of Morocco accounts for 7% of the African continent. Morocco is the fifth economic power of Africa with a 2006 GDP of \$152.5 billion at PPP (\$58.1 billion at official exchange rates), after South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Nigeria (2001).

Morocco's largest industry is the mining of phosphates. Its second largest source of income is from nationals living abroad who transfer money to relatives living in Morocco. The country's third largest source of revenue is tourism; 7.45 million tourists visited the country in 2007. Moroccan economic policies brought macroeconomic stability to the country in the early 1990s. Morocco's GDP growth rate slowed to 2.1% in 2007 as a result of a drought that severely reduced agricultural output and necessitated wheat imports at rising world prices.

In 2005, Morocco launched the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), a \$2 billion social development plan to address poverty and unemployment and to improve the living conditions of the country's urban slums. In 2000, Morocco entered an Association Agreement with the EU and, in 2006, entered a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the US.

## **Sources:**

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