



Morocco

Last update:	15 July 2009
Author:	Maxim Moussa (Co-author)
Population:	33,241,259 (July 2006 est.)
Prime minister:	Abbas El Fassi (since September 2007)
President:	King Mohammed VI (since July 1999)
Governemental type:	Constitutional monarchy
Ruling coalition:	Independence (Istiqlal) Party, USFP, National Rally of Independents, Party of Progress and Socialism
Last election:	Parliamentary September 7, 2007
Next election:	Local June 12, 2009, Parliamentary September 2012
Sister parties:	Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU)



On 12 June local elections were held in Morocco. The major winner was a new political party, the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM) that won 6015 seats. The governing Istiqlal (PI) party followed with 5292 seats. The party, which has won strong backing at home and abroad for reforms to combat poverty, has positioned itself as an alternative to both opposition Islamists and the governing Istiqlal. The official turnout was 52.4 per cent, out of 14 million registered voters.

INTRODUCTION

During the 1990s and since King Mohamed VI came to power, following his father's death in 1999, the democratic perspectives for the future of the Kingdom of Morocco improved. Already, gradual political reforms in the 1990s resulted in the establishment of a bicameral legislature in 1997. Parliamentary elections were held for the second time in September 2002. The elections of 2007 could be seen, despite the low turnout, as a new step towards full democracy now the leader of the biggest party in parliament, Abbas El Fassi of the Istiqlal-party, has been appointed by the King as Prime Minister of the new government. In the local elections of 2009 the new PAM party won the elections, leaving the governing Istiqlal-party and Islamic PJD party behind. Between 2002 and 2007, the non-affiliated Driss Jettou was appointed Prime Minister.

Morocco however still has a number of human rights' issues to resolve, and the international border issue with the Polisario Front over the territory of Western Sahara remains unsettled. Since the accession of Spain to the European Economic Community (now EU) in 1986, Morocco is one of the neighbours of the EU. To strengthen the relationship with these neighbours, the EU signed the Association Agreement with Morocco in 1996 and has developed (since March 2003) the European Neighbourhood Policy, in which Morocco participates.

ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL SITUATION

Political situation

The current King, Mohamed VI came to power after the death of his father, King Hassan II, in 1999. While King Hassan II was an autocratic ruler, King Mohamed VI appears to have a different vision for Morocco's future. Under



his leadership, there seems to be a tendency towards more democratic and liberal values in Morocco. Mohamed VI has stressed the need for social and economic reform and the need to tackle problems like poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment. In relation to this, NGO's and independent human rights' organisations achieved more successes due to the increased possibilities the new regime offered.

Morocco's political system is carefully evolving from a strongly centralised monarchy to a parliamentary system. The King retains much of the executive power, but Parliament is democratically elected. The government (the Prime Minister and his team) is not elected, but appointed by the King. However, according to independent information provider CountryWatch Inc., democratic gestures and programmes do not mean that any real democratisation is taking place, and King Mohamed VI has, next to economic and social reforms, also reinforced his powerbase by strengthening the army and placing members of his inner circle at important positions in the government. In 2001, a decentralisation process has been launched. The local governors, which are appointed by the King, have achieved more power and that is why this is considered by critics to be a well-groomed way of the King to expand his power.

Local elections 2009

On 12 June local elections were held in Morocco in which nearly 28,000 members from around 30 political parties were to be elected to 1,500 municipal councils. The major winner was a new political party, the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM) that won 6015 seats. The governing Istiqlal (PI) party followed with 5292 seats. Although PAM did not take part in the last legislative elections it showed to be a major force to be reckoned with. The party, which has won strong backing at home and abroad for reforms to combat poverty, has positioned itself as an alternative to both opposition Islamists and Istiqlal.

The vote was the first major test for the governing coalition of conservatives and socialists since the moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) scored its best result in the 2007 legislative elections. In this poll, however, the main opposition party PJD performed poorly, winning only 7.4%, making no gains compared to last election. Widespread disillusionment and cynicism towards traditional parties may have played a role in the results. Critics of Istiqlal Prime Minister Abbas el Fassi say his administration lacks energy and direction. The government lost its parliamentary majority in May 2009 when PAM withdrew support from its government. Some other factors that have been named are the party's close relation with the King, the large number and scattered character of leftist parties and the suggestion that the electoral climate was dominated mainly by money and religion. However, Istiqlal party's second place finish meant a certain reaffirmation of the government, which had been accused of not having a solid programme despite the Moroccan economy has survived the global crisis fairly well. The leftist USFP, which only obtained 11.6% of the vote, is going through a more serious crisis. By joining the governing Koutla coalition, this party had bet on the critical support to the King.

The official turnout was 52.4 per cent, out of 14 million registered voters. Due to the recent electoral reforms that set the quota on 12% for women, parties were given incentive to add women candidates to their lists. 3,406 Women were elected (out of 20,458 candidates) against just 127 in 2003.

Corruption appeared widespread; courts are considering hundreds of official complaints of bribery, local officials giving preferential treatment to certain candidates, and voter and candidate intimidation.

Parliamentary elections 2007

The Kingdom of Morocco ("Al Mamlakah al-Maghribiyah") is a constitutional monarchy. The King, since July 1999 Mohamed VI, is the head of state, succeeded by his son the crown prince. The power of the King is counterbalanced by the government. The government is at the executive level composed of a Prime Minister, which is appointed by the King, and a cabinet, the members of which are nominated by the Prime Minister and then appointed by the King.

The legislative power further consists of two chambers of parliament: the Chamber of Counsellors (upper house) and the Chamber of Representatives (lower house). In September 1996, amendments to the constitution (dated 10 March 1972, revised 4 September 1992), which were approved by referendum, enabled this bicameral legislative structure. The first elections for the Second Chamber were held on 5 December 1997. A person can vote from the age of 18 (as of January 2003), the electable age is 23. The Chamber of Councillors, 270 members, is elected every nine years (a third of it replaced every 3 years) by indirect universal suffrage. The Chamber of Representatives, the 325 members counting lower house, is elected every five years by direct universal suffrage. Of the 325 seats, 295 members are chosen from multi-seat constituencies and 30 from national lists of women.



Background to the parliamentary elections 2007

The previous parliamentary elections were held on 27 September 2002.. After the 1997 elections, in which the former opposition parties (Istiqlal, USFP, PPS) took over the government from the administrative parties, the elections of 2002 could be seen as a continuation of that process. Despite the fact that the appointed Prime Minister, Driss Jettou, was still not from one of the coalition parties, it can be stated that the former opposition parties of the pre-1997 era, maintained their strong by forming a coalition government again.

In 2002, a public relation campaign was organised in order to get Moroccan citizens to vote in what were said to be the first completely free and fair elections in order to consolidate Moroccan democracy. Before these elections, the former King, Hassan II, and the former Minister of the interior, Driss Basri, had always controlled the elections outcome. Unfortunately, despite the enormous effort, the outcome of the elections still hardly mattered for the formation of the government. According to commentators, King Mohamed VI influenced the formation of the new government in such a way that the elections led to an increased grip of the monarch on the legislative power (see below). What was especially disappointing was the very low voter turnout. In 1997, the percentage was 58%; in 2002 it was only 52%. However, in 2007 the turnout was even lower than in 2002: 37%.

The outcome of the elections did not design a clear winner, the formation battle concentrated around the two biggest parties: USFP and Istiqlal. The Istiqlal did not want to be the smaller partner of an USFP-headed government, especially not since its encouraging election results. Then the King appointed a Prime Minister from outside the political system: Driss Jettou. The appointment of the independent Prime Minister (it was expected that the King would appoint a Prime Minister from one of the largest parties in parliament) was considered by critics as the end of the democratic process of the 2002 parliamentary elections. The King made clear that in fact, Morocco's political stability was independent from electoral results.

The election campaign According to the National Democratic Institute, the election campaign of the major parties was professional and with the use of modern techniques like SMS and the internet. The campaign marked an improvement over recent previous elections. The NDI stated that parties were "responding more directly to voter interests and engaging more directly with citizens around the country."

Also, parties and the government have tried hard to educate (through television, flyers, billboards, concerts etc.) the electorate on polling procedures. Unfortunately, the turnout was historically low, so it can be concluded that the increased education of voters could have led to increased knowledge among voters, but has not led to an increased enthusiasm to vote among the electorate.

Results

The enthusiasm for the elections was the lowest ever: not more than 37% of the eligible voters took the opportunity to vote. Many ballots even appeared to be invalid, so that it is likely that not more than 25% of the voters did cast a valid ballot. In general, it can be stated that the conservative parties have won over the left-wing parties. The biggest loser of the elections, the social-democratic USFP, dropped from the first party in parliament (in number of seats) to the fifth party in parliament. The elections results are the following:

Political Party	2007 elections	+/-
Independence Party (Hizb al-Istiqlal/Parti d'Independence)	52	+4
Justice and Development Party (Parti de la Justice et du Developpment)	46	+4
People's Movement (Mouvement Populaire)	41	+14
National Rally of Independents (Rassemblement National des Indépendents)	41	-2
Socialist Union of People's Forces (USFP)	38	-12
Constitutional Union (Union Constitutionnelle)	27	+11



Party of Progress and Socialism (Parti du Progrès et du Socialisme)	17	+6
PND–Al Ahd Union	14	-3
Front of Democratic Forces (Front des Forces Démocratiques)	9	-3
Democratic and Social Movement (Mouvement Démocratique et Social)	7	+2
PADS–CNI–PSU Union	6	+5
Labour Party (Parti Travailleiste)	5	+5
Environment and Development Party (Parti de l'Environnement et du Développement)	5	+3
Party and Renewal and Equity (Parti de Renouveau et de l'Équité)	4	+4
Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste)	2	+2
Moroccan Union for Democracy (Union Marocaine pour la Démocratie)	2	+2
Citizens' Forces (Forces Citoyennes)	1	-1
Alliance of Liberties (Alliance des Libertés)	1	-3
Citizenship and Development Initiative (Initiative Citoyenneté)	1	+1
Party of Renaissance and Virtue (Parti de la Renaissance et de la Vertu)	1	+1
Independents	5	+5
Total (turnout 37%)	325	-

Besides a victory for the conservative parties (or a loss for the USFP), another result is also interesting. In spite of the large number of competing parties (33, in 2002: 26), the seven major parties have increased their total share of seats in parliament: in 2002, the seven major parties had 72% of the seats, while in 2007 these parties have 80% of the seats in parliament. The right-wing parties claim 63% of the seats, while the left-wing parties only have 17% of the seats.

The biggest party in parliament is the Independence Party (Hizb al-Istiqlal) with 52 seats. The party only slightly increased its share of seats. The runner-up, the Islamist Justice and Development Party, was seen as the most likely winner during the period before the elections. All major polls showed that a major increase of seats was likely to come about. However, the contrary happened: the PJD did not become the biggest party and despite the increase of four seats in parliament, the party is seen as one of the losers of the elections. Before the elections, the PJD was very optimistic. Lahcen Daoudi, one of the main leaders of the PJD stated: "We are eager, we hope to win 80 (of 325 parliamentary) seats and maybe even more." The party's secretary-general, Saad Eddine Othmani, was more cautious, predicting: "We will be first with a million votes and a little over 70 seats." From another perspective, the PJD did even worse than in 2002: in that year, the party ran in 51 constituencies and won 42 seats, while this year the party ran in 94 constituencies, winning 46 seats.

In sum, 19 parties have been elected in the Moroccan parliament, compared to 22 parties in the previous parliament. Six parties are newly elected in parliament (8 new parties in 2002). An overview of all parties (including the new ones) can be found below.

Composition of the government

Istiqlal-leader Abbas el Fassi was appointed as Prime Minister on 19 September 2007 by King Mohamed VI . On 15



October 2007, it was announced that El Fassi succeeded in forming a government with four parties: Istiqlal-party, USFP, National Rally of Independents and the Party of Progress and Socialism. The number of ministers is 34, of which seven are women. Among the female minister is Nawal el Moutawakil, who won gold in the 400-meter intermediate hurdles at the 1984 Olympics, as sports minister.

The most important absent party is the PJD. Some party-members of the PJD see a role in the opposition as more attractive than being part of a majority coalition.

Observation report

The National Democratic Institute was invited by the Moroccan government to observe the elections by more than 50 foreign (former-)legislators. The observation mission concluded that:

“While members of the delegation witnessed or heard reports of isolated irregularities on election day, overall, the voting went smoothly and was characterized by a spirit of transparency and professionalism. Through the elections, the Government of Morocco provided a significant opportunity for Moroccans to make their political views known.”

However, the NDI mission also made remarks about the low turnout:

“The low voter turnout (estimated in preliminary figures at 37 percent) and significant number of protest votes suggest that Moroccan authorities will need to undertake further political reforms in order to encourage widespread engagement in the political process.”

NDI states that especially the complicated electoral system could be changed in order to enlarge the interest of the electorate in Moroccan politics.

Source: NDI Preliminary statement of the international observer delegation to Morocco’s 2007 Legislative elections.

Gender issues

In September 2002, a quota system was adopted, aimed at encouraging a better representation of women in Parliament: 30 Seats in Parliament (10% of seats) are reserved for women running in national lists. Every party presents one list, consisting of 30 women candidates.

After the 2007 elections, a new government was formed with a total of 34 ministers. Seven of them are women. In parliament, 34 women were elected. This is one less than in the 2002 elections. The election observer mission, organised by the National Democratic Institute, stated in its report that Morocco especially lacks female officials during the elections process:

“As other political reforms are pursued, consideration should be given to the best means to increase women’s political representation as elected officials, in political party leadership and as election officials.”

On of the observers, Sonja Lokar, argued that there was one exemption to the above observation: the PJD, which was the best organised of all parties and presented a huge number of well educated women observers at the polling stations.

On a local level, the representation of women is very poor. Only 0,5% of the local councillors is women and there is only one female mayor in whole Morocco.

IMPORTANT POLITICAL ISSUES

Human rights

Morocco has in recent years improved its human rights record. In 1993, Morocco ratified the UN Conventions on torture, on discrimination against women and on child rights. In November 1993, the first ever Minister for Human



Rights was appointed. In February 2007, diverse media reported that in 2007, Morocco will be the first Arab country to abolish capital punishment for all crimes. By October 2007, this has not yet been the case.

Equity and Reconciliation Commission

The Moroccan Human Rights Advisory Council (which reports to the King) has on 7 January 2004 set up an Equity and Reconciliation Commission to look into the reign of the current King's father, King Hassan II, and to "close the file on past human rights violations". During King Hassan II's regime, political prisoners, "disappearances", torture and violent repression were widespread. One of the tasks of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission is to complete payment of compensation to victims of these "disappearances" and arbitrary detention, which occurred between the 1950s and 1990s. Besides this, the Commission is also charged with providing other forms of reparation to enable victims to be rehabilitated and reintegrated into society, and with proposing measures to prevent recurrence of such human rights violations. To this end, it consulted with victims and associations representing them on all sorts of topics. By December 2004 the Commission had received requests for reparations concerning more than 16,000 victims. Another important task of the Commission is to establish the fate of hundreds of people who "disappeared" and, in the case of those who died in detention, to locate their remains. However, no actual steps were planned to bring to justice those responsible for "disappearances" and some supposed perpetrators were even allowed to remain members – or even high-ranking officials – of the security forces.

During the year the Commission collected testimonies from relatives of the "disappeared" and organized public hearings, broadcast on radio and television, in which dozens of witnesses and victims would present their testimonies. In November 2005 the Commission came with its report. The Commission had determined the fate of 742 people that had disappeared between 1956 and 1999. Furthermore the Commission gave several recommendations, of which the following are the most important:

1. Consolidating the constitutional guarantees to human rights.
2. Adopting and implementing an integrated national strategy to struggle against impunity.
3. In order to promote the state of law, there must be reforms in the sectors of security, justice, law and penal policy.

The third recommendation has been already followed by the intention of the government to abolish capital punishment (see: "Human Rights"). Despite the thorough work the Commission and the many cases they solved, non-cooperation of public officials made it difficult for them to solve many cases more. During 2006, the Commission has worked on determining to what extent and in which way victims of the Hassan II regime should be compensated.

Women's rights

On 3 February 2004 a new Family Code was publicised, which significantly improved the legal framework for women's rights. Husbands and wives were accorded equal and joint responsibility for running the family home and bringing up children, and the wife's duty of obedience to her husband was rescinded. The minimum age of marriage for women was raised from 15 to 18, the same as for men, and the requirement of a male marital tutor for women to marry was eliminated. Severe restrictions were imposed on male polygamy. The right to divorce by mutual consent was established and unilateral divorce by the husband was placed under strict judicial control. However, provisions concerning inheritance rights, which widely discriminate against women, remained almost entirely unchanged. What effect this reforms will have on the ground will depend on the judiciary's ability to put them into practice. Confirming the findings of local women's rights organizations, the UN Human Rights Committee expressed its concern in November 2004 about the high level of domestic violence against women. In 2007, Human Rights Watch stated that the reforms of the new Family Code are implemented at a slow pace. In the 2007 Amnesty International annual report, it is stated that Morocco makes efforts to improve the legal status of women, but that legislation still contained "some discriminatory provisions, particularly with regard to inheritance and criminal matters".

Changes in the legislative framework that simplified working in the non-governmental sector have led to a more active civil society. Official estimates are that in 2004, Morocco counted some 20.000 to 30.000 associations working in the field of democratisation and human rights. Moroccan NGO's, which also work in fields as social work and economic development, often suffer from a lack of funding and capacity.



Human rights in the war against terror

The authorities tightened up on suspected Islamic activists, a campaign that began in 2002 and intensified after the Casablanca bomb attacks of 16 May 2003 (see below). Over 200 people were sentenced to prison terms ranging from several months to life imprisonment, convicted of belonging to “criminal gangs” or of involvement in planning violent acts. Those sentenced to death in 2003 remain in custody – no executions have taken place in Morocco or Western Sahara since 1993. Several of those sentenced in 2004 were allegedly tortured to extract confessions or to force them to sign or thumbprint statements they rejected. Other breaches of the right to a fair trial were reported, such as the frequent rejection by courts of requests by defence lawyers to call defence witnesses.

The Human Rights Watch expressed in their annual report of 2007 their concerns about the large number of alleged cases of torture or ill treatment in detention and the lack of independent investigations into them. Amnesty International confirmed this concern in their annual report of 2007.

Morocco is an official ally of the US in the war against terror. On 16 May 2003 Morocco itself was the victim of a terrorist attack. In a period of 30 minutes, five bombs exploded on different places in Casablanca, killing 43 people. Targets included the Belgian Consulate, a Jewish community centre, a Spanish restaurant, and the Fararh hotel. The attacks bearded the signature of a group with a great deal of organizational skills and resources – there were reports that the attacks may have been the work of Al-Qaida or linked terrorist groups. In May 2003, Morocco’s parliament passed a controversial anti-terrorism law, which broadened the definition of terrorism and increased the number of offences punishable by death. However, Morocco’s King has strongly opposed the war in Iraq.

On 11 March 2007, precisely three years after the devastating suicide bombings in Madrid, a suicide bomber blew himself just outside an internet café in Casablanca. He killed himself and injured four others, of which his companion was one of them. On 13 August 2007, a suicide bomber tried to blow-up a tourist-bus in Meknes. However, he did not kill anybody, not even himself. The suicide-bomber only lost his arm.

Free media Although there is a general opinion that there is a relatively free press in Morocco, the country was labelled ‘Not Free’ by Freedom House in 2006. Freedom of expression is guaranteed by the constitution. However, an extensive press law forbids journalists from criticizing Islam, the King or the royal family, or Morocco’s presence in the Western Sahara. This law also levies fines and prison sentences against journalists who violate these rules, “endanger public order”, or defame public officials. In May 2004, the Moroccan government invoked Article 41 of new anti-terror legislation (see above) that set stricter limits on and penalties for speech offences. The law permits the arrest of journalists who disseminate information deemed supportive of terrorism; a very broad definition.

Human Rights Watch reports that since 2005, a number independent weeklies has been prosecuted for publishing “false news”, “insulting a foreign head of state” or “undermining the institution of the monarchy. Because of the above prosecutions, press freedom still isn’t as self-evident as it should be. Also in 2005, the spokeswoman of the Al-Adl wal Ishan group was charged with defamation of the monarchy when she has expressed in a newspaper that, according to her, the monarchy was not appropriate for Morocco.

Broadcast media are the key source for Morocco’s population, which has a high level of illiteracy. Newspapers are therefore hardly read in Morocco. Of all the North-African, the number of the read newspapers per 1000 inhabitants is relatively low and below the average of these countries. Most of the national broadcast media remain under government control, except Medi-1, a private radio station from Tangiers, but this station avoids political issues.

The number of Moroccans having Internet access in 2003 was about one million, but in 2007 this number had grown to 4,5 million, which is 15,1% of the population. This makes Morocco one of the frontrunners in internet usage in Africa.

Corruption Transparency International ranked Morocco 72th out of 179 countries in 2007 on the Corruption Perception Index. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is highly corrupt, Morocco scored a 3.5, which indicates that corruption is still a large problem to Morocco’s economy and one of the main courses for it’s economic backwardness. The score of Morocco in the Corruption Perception Index was stable between 2003 and 2006, around 3.2 each year.

Minority issues: the Berber population



From an ethnic point of view, the majority of the Moroccan population belongs to the Berber population. The Berbers were the first inhabitants of Northern Africa, before the conquest of the continent by the Arabs in the 17th century. In terms of identity however, the population that considers itself to belong to the Berber community, is much lower: around 40% of the Moroccan population.

Officially the Berber population is called "Amazigh". Their language, the "Tamazight", is – although rarely ever written – still the language of Morocco's rural zones. In the Atlas and Riff mountains it is the main language. In the Sahara desert it is spoken by the Touaregs, a small ancient tribe. Responding to questions of the Berber communion, King Mohammed VI has in 2001 created "l'Institut Royal de la Culture Amazigh", in support of the promotion and preservation of the Berber culture and language.

Still many questions concerning the integration of Berbers in modern Moroccan society remain unsolved. Among these questions are the recognition of the Tamazight as national language (in Algeria this is the case since 2002) and the education of Berber children.

Foreign relations

Since Morocco gained independence, its foreign policy has been sympathetic to the West. Long-term goals are to strengthen its influence in the Arab world and Africa, as well as to maintain close relations with Europe and the United States. Maintaining good relations with the EU is one of Morocco's priorities. The European Union and Morocco have various partnerships and trade agreements, among which the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the EU-Morocco Association Agreement (see below). The USA accorded Morocco the status of "major non-NATO ally" in June 2004, apparently in acknowledgement of what a senior administration official described as "Morocco's steadfast support in the global war on terror". The status lifted restrictions on arms sales. The USA also signed a free-trade agreement with Morocco.

Morocco is a member of the United Nations and also holds memberships in the Arab League; the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC); and the Non-aligned Movement. The late King Hassan II was acting chairman of the Arab League as well as chairman of the OIC. Morocco also was a member of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), but withdrew when the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (Western Sahara) was given full membership. Morocco is one of four participants in the Agadir free trade agreement with Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan, which is open to other countries.

European Neighbourhood Policy

Since the enlargement of the European Union with ten new Member States (1 May 2004), the EU has new borders and with new borders come new neighbours. To strengthen the relationship with these new neighbours, the EU has, already in March 2003, developed the European Neighbourhood Policy, in which Morocco participates. This policy sets out ambitious objectives for partnership with neighbouring countries based on strong commitments to shared values and political, economical and institutional reforms. Partner countries are invited to enter into closer political, economic and cultural relations with the EU, to enhance cross border co-operation and to share responsibility in conflict prevention and resolution.

Diplomatic relations between Morocco and the European Union date back to 1960, when a commercial agreement was concluded. In 1976 a first co-operation agreement was signed. In At the 1995 Barcelona conference the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was inaugurated, establishing a policy with ambitious and long-term objectives in the fields of (a) the political and security partnership, (b) the economic and financial partnership and (c) the partnership in social, cultural and human affairs. To develop these conditions bilaterally, the Union and Morocco have set up the EU-Morocco Association Agreement. This document, dated 1 March 2000, is the legal basis for relations between Morocco and the EU. The agreement emphasizes the importance of human rights, democratic principles and economic freedom, as well as the need to strengthen peace, political stability and economic development in the region by encouraging regional co-operation; the need to open a regular political dialogue in bilateral and international contexts on issues of common interest; and the need to maintain a dialogue on scientific, technological, cultural, audiovisual and social matters to the benefit of both parties (source: Commission staff working paper, European Neighbourhood Policy. Country report Morocco, Brussels 12.05.2004, and the website Gateway to the European Union: http://europa.eu.int/index_en.htm).

The question of Western Sahara



The boundaries between Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and Western Sahara are derived from the old historical zones of influence of the French and Spanish. Since Spain's withdrawal in 1976, Western Sahara has been a disputed territory. Morocco has occupied and virtually annexed the territory in 1979, apart from an eastern strip controlled by the Polisario Front. The Polisario Front, or the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro, in February 1976 formally proclaimed a government-in-exile (from southwest Algeria) of their Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), led by President Mohamed Abdelaziz.

Most countries regard the sovereignty of Western Sahara as undetermined, pending United Nations efforts to find a solution. In 1991, a ceasefire was agreed between the two parties. Since then, the United Nations have repeatedly tried to hold a referendum on the matter, which would lead either to independence, or to annexation. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) has however until today not made any real progress. The latest UN-proposal was a 'Peace Plan' that involved a period of autonomy followed by a referendum. According to Kofi Annan (UN Secretary-general of the UN, 1997-2006) this was a plan that should have been acceptable to both parties. Unfortunately they could not agree: it was acceptable to the Polisario, but not to Morocco. So far, every initiative to achieve a solution to the status of the territory has failed.

Morocco's efforts to convince the international community of its sovereign rights over Western Sahara suffered a setback in September 2005 when South Africa formally established diplomatic ties with the Polisario Front. While Morocco's record in Western Sahara has improved in recent years more needs to be done on providing equality of opportunity for the people of the territory. Both sides have imperfect records on human rights. The conflict has led to around 150.000 refugees from the Sahara in refugee camps in Algeria, and about 500 Moroccans, which are held captive in the Sahara.

On 18 and 19 June 2007, the UN's Special Envoy for Western Sahara, Peter van Walsum, hosted a series of meetings between representatives of the Morocco and Frente Polisario, and the neighbouring countries Mauritania and Algeria. These meetings were considered to be the first direct talks between the two parties in seven years. The talks were a direct result of the UN Security Council Resolution 1754 of 30 April, 2007 which urged both parties to "enter into direct negotiations without preconditions and in good faith." The parties discussed a form of autonomy for Western Sahara, under Moroccan sovereignty. So far, the date for the second series of talks has not been fixed yet.

Border issue with Spain

Morocco has another border dispute with Spain, since Morocco protests against Spain's control over the coastal enclaves of Ceuta, Melilla, and Penon de Velez de la Gomera, as well as the islands of Penon de Alhucemas and Islas Chafarinas and their surrounding waters. Discussions on the matter have not progressed, but defining the boundaries is necessary in order to set limits on exploration of the territories and refugee interdiction, which then again is very important, since Morocco serves as one of the primary launching areas of illegal migration into Spain from North Africa. In 2002, Morocco rejected Spain's unilateral designation of drawing a median line from the Canary Islands. A solution has thus not yet been found. In the recent years the problem of African refugees has grown. In July 2006, 3 refugees were killed in the Spanish border enclave of Melilla in Morocco when they tried to enter Spain and still many refugees are wounded in their attempt to reach the Spanish enclave. So far, no solution has been found to cope with this growing problem.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES

United Party of Socialists (Parti Socialiste Unifié)

Leader: Mohamed Moujahid

The PSU was created in 2005 through the merger of the Parti de la Gauche Socialiste Unifiée (PGSU) and the "Fidélité à la Démocratie" association. The PGSU itself had been the result of an earlier merger of four leftist parties in 2002, namely the Organisation de l'Action Démocratique et Populaire (Organisation of Democratic and Popular Action), the Mouvement des Démocrates Indépendants (Movement of Independent Democrats), the Mouvement pour la Démocratie (Movement for Democracy) and the Personnalités Indépendantes de Gauche (Independent Persons of the



Left).

The PSU is a socialist party which strives for “a dignified life and equitable distribution”. According to the PSU, their program is founded on the principles of modernity, rationalism, and citizenship. The party wishes to change the constitution so as to curb the powers of the king and turn Morocco into a constitutional monarchy. PSU furthermore wishes to increase the Moroccan’s sense of citizenship through education, training and cooperation with NGOs and grassroots movements. Important issues for the party are equal access to quality education and healthcare; the creation of employment; development of rural areas and environmental protection; the fight against corruption; the modernisation of the administration; and greater independence of the judiciary. PSU furthermore actively supports gender equality and equal opportunities for minorities and disabled. Within the party, a women network and a youth organisation are active.

The PSU currently has 2 representatives in parliament.

Socialist Union of People’s Forces (Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires. USFP)
Leader: M. Mohamed Elyazghi

The USFP is the successor of the “Union Nationale des Forces Populaires” (UNFP, the party was renamed USFP in 1975), which was created in January 1959, following internal division in the Istiqlal Party. The USFP, which had led the 1997 government, lost 7 seats in the 2002 elections, and another 12 seats in the 2007 elections. The party holds nowadays 38 seats in parliament and is the fifth party in parliament. Despite the big loss of seats, USFP kept its place in the coalition government. The party formed a government with Istiqlal, PPS and the National Rally of Independents.

After its creation, the USFP held it’s next congress in 1962. In the first legislative elections of the country, in 1963, the new party was a success and the leaders of the UNFP (among which Mehdi Ben Barka, who disappeared mysteriously in 1963 in Paris) were voted into parliament. Under the reign of King Hassan (1961–1999), the USFP was frequently harassed by the regime. In 1963 and 1981, Party leaders were kidnapped and the Party press (newspapers “Al Moharrir” and “Libération”) was forced to close down. In 1993 the democratic bloc “la Koutla Démocratique” was created by the USFP together with Istiqlal, PPS and OADP. In 1997 they formed the government together with their allies from the Koutla, which have been opposition in the past. In the run-off to the 2007 elections, the USFP incorporated the Parti Socialiste Democratique (PSD).

Highlights of the USFP program are to integrate young unemployed people into the labour force, to maintain and stimulate the development of the Moroccan arts and handicrafts and their cultural values, and the adoption of local projects in order to promote investment and employment.

The USFP is member of the Socialist International.

Website (French): <http://www.usfp.ma/index.php>

OTHER PARTIES

Independence Party – Istiqlal Party/Parti d’Indépendance
Leader: M. Abbas El Fassi

The Istiqlal/Independence Party (Istiqlal/Parti d’Indépendance) was founded in 1944, as an umbrella group of Moroccans fighting for independence from France. In 1993, the party became one of the parties of the democratic bloc “Koutla” and was part of the new government of 1997. Ever since, Istiqlal is in government. Today, Istiqlal is the nationalist party of Morocco and the party in power, functioning in line with the Moroccan Monarchy. Key points of the Istiqlal Party are: the connection with Islam and the constitutional monarchy and the throne, the safeguarding of Morocco’s cultural identity, the realisation of economical and social equality, the development of the economy and



the reduction of economic and social differences between the regions. Istiqlal also wants to offer more attention to the position of Moroccans living abroad.

In the 2007 parliamentary elections, the Istiqlal-party became the biggest party in parliament with a total of 52 seats. Therefore, the King appointed Istiqlal-leader Abbas el Fassi as Prime Minister of the new Moroccan government. El Fassi formed on 15 October 2007 a coalition with USFP, PPS and the National Rally of Independents.

Website (French): <http://www.istiqlal.ma/sommaire.php3>

Party of Justice and Development (Parti de la Justice et du Développement)
Leader: M. Saad Eddine El Othmani

The Party of Justice and Development was created as the “Constitutional and Democratic Popular Movement” (MPDC) from splinters of the Popular Movement (MP) in January 1967 (the Party changed its name to PJD in October 1998). The Party is moderate Islamist and a growing force in the country. The Islamist PJD carefully paves the way for a more religious orientated Morocco by creating the image of being the true defender of the Muslim state. The PJD presents itself as the only party which can bring problems such as corruption, poverty and the loosening of traditional values by the parties in power to an end.

The electoral program of the PJD had five key points: authenticity, sovereignty, democracy, equality and development – everything in accordance with Islam. After the 2003 Casablanca-bombings, the party changed its political profile by becoming more pragmatic and less critical about the Western influences in Morocco. This pragmatic profile seemed to pay-off in the run-off to the parliamentary elections of 2007. The opinion-polls showed a great victory for the PJD, with the possibility of winning up to 80 seats. However, the outcomes of the elections were a big disappointment for the PJD. The party, however, did increase its number of seats from 42 in 2002 to 46 in 2007, but the increase was much less than they expected.

Website (Arabic, French in progress): <http://www.pjd.ma/arabe/index.asp>

People’s Movement (Mouvement Populaire)
Leader: M. Mohamed Laenser (Secretary General), Mahjoubi Ahardane (President)

The People’s Movement (MP) was constructed in 1959. The program of the MP rests on various principles related to Morocco’s political and cultural identity, the promotion of private initiative, increasing the dynamism of the productive and growing sectors of Morocco’s economy, the realisation of social equality and the regulation of state intervention in the economical and social life. The party is a member of the Liberal International since 2003.

The MP, which has participated in different legislative consultations organised in Morocco since 1963 held its latest congress in 2001. Since 1986, M. Laenser occupies the post of Party leader, thereby replacing M. Mahjoubi Aherdane who has later founded the MNP. In 2006, the People’s Movement merged with the National Popular Movement (MNP) and the Democratic Union (UD).

In the 2007 elections, the party increased its number of seats tremendously: from 27 in 2002 to 41 in 2007. This makes the MP the third party in parliament. The increase of seats is due to the merger with the Democratic Union and the National Popular Movement.

Website (French): <http://www.harakamp.org.ma/>

National Rally of Independents (Rassemblement National des Indépendents, RNI)
Leader: M. Ahmed Osman

Since it was created in 1978 by the ‘SAP’ (Sans Appartenance Politique) deputies of the 1977 elections, the RNI strives for the realisation of its goals: the promotion of social democracy within the constitutional monarchy, the preservation of the Arab-African Moroccan identity and the defence of the territorial integrity of the Kingdom. In the context of this program, the RNI calls for the realisation of a social project, aimed at the creation of a solid and competitive economy, which guarantees labour places, the development of the country, and reform of the legal



system as well as the tax system – which in turn must encourage private investment.

The RNI has 41 seats in the Moroccan parliament. The party lost two seats compared to the 2002 elections.

Constitutional Union (Union Constitutionnelle)

Leader: Mohamed Abied

Member of the Liberal International since 2003. The UC was created in 1983; and has been part of governments in the past several times. The party is considered to be closed to the palace or at least to the administration. Mohamed Abied is Party leader since 2001. In the 2007 elections, the party increased its share of seats tremendously: from 16 in 2002 to 27 in 2007.

Party of Progress and Socialism (Parti du Progrès et du Socialisme)

Leader: M. Ismaïl Alaoui

The PPS considers itself to be the legitimate heir – of the organisation, the ideology as well as the political orientation – of the Moroccan Communist Party (Parti Communiste Marocain, 1943–1968) and the Party of Liberation and Socialism (Parti de la Libération et du Socialisme, 1968–1969). In 1993, the PPS became member of the democratic bloc “Koutla” and in 1997 member of the government, together with Istiqlal, USFP and OADP. The PPS defines itself as an independent, social democratic, progressive national party, which respects the socialist principles, the militant traditions of the Moroccan people, the Arab–Amazigh culture and the values of Islam. The Party counts intellectuals as well as manual workers among its supporters.

In the 2007 parliamentary elections, the PPS won 17 seats in parliament. The party increased its number of seats with 6. The electoral–program was based on four issues: employment, education, the life of ordinary Moroccan citizens and the fight against corruption. After the elections, the PPS formed a government with Istiqlal, USFP and the National Rally of Independents.

M. Ismaïl Alaoui is party leader since 1997. As party–leader he ran in the 2007 parliamentary elections, but didn’t win his seat. The PPS publicises two daily national newspapers (“Al–Bayane” and “Bayane Al Youm”).

Website (French): http://www.pps-maroc.org/francais/index_f.htm

National Democratic Party (Parti National–Démocrate) – Covenant Party (Parti Al–Ahd)

Leader: M. Abdallah Kadiri

Created in 1981 by fragments from RNI. In the 2007 parliamentary elections, the PND (12 seats in 2002) formed a joined list together with the Covenant Party (Parti Al Ahd) of Najib El Ouazzani. This party was created in 2002 and had 6 seats in parliament (2002). Together the parties won 14 seats in parliament.

Front of Democratic Forces (Front des Forces Démocratiques)

Leader: M. Thami Khyari

Founded 22 June 1997 by splinters of PPS. In the 2007 elections, the party won 9 seats, three less than the in the 2002 elections. The party is now joining forces again with its “mother” PPS in Parliament in order to gain the status of Parliamentary group (17+9), where minimum seats is about 22.

Democratic and Social Movement (Mouvement Démocratique et Social)

Leader: M. Mahmoud Archane

Created 15 June 1996 from splinters from the MNP. The party has 7 seats in parliament.

PADS–CNI–PSU Union

Leaders: Ahmed Benjelloun (PADS), Mohamed Moujahid (PSU), Abdesalam Alaziz (CNI)

The PADS–CNI–PSU Union has 6 seats in the Moroccan parliament. The union is a combination of the Parti de l’Avant–garde Démocratique et Socialiste (PADS), the Parti du Congrès National Ittihadi (CNI, left–socialist, formed 2001) and the Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU, left–socialist, formed 2005 as a merger from GSU and « Association



Fidélité à la démocratie »).

In some constituencies the parties presented their own candidates, in some they stood as a union. Only CNI managed to win one individual seat, the other 5 seats were won through the Union-approach.

Parti Travailleiste (Labour Party)

Leader: Abdelkrim Benatiq (former banker and labour unionist)

At the end of 2005, Abdelkrim Benatiq, Omar Seghrouchni, Mohamed el-Ouchari took the initiative to create the Labour Party (Parti Travailleiste). The party was founded on 14 and 15 May 2006 at the party's first party conference.

The party's ideology is not clear yet. Initially, the party placed itself on the left of the political spectrum. Later, however, the party changed to a more centre-left party. The party itself states that it is a party for workers and middle-class people. The lack of a clear profile is also caused by the fact that the party so far hasn't been part of any alliance with other political parties. In an interview before the 2007 parliamentary elections, party leader Benatiq stated that the most important task of political parties for the coming years in Morocco is to restore the credibility of the parliament.

In the parliamentary elections of 2007, the Parti Travailleiste entered the Moroccan parliament with 5 seats. However, Benatiq stated that the main focus of the party will remain the 2012 elections. Until that moment, the Parti Travailleiste sees being in opposition as the ideal way to develop politically and organisationally.

Environment and Development Party (Parti de l'Environnement et du Développement)

Leader: Ahmed Al Alami

Created in 2002. The party has 5 seats in parliament.

Party of Renewal and Equity (Parti de Renouveau et de l'Equité)

Leader : Chaquir Achahbar

Created in : 2002

Orientation ethnic - berber. 4 seats.

Parti Socialiste (Socialist Party)

Leader: Abdelmajid Bouzoubaâ

The Parti Socialiste (Socialist Party) was founded on 29 April 2006 by former members of the "Mouvement Solicaliste Marocain". The founders protested against the level of intern democracy within the "Mouvement Socialiste Marocain".

The party's main objectives are threefold: 1) political and constitutional changes, 2) cultural, social and economic reforms and 3) territorial integrity. Just like the Parti Travailleiste, the Parti Socialiste tries to restore the political credibility of the Moroccan politics.

As stated earlier, the Parti Socialiste has the objective to strive for political changes. Party leader Abdelmajid Bouzoubaâ stated that he Moroccan politics should be "reorganised" in a system with only three poles: left, centre and right. He stated to regret the current fragmentation on the left side of the political spectrum.

In the 2007 parliamentary elections, the Parti Socialiste (Socialist Party) gained two seats in parliament.

Moroccan Union for Democracy (Union Marocaine pour la Démocratie)

Leader: Abdellah Azmani

The Moroccan Union for Democracy was founded 10 July 2006 in the Moroccan capital of Rabat. The party states in its program that they will contribute to the realisation of "the democracy of the constitutional monarchy, the economic development of the country, the reinforcement of the Islamic, Berber and Arabic fundamentals of the



Moroccan nation, and the defence of the Moroccan territorial integrity.” Its leader, Abdellah Azmani, is a former cultural minister and states that the new party shows the aspirations of the youth in Morocco. In the 2007 parliamentary elections, the party entered parliament with two seats.

Civic Forces/Citizens' Forces (Forces Citoyennes)
Leader: Abderrahim Lahjouji

Founded in 2001, the party's orientation is liberal and closed to entrepreneurs/business owners. 1 seat.

Alliance of Liberties (Alliance des Libertés)
Leader: M. Ali Bel Haj

Created in 2002, the party won 1 seat in parliament. This was a loss of 3 seats compared to 2002.

Citizenship and Development Initiative (Initiative Citoyenneté)
Leader: Mohammed Benhammou
Created in: 2002
Orientation ethnic – berber. 1 seat

Party of Renaissance and Virtue (Parti de la Renaissance et de la Vertu)
Leader : Mohamed Khalidi
The Party of Renaissance and Virtue was founded on 25 December 2005.
Religious party. Among the party-members there are former members of a variety of parties, of which the Justice and Development Party and the Istiqlal-party are the most important.

Party-leader declared that the party is a national democratic party with connections to the Islam and with the objective of modernisation and democratisation. The party also empathises the importance of social justice for the Moroccan party.

In the parliamentary elections, the party won 1 seat in parliament.

SOURCES

- Amnesty International Report 2005 Morocco/Western Sahara:
<http://web.amnesty.org/report2005/mar-summary-eng>
- Arabicnews.com
- CIA: The world factbook: <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mo.html>
- Commission staff working paper, European Neighborhood Policy. Country report Morocco, Brussels 12.05.2004: (http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/pdf/country/Morocco_%2011_May_EN.pdf)
- Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – 2001: Morocco, released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 4 March, 2002: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8277.htm>
- Electionworld: elections in Morocco: <http://www.electionworld.org/morocco.htm#parties>
- Freedom House Freedom of the Press 2004: A Global Survey of Media Independence (<http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/pressurvey.htm>)
- Freedom House Freedom of the press 2005 draft country reports (<http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/pressurvey/pfs2005.pdf>)
- Gateway to the European Union: http://europa.eu.int/index_en.htm).
- Governments on the WWW: Morocco: <http://www.gksoft.com/govt/en/ma.html>



- Human Rights Watch Middle East/North Africa: <http://www.hrw.org/doc?t=mideast&c=morocc>
- Institut Européen de Recherche sur la Coopération Méditerranéenne et Euro-Arabe, Fiche d'Information Maroc: <http://www.medeab.be/index.html?page=2&lang=fr&doc=%20129>
- International Republican Institute Morocco Program: <http://www.iri.org/countries.asp?id=7393867642>
- James N. Sater, "Morocco after the parliamentary elections of 2002", in: *Mediterranean Politics*, 8, 1, (spring 2003), pp. 1135-142.
- Le journal hebdomadaire : <http://www.lejournal-hebdo.com/>
- Maghreb Arabe Presse: <http://www.map.ma/eng>
Marrakech (Maroc), 17 – 23 mars 2002): <http://www.majliss-annouab.ma/FRANCAIS/secretaire-general.html>
- Ministry of communication of Morocco: http://www.mincom.gov.ma/french/f_page.html
- Moroccan Chamber of Representatives: <http://www.parlement.ma/sitefr/>
- Moroccan-American Trade and Investment Council: <http://www.moroccanamericantrade.com/morogov.cfm#top>
- Morocco Country Review: <http://www.countrywatch.com/>
- Morocco news and basic information: <http://www.al-bab.com/maroc/>
- Morocco's Parliamentary System (107ème Conférence de l'Union Interparlementaire)
- National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Middle East and North Africa: Morocco: <http://www.ndi.org/worldwide/mena/morocco/morocco.asp>
- Stephen Zunes, "Morocco and Western Sahara", in: *Foreign policy in focus*, vol. 3, no. 42, December 1998.
- The Library of Congress (US) Guide to law online, Morocco: <http://www.loc.gov/law/guide/morocco.html>
- Transparency International Country Profiles: <http://www.corisweb.org/article/archive/32>
- U.S. Department of State Morocco Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998: <http://www.usembassy.ma/Themes/CivilSociety/us.htm>
- United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office Country Profiles
- United Nations Development Programme: Programme on Governance in the Arab Region; State – Civil Society Relations: Morocco: <http://www.pogar.org/countries/civil.asp?cid=12>