

### Political

#### General Political Environment:

Efforts at political liberalization and respect for the authority of King Mohammed VI have translated into a stable political environment for the Kingdom.

The parliamentary system remains weak and most political power rests with the King.

Only 37% of Moroccans voted in the September 2007 legislative elections, out of which a reported 20% spoiled their ballots. Voter apathy likely stemmed from frustration that the legislature could deliver on promised reforms. The nationalist Istiqlal (PI) party won the most seats, four more than in 2002, and formed a ruling coalition with the USFP and two other parties. The PJD party was unable to secure its expected victory, coming in second in the polls. As an opposition party, the PJD are expected to challenge the government's performance in dealing with corruption, unemployment and the delivery of public services.

Many of King Mohammed VI's promised social reforms have failed to materialize, creating a level of frustration among Moroccans who must contend with acute social problems such as high unemployment and rising poverty.

In 2004, the government created the Equity and Reconciliation Commission to investigate and document human rights violations which occurred between 1956 and 1999. The decision to create such a body as well as the nationally-televised testimony of the witnesses marked a significant step forward in Morocco's human rights development in addressing past abuses. That said, the overall status of the human rights situation remains a mixed picture. There is some concern that the Kingdom's security crackdown following the 2003 Casablanca bombings has led to more incidents of serious violations of civil liberties.

Morocco's most influential Islamist association, the al-Adl wal Ihsan (Justice and Charity) is banned from gaining official party status and allowed only to function as a charitable organization. In April 2006, 3,000 of its members were questioned and 500 then charged with participating in unauthorized meetings or assemblies and belonging to an unauthorized association.

#### Investment Environment:

The government encourages foreign direct investment and continues to prioritize the privatization of large state and family-owned assets.

The government is working to address issues of pervasive bureaucracy and a slow and unreliable judiciary which both act as obstacles to greater foreign investment. The 2009 launch of a business competition council to encourage a safe business environment should help bolster that effort.

Corruption exists at all levels of government with the bribery of customs officers being a significant concern. A special court to combat corruption has been created and the government is also working with the World Bank to address the issue.

#### Political Violence:

The May 2003 Casablanca bombings against Jewish and western targets led to a security crackdown on radical Islamists, particularly those that were members of the group linked to the bombings – the Salafiyya Jihadiya. Seven members of the group were rearrested for alleged involvement in a 2007 suicide bombing at an internet café in Casablanca.

An UN-brokered cease-fire ended hostilities between the Moroccan government and the Polisario Front over the autonomy of the Western Sahara in 1991. Efforts towards resolution of the long-standing dispute remain tense though there has been some increasing cooperation and goodwill between Morocco and Algeria (the sponsor of the Polisario Front) in recent months. A return to military hostilities remains a negligible risk as long as diplomatic channels remain open.

#### Political Structure

Constitutional Monarchy

#### Head of State

King Mohammed VI

#### Prime Minister

Abbas el-Fassi

#### Legislative Bodies

- Bicameral system;
- Lower House of Representatives (Majlis al-Nuwab) - 325 seats
  - Upper Chamber of Advisors (Majlis al-Mustasharin) - 270 seats

#### Major Parties (seats in Assembly)

Ruling Coalition:

- Istiqlal (PI) – centre-right: 52;
  - Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires (USFP) – left: 38
  - National Rally for Independents (RNI) – centre-right: 39
  - Party for Progress and Socialism: 17
- Opposition:
- Justice and Development Party (PJD) – moderate Islamist: 46
  - Mouvement Populaire (MP) - 41

#### Last Elections

- House of Representatives: September 7, 2007
- Chamber of Advisors: October 6, 2007

#### Next Elections

Local elections: June 2009

#### Press Freedom Survey:

- 2008 Score: 64 (Not Free) [freedomhouse.org](http://freedomhouse.org)

#### Control of Corruption Index:

- 2007 Score: -0.24 (-2.5: Worst; +2.5: Best) [worldbank.org](http://worldbank.org)

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#### Political Outlook

Low voter turnout in recent elections reflects popular discontent with the legislature's inability to effectively address important issues such as rising poverty and diversification and development of the agriculture sector.

A continuation of the country's political stability depends on the government's ability to adequately address the country's socio-economic problems which include rising poverty and high rates of unemployment.