



## **Former Refugees in Washington, DC this week speak out for thousands still held in Polisario camps**

**Washington, DC (May 5, 2008)** – This week, a group of former Sahrawi refugees held by the Polisario Front in southern Algeria—some for their entire lives—have come to United States to meet with US government officials, media, and human rights organizations. Their mission is to speak out on behalf of their own families and the tens of thousands of other refugees still being held in the tightly-controlled Polisario camps.

Among the group of former refugees are: **Naba Deddah El Meki** (a former Polisario humanitarian aid coordinator who witnessed systematic corruption and theft), **Naha Al Salek Sidi** (a handicapped mother of two, who was used by the Polisario to solicit medical supplies from international NGOs – supplies which were subsequently sold), **Salma Essalek** and **Said Abderahman** (a pregnant woman and her husband who made their nighttime escape through a minefield, chased by Polisario soldiers), **Al Afia Hammidi** (a mother of five who, with the assistance of UNHCR, last week won the battle to force the Polisario to return her two youngest children) and **Brahim Al Selem** (a former Polisario police officer who was imprisoned for speaking out against the Polisario, and who has first-hand knowledge of secret prisons for unwed mothers, and the extensive smuggling and contraband network operating in the region).

Their testimonies are hardly unique; they represent hundreds of similar accounts witnessed by international organizations, such as the UN High Commission for Refugees and the World Food Program. Too often, the Polisario Front has used the Western Sahara political impasse to distract attention away from this on-going humanitarian crisis. In fact, just two weeks ago, the UN Secretary General's Personal Envoy for the Western Sahara, Peter Van Walsum acknowledged that there is also a "moral dilemma" to the situation and lamented that the intolerable status quo is "too readily accepted [. . .] by deeply involved supporters of the Frente Polisario, who do not live in the camps themselves [. . .]."

"It is vital for the international community to be aware of these inhumane conditions and denial of refugee rights under international law, including the most basic freedom to leave the Polisario controlled refugee camps," said Robert Holley, Executive Director of the Moroccan American Center for Policy. "The situation in the Western Sahara is not merely a political conflict, but an unconscionable humanitarian crisis that must be addressed."

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**The Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP)** is a non-profit organization whose principal mission is to inform opinion makers, government officials and an interested public in the United States about political and social developments in Morocco and the role being played by the Kingdom of Morocco in broader strategic developments in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East.

For more information, please visit [www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org)



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You are cordially invited to attend a breakfast discussion:

## “Our Families, Our Faiths & Our Future”

How Women Religious Leaders & Faith-Based Community Partnerships Can Promote Equality, Strengthen Families & Deepen Interfaith Dialogue

Our special guests will be members of a delegation of *mourchidates*, or women religious counselors, from Morocco. These pioneering women will share their experiences as part of Morocco’s innovative approach to tearing down barriers by building up families.

**Wednesday, May 20, 2009**

**9:00am—10:30am**

at the

**Moroccan American Cultural Center**

1220 L St NW, Suite 411, Washington, DC 20005

Please RSVP by Monday, May 18 to [cdark@moroccanamericancenter.com](mailto:cdark@moroccanamericancenter.com)

Other invited guests include:



The **Peaceful Families Project** is devoted to ending domestic violence in Muslim families by facilitating awareness workshops for Muslim leaders and communities, providing cultural sensitivity trainings for professionals, conducting research, and developing resources.

**Jewish Women International** develops ideas to create safe homes, healthy relationships and strong women; our partners - the individuals, organizations, businesses and entire communities that implement our plans - turn those ideas into initiatives.



**House of Ruth** provides free, confidential counseling to help women work through issues surrounding domestic violence as well as developmental day care for children from families that are recovering from homelessness and abuse.

The **Moroccan American Cultural Center (MACC)** is a not-for-profit 501 c(3) organization which works to build stronger cultural and educational ties between Morocco and the US through its support of programs that enhance bilateral relations and cooperation. Created in 2003 as an initiative of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, MACC has undertaken a range of projects which include hosting events that celebrate and share the rich diversity of Moroccan culture, and supporting programs that enhance cultural and educational ties between the US and Morocco as well as across the Maghreb. For more information, go to [www.moroccanamericanculture.org](http://www.moroccanamericanculture.org).

# NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Thursday, April 16, 2009**

## **Majority of Congress Calls for Resolving W. Sahara Conflict to Remove 'Single Greatest Obstacle' to Combating Terrorist Threats in N. Africa**

**Bipartisan Letter to Pres. Obama from 229 US House Members Urges Strong Actions to Reaffirm Support for Morocco's Compromise Autonomy Proposal**

**Washington, DC (April 16, 2009)**—Today, a majority of Members of the US House of Representatives—led by Rep. Gary Ackerman, Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart, and the highest ranking members of the Democratic and Republican leadership—sent a letter to President Barack Obama expressing concern over the rising threat from al-Qaeda and other terrorists in North Africa. The letter called for strong US backing for Morocco's compromise solution to end the 30-year Western Sahara conflict, which would clear a path for greater regional cooperation to meet growing security and economic challenges.

The "single greatest obstacle" standing in the way of US efforts and those of its partners in the region, says the letter from a bipartisan majority of the Congress, is the "unresolved territorial dispute over the Western Sahara" which has lingered for more than three decades. In 2007, Morocco presented a compromise proposal to peacefully end the dispute by providing self-determination through autonomy for those in the region. This initiative, which the UN Security Council called "serious and credible," spurred UN-mediated direct talks between Morocco and the Algerian-backed Polisario Front. However, after four rounds of negotiations, little progress has been made, despite support from many in the international community for Morocco's proposal.

"We remain convinced that the US position, favoring autonomy for Western Sahara under Moroccan sovereignty, is the only feasible solution," the letter continued, referring to the US policy which has remained consistent through the Clinton and Bush Administrations. "We urge you to both sustain this longstanding policy, and to make clear, in both words and actions, that the United States will work to ensure that the UN process continues to support this framework as the only realistic compromise that can bring this unfortunate and longstanding conflict to an end."

Among the letter's signers are: House Majority Leader **Rep. Steny Hoyer** (D-MD), House Minority Leader **Rep. John Boehner** (R-OH), House Majority Whip **Rep. James Clyburn** (D-SC), House Minority Whip **Rep. Eric Cantor** (R-VA), Democratic Caucus Chairman **Rep. John Larson**, and Republican Conference Chairman **Rep. Mike Pence**. House Morocco Caucus Chairman, **Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart** (R-FL) and Chairman of the House Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, **Rep. Gary Ackerman** (D-NY), led the effort. Today's letter reaffirms the broad bipartisan support in the US Congress for Morocco's compromise proposal that was endorsed in a letter by 173 Members in 2007 (including the Democratic and Republican leadership).

**\*\* For full letter and signers, please visit:**

[www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/CongressionalLetter.pdf](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/CongressionalLetter.pdf)

The recommendations in the letter echo those made in a special report, "[Why the Maghreb Matters](#)," issued last month by a panel of experts including former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, General Wesley Clark, Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat, among others, which stressed the need for increased US regional engagement with the nations of North Africa to protect US security interests and promote regional peace and prosperity.

###

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*This material is distributed by the Moroccan American Center for Policy on behalf of the Government of Morocco.  
Additional information is available at the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.*

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

April 3, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Vital U.S. interests in North Africa are increasingly challenged by growing regional instability. Terrorist incidents in the Maghreb have increased by more than 400 percent since September 11, 2001, and the emergence of Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has led to a spike in terror attacks against both symbols of national government and institutions reflecting cooperation between the Arab world and the West. The single greatest obstacle impeding the security cooperation necessary to combat this transnational threat is the unresolved territorial dispute over the Western Sahara.

In addition to bringing peace to the people of Morocco and to the Saharawi, and shrinking the space for global terrorist elements to recruit and operate, resolving the conflict in the Western Sahara would have considerable economic benefits and improve the lives of millions of Africans. The entire Maghreb would finally be free to pursue serious economic integration, attract increased foreign investment, and realize the potential for regional trade and cooperation. All of these important goals are currently blocked by the continued conflict and the tension it creates between states in the region.

In 2007, at the urging of the United States and the United Nations, Morocco, our oldest ally and partner for peace in the Middle East, initiated a ground-breaking autonomy plan to resolve the more than 30 year-old conflict within the framework of self-determination for the Western Sahara. The Moroccan compromise plan received widespread support from the international community as a critical breakthrough for achieving peace and led to four rounds of UN mediated negotiations.



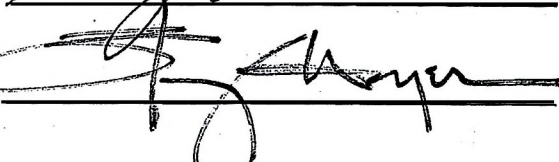

The UN Security Council, in resolution 1813 (2008), described Morocco's compromise efforts as "serious and credible." In pressing for adoption of the resolution the United States reaffirmed the policy initiated under President Clinton, and continued under President Bush, that, "Genuine autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty is the only feasible solution."

After the four rounds of negotiations did not produce any real progress, the UN Secretary General's Personal Envoy for the Western Sahara, Mr. Peter van Walsum, issued an assessment to the Security Council in April 2008. He said, "My conclusion is that an independent Western Sahara is not an attainable goal that is relevant today because it lies at the root of the current negotiation process," and he urged that future rounds of talks be held only on the subject of autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty.

Unfortunately, following this bold statement the negotiations process stalled. Mr. van Walsum has been replaced by Ambassador Christopher Ross as the new UN Personal Envoy. We are hopeful that Ambassador Ross's appointment will result in the continuation of the talks based on Mr. van Walsum's assessment.

We remain convinced that the U.S. position, favoring autonomy for Western Sahara under Moroccan sovereignty is the only feasible solution. We urge you to both sustain this longstanding policy, and to make clear, in both words and actions, that the United States will work to ensure that the UN process continues to support this framework as the only realistic compromise that can bring this unfortunate and longstanding conflict to an end. We look forward to working with you towards the success of this policy.

Sincerely,

Bob [unclear]

Ray Frank

Susan Davis

Michael [unclear]

Mary Jo [unclear]

Stephen P. [unclear]

Tom Klein

Alan [unclear]

~~[unclear]~~

Richard [unclear]

Bob Filner

[unclear]

John [unclear]

Theresa [unclear]

[unclear]

Henry [unclear]

Carol [unclear]

[unclear]

Jerrold [unclear]

[unclear]

Bell DeLahud

Jumpkin

Edut Weyl

Ro A Ross

Mr. Fulco

J.P. Mutter

~~Roller~~

Tim Holder

Ch. Pm

Scott Kebab

Tim J.

Lucy Berkeley

Stan Tish

David B. G.

Debbie Wasserman Schultz

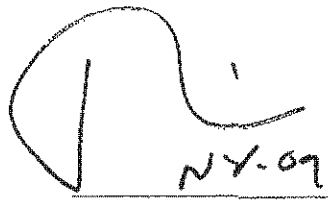
Steve Asst

~~Roller~~

Paul Weiss

Allyson J. Schwartz

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NY-09

William Diney

Ch. B. Ford

Norm Sachs

John Huseel

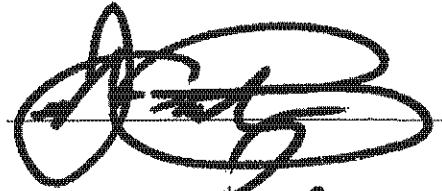
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Peter King

Michael Hand

Samuel L. Bucci

Jim Act



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Ma. R.

Rosa J. De Lauro

Carol B. Maloney

Eliot L. Engel

Michael H. Michaud

Neil Abernethy

Phyllis

Eric J. Zorn

Yvette D. Clarke

*[Handwritten signature]*

Steve Cole

Jim Langewies

Jeff Hines

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Joe Courtney

Frank Pallone Jr.

Anna Esch

Kim M. [unclear]

Ch. C.

Lothar J. [unclear]

Kathleen [unclear]

Bart Gordon

*[Handwritten signature]*

Bonnie A. Thompson

Wm. Lacy Clay

Tom Harkin

Rubin Herrera

*[Handwritten signature]*

Chris J. [unclear]

Carolyn C. Kipatnick

Elijah E. Turnings

~~Col. C. [unclear]~~

John [unclear]

David Price

Marcy Kaptur

Ben Van Hollen

Chris [unclear]

James [unclear]

Edie Bonine-John

Tam Perillo

Ann [unclear]

Di [unclear]

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~~John~~ TX 31

Fred McLean Ca 25

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[unclear]

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~~T. McCotter~~

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MMA

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[Signature]

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[Signature]

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[Signature]

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Nathan Deal

E. Whiffles

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[Signature]

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Chad Young GA-11 J. Lag Y. Lee

Jack Kingston GA-1 Gene King IA-5

Patrick Thum Mr. G. B.

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ NE

Steve Buyer IN-4 Mr. Moseley

John Linder Wally Harger

Mike Amodeo Ken Gray

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~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Eric Parker

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Michele Bachmann

James E. Clyburn

Anton Davis

John B. Janson

Charli J. Melancon

Michael E. McInerney

Sue Myrick

Paul C. Brown

Missie McFuttyre

Alan B. Hall

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Steve Kagen (WI-8)  
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John McHugh (NY-23)

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Louie Gohmert (TX-1)  
Bill Young (FL-10)  
Shelly Moore Capito (WV-2)  
John Mica (FL-7)  
Ginny Brown-Waite (FL-5)  
Doc Hastings (WA-4)  
Joe Wilson (SC-2)  
Jerry Moran (KS-1)

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Ken Calvert (CA-44)  
Jerry Lewis (CA-41)  
Mike Pence (IN-6)  
Brian Bilbray (CA-50)  
Rob Bishop (UT-1)  
Mary Fallin (OK-5)  
Pete Sessions (TX-32)  
Virginia Foxx (NC-5)  
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Henry Brown (SC-1)

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Greg Walden (OR-2)  
Fred Upton (MI-6)  
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Christopher Smith (NJ-4)  
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Anh "Joseph" Cao (LA-2)  
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Steven LaTourette (OH-14)  
Adam Putnam (FL-12)  
Deny Rehberg (MT)  
Rodney Alexander (LA-5)  
Cliff Sterns (FL-6)

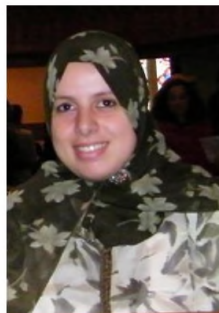
John Fleming (LA-4)  
Trent Franks (AZ-2)  
Judy Biggert (IL-13)  
Jim Gerlach (PA-6)  
Rodney Frelinghuysen (NJ-11)  
Jim Sensenbrenner (WI-5)  
John Kline (MN-2)  
Frank LoBiondo (NJ-2)  
John Boozman (AR-3)  
Ed Whitfield (KY-1)  
Duncan Hunter (CA-52)  
Adrian Smith (NE-3)

Ted Poe (TX-2)  
Jeff Miller (FL-1)  
Randy Forbes (VA-4)  
Steve King (IA-5)  
Vern Buchanan (FL-13)  
Jeff Fortenberry (NE-1)  
John Shadegg (AZ-3)  
Wally Herger (CA-2)  
Kay Granger (TX-12)  
Mark Souder (IN-3)  
Erik Paulsen (MN-3)  
Michelle Bachmann (MN-6)

John Larson (CT-1)  
Charlie Melancon (LA-3)  
Sue Myrick (NC-9)  
Mike McIntyre (NC-7)



## Mourchidates Profiles



**Fatima Zahra Salhi** is a graduate from the first class of *mourchidates* in 2006 and now serves the Rabat/Salé community in Morocco. She earned her Master's degree in public law, specializing in international relations, from Mohammed V University in Rabat. Fatima Zahra serves as a community health coordinator with a particular focus on the spiritual and psychological needs of critically ill members of her community and their families. As part of her hospital outreach, Fatima Zahra organizes a reading group, Qur'anic recitation class, social activities, and theatrical performances for those confined to medical facilities. Fatima Zahra plays an instrumental role in several community health programs, including blood donation drives and awareness campaigns for teens concerning sexually transmitted diseases. Fatima Zahra is married with one child.



**Nezha Nassi** also works in the Rabat/Salé community, and completed her *mourchidate* training in 2006 after earning her B.A. in Islamic Studies from Mohammed V University in Rabat. In the mosques she serves, Nezha regularly gives seminars and workshops on Qur'anic recitation and religious studies. Outside the mosque, Nezha works primarily in women's detention centers, providing counseling and spiritual guidance to incarcerated women. For these women, Nezha teaches adult literacy classes, organizes support groups and awareness campaigns on the dangers of drug abuse and sexually transmitted diseases, and coordinates social activities and religious ceremonies in the prison. Nezha also provides much needed counseling and support for women who are released from prison and seek to reintegrate into society.



**Ilham Chafik** graduated from the *mourchidate* training program in 2008 and currently serves the Rabat/Salé community. She earned her PhD in Arabic Language and Literature, specializing in Arabic Linguistics, from Mohammed V University in Rabat. Ilham also earned a degree in Information Technology from the Near East Institute in Oman. Ilham organizes religious training workshops, seminars, and book expositions in local mosques and universities. She also coordinates religious events, field trips, and support groups for several local youth centers in her community. Ilham dedicates much of her service to working with the blind, particularly the young. As part of her outreach to the blind community, she conducts workshops on Islam and Qur'anic study and recitations at Mohammed VI Institute for the Education and Training for the Blind. Ilham is married with two children.

### ***"Women's Spiritual Voices" at the AJC, New York, May 21, 2009***

The **Moroccan American Cultural Center (MACC)** is a not-for-profit 501 c(3) organization which works to build stronger cultural and educational ties between Morocco and the US through its support of programs that enhance bilateral relations and cooperation. Created in 2003 as an initiative of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, MACC has undertaken a range of projects which include hosting events that celebrate and share the rich diversity of Moroccan culture, and supporting programs that enhance cultural and educational ties between the US and Morocco as well as across the Maghreb. For more information, go to [www.moroccanamericanculture.org](http://www.moroccanamericanculture.org).

The **American Jewish Committee (AJC)**, established in 1906 by a small group of American Jews deeply concerned about pogroms aimed at Russian Jews, determined that the best way to protect Jewish populations in danger would be to work in a world in which all peoples were accorded respect and dignity. Over 100 years later, AJC continues its efforts to promote pluralistic societies where all minorities are protected. AJC has 28 U.S. chapters, 8 offices overseas, and 28 official partnerships with communities around the world. For more information, go to [www.ajc.org](http://www.ajc.org).



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, November 5, 2010**

## **Sahrawi Leader Reported Shot by Polisario; Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch Reiterate Call to Free Him**

**Urgent appeal continues for immediate access by outside medical care to ensure his safety, survival; Now 30 days after the Polisario Front's promised release**

**Washington, DC** (Nov. 5, 2010)—International human rights advocates Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch repeated their call for the Algeria-based Polisario Front to make good on its Oct. 6 promise to free outspoken Sahrawi leader, Mustapha Salma Ould Sidi Mouloud, following reliable reports received by his family that he has been shot and possibly very seriously injured by his Algerian and Polisario captors.

The former Polisario chief police inspector has been confined in a remote desert location since his Sept. 21 arrest for alleged "treason" and "espionage" when he tried to rejoin his family in Algeria's Tindouf refugee camps and speak out for Morocco's autonomy compromise to end the 35-year-old Western Sahara conflict.

"We share your concern about the case of Mustafa Salma Ould Sidi Mouloud," Amnesty International said in a letter to former US Ambassador to Morocco, Edward Gabriel. Amnesty said it has "publicly criticized his detention and called on the Polisario Front to release him," adding that he should not be "held for publicly expressing support for the autonomy of Western Sahara."

Human Rights Watch said the Sahrawi leader is being confined at an isolated desert outpost unable to contact his family, despite the Polisario's promised release 30 days ago. "There are no outside observers on the ground to verify he is being humanely treated," said Human Rights Watch in a statement this week. "The Polisario Front says it's cooperating fully with UNHCR" to resolve the situation. "But it is they who first detained him... apparently because of his political opinions." As "the party responsible for his well-being," they "should start by enabling him to communicate freely with his family."

"It has been a full month since the Polisario promised to free Mustapha Salma, but they still have not," said Robert Holley, Executive Director, Moroccan American Center for Policy. "Now, from what Human Rights Watch indicates, the Polisario is insisting he is no longer 'technically' their prisoner even as they detain him in some remote desert outpost, with no family contact. With their actions, Algeria and the Polisario have made it clear they can't be trusted to tell the truth. Nor can they be trusted with the safety of Mustapha Salma, whose life is at risk. The international community must hold the Polisario and Algeria accountable. They should insist Mustapha Salma be freed, now, and receive immediate outside medical care."

[Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Leadership Council for Human Rights](#), [UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#), and [US Senate](#) and [House](#) members all criticized the Polisario after the Sept. 21 arrest. The Action Committee for the Release of Mustapha Salma Ould Sidi Mouloud reported the shooting on Oct. 30.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Center for Policy

**Tuesday, September 28, 2010**

## **International Experts call Terrorism and Humanitarian Crises Greatest Threats to Africa; Morocco cited as "Key African Partner"**

**Mbarka Bouaida, Moroccan Parliamentarian, joins international forum on political and economic development in Africa**

**Atlanta, GA** (Sept. 28)—This week, US and international leaders, policymakers and experts convened in Atlanta, GA to examine the daunting economic, political, and humanitarian challenges facing Africa today, and the role the US and international community can play to address them. The Leon H. Sullivan Foundation's Africa Policy Forum, held for the first time in the US, brought together international experts of diverse backgrounds and expertise to develop its "Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."

"Our collective thinking and debate on 'Africa' is vital to help all nations on the continent reach their highest potential," said Ms. Mbarka Bouaida, the youngest member of Morocco's Parliament and chair of its Foreign Affairs Committee, during the panel discussions. "This conversation is not complete if it doesn't include 'North Africa'. Morocco and its neighbors have great potential as a region and can contribute tremendously to its southern neighbors."

Joining Ms. Bouaida at the four-day event were former UN Ambassador Andrew Young, Susan D. Page, US Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of African Affairs, General William "Kip" Ward, Commander of US AFRICOM, as well as several African ministers, international NGO leaders, and representatives from US corporations doing business in Africa.



(L to R) General William "Kip" Ward, Commander, US AFRICOM, Witney Schneidman, Sullivan Foundation, and Mbarka Bouaida, Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee in Morocco's Parliament discuss challenges facing Africa at the Leon H. Sullivan Foundation's Africa Policy Forum in Atlanta, GA.

Two of the Forum's key topics were the growing threat of terrorism in Africa and the grave humanitarian crises festering across the continent. The panelists uniformly acknowledged that increased international attention is particularly important in unstable areas with weak leadership that could easily become "failed states." "As President Obama has said, 'The more one area is unstable, the more unstable we all are,'" Deputy Assistant Secretary Page told the panel.

US business opportunities and responsibilities in Africa were highlighted in a forum on economic development moderated by National Public Radio's Charlayne Hunter-Gault, noted author and expert on African affairs. The experts reiterated that increased US engagement in Africa is necessary for real progress. Morocco's free trade agreement with the US and its nearly \$700 million Millennium Challenge Corporation partnership were singled out as models for the continent.

"For centuries, Morocco has been a key partner with its African neighbors economically and politically—during times of peace and conflict," said Ms. Bouaida. "Morocco has seen great success in the areas of social and economic development and democratization. What will make this success greater is continued progress throughout the continent."

(For media inquiries and interview requests for Ms. Bouaida during her US visit, please contact Calvin Dark, [cdark@moroccanamericancenter.com](mailto:cdark@moroccanamericancenter.com), 202-309-0372.)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Wednesday, October 6, 2010**

## **Bowing to International Pressure, Polisario Reportedly Decides to Free its Police Chief Imprisoned for Speaking Out to End Sahara Conflict**

**Key questions remain: Will he be free to rejoin his family in the camps? Will he be allowed to continue efforts with Sahrawis in the camps to promote peace?**

**Washington, DC** (October 6, 2010)—The international community cautiously welcomed, and also raised questions about, today's announcement by the Polisario Front that it has "decided" to release its imprisoned Chief Police Inspector, Mustapha Salma Ould Sidi Mouloud. He was arrested Sept. 21 in Algeria on charges of "treason" and "espionage" when he tried to rejoin his family in the Tindouf refugee camps and speak out in favor of Morocco's compromise autonomy plan to end the decades-long Western Sahara conflict.

According to the announcement, made on *Sahara Press Service*, the decision to release the outspoken police chief came "in response to the request of international organizations of human rights." However, details on the "implementation of this decision," including a timetable and conditions of the release, remain unclear.

"We welcome this announcement of Mustapha Salma's release," said Robert Holley, Executive Director of the Moroccan American Center for Policy. "But the Polisario statement also raises some very important questions. To whom is he being released? Will he be allowed to return to his family in the camps and speak his mind freely about ending the Sahara conflict? Or is he being exiled from Algeria and the Polisario-run camps where thousands of Sahrawis are still confined? Are the alleged "espionage" charges against him still pending?"

This week, Mustapha Salma's father and brother are in New York City making personal appeals to the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and international human rights groups, urging them to ensure that he is given his freedom and that his family is protected and allowed to decide their future. The father and brother currently live in Smara, southern Morocco, where Mustapha Salma was kidnapped as a young boy by Polisario raiders who killed four other family members.

Human rights advocates criticized the arrest—including [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Leadership Council for Human Rights](#), the [UN High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#), and Members of the [US Senate](#) and [House of Representatives](#).

Mustapha Salma had travelled to Morocco to visit his family for the first time in 31 years as part of the UNHCR family visit program. After seeing the progress made in the region, he decided to return to the camps and speak in favor of Moroccan autonomy to end the 35-year Sahara conflict.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Monday, October 4, 2010**

## **US Senators Appeal to Sec. Clinton for Assurance on Safety of Police Chief Arrested by Polisario for Speaking Out to End Sahara Conflict**

**Imprisoned Sahrawi leader's father, brother travel to US for personal plea to UN to 'Free Sidi Mouloud'**

**Washington, DC** (October 4, 2010)—US Senators Judd Gregg (R-NH) and George LeMieux (R-FL) wrote to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, joining other Congress members and a growing outcry from international human rights advocates seeking action and assurance for the safety and whereabouts of Mustapha Salma Ould Sidi Mouloud. The Polisario Front accused the Sahrawi police chief of "treason" and "espionage" and arrested him Sept. 21 in Algeria as he tried to rejoin his wife and children in the Tindouf refugee camps. Sidi Mouloud had vowed to speak out to other Sahrawis in favor of Morocco's compromise autonomy plan to reunite Sahrawi families and end the decades-long Western Sahara conflict.

"This letter is to express my concern for the safety of Mustapha Salma Ould Sidi Mouloud, the Inspector General of the Polisario Front's police," Senators Gregg and LeMieux each wrote to Sec. Clinton. "Your assistance in obtaining information on Mr. Sidi Mouloud's whereabouts and circumstances is greatly appreciated." Gregg is Ranking Member on the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and LeMieux is a Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The Senators' letters note that Sidi Mouloud was in Morocco on a recent trip sponsored by the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). After seeing the progress in W. Sahara, which he was visiting for the first time in 31 years, Sidi Mouloud vowed to return to the refugee camps and voice his support for Morocco's compromise autonomy plan to end the 35-year W. Sahara dispute. The letters point to the growing outcry from international human rights advocates criticizing Sidi Mouloud's arrest—including [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Leadership Council for Human Rights](#), and the [UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) (UNHCR).

Sidi Mouloud's father and brother are travelling to the US this week from southern Morocco to speak to the United Nations and urge the international community to support their efforts to free Sidi Mouloud. They will address the UN 4th Committee on Tuesday in New York City and hand deliver letters to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and international human rights groups. Sidi Mouloud's father, Sheikh Salma Mouloud, is a leader of the Rguibat tribe, the largest Sahrawi tribe in W. Sahara. The father and brother both live in Smara, in southern Morocco, where Sidi Mouloud was kidnapped as a young boy by Polisario raiders who killed four other family members and injured his father.

For the full text of the letter from Sen. LeMieux to Sec. Clinton, go to:

[http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/documents/Sen\\_Lemieux\\_letter\\_on\\_Sidi\\_Mouloud.pdf](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/documents/Sen_Lemieux_letter_on_Sidi_Mouloud.pdf)

Earlier, Reps. Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL) and Jim Moran (D-VA) sent a letter to Clinton urging "the State Department to work to secure the immediate release of Mr. Sidi Mouloud." That letter is at: [http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/documents/Cong\\_Letter\\_to\\_Clinton\\_re\\_Sidi\\_Mouloud.pdf](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/documents/Cong_Letter_to_Clinton_re_Sidi_Mouloud.pdf)

There is also a Free Sidi Mouloud page on Facebook, at: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Free-Sidi-Mouloud/156280031067961?ref=ts>. A petition for Sidi Mouloud's release has been organized by Leadership Council for Human Rights, at <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/free-mustapha-salma-ould-sidi-mouloud-now/>.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, October 8, 2010**

## **Senator Urges US Inquiry into "Very Troubling Incident" of Sahrawi Leader Jailed by Polisario for Speaking Out to End Sahara Conflict**

**Outspoken police chief reportedly to be freed, but may not be free to return to Tindouf refugee camps in Algeria to see his family or speak for peace with other Sahrawis**

**Washington, DC** (October 8, 2010)—US Senator Jim Bunning (R-KY) wrote to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, joining other Congress members and international human rights advocates expressing concern for the safety of Mustapha Salma Ould Sidi Mouloud, the outspoken Sahrawi leader whose whereabouts are still unknown. The Polisario Front said Wednesday it would release him following his Sept. 21 arrest and imprisonment in Algeria. Senator Bunning asked Sec. Clinton to inquire into this "very troubling incident" of the Polisario's jailing of its own Chief Police Inspector. Mustapha Salma was charged with "treason" and "espionage" as he was on his way to rejoin his family in the Tindouf refugee camps in Algeria and speak out in favor of Morocco's compromise autonomy plan to end the decades-long Western Sahara conflict.

"I am writing to express my concern for the safety and well-being of Mustapha Salma Ould Sidi Mouloud," Sen. Bunning wrote Clinton. He said while the Polisario statement on "the release of Mr. Sidi Mouloud is good news, it is a very troubling incident. Your assistance in obtaining information on his continued safety, and that of his family, would be greatly appreciated." He also asked Sec. Clinton for "any other information on how and why this detention occurred."

Bunning noted Mustapha Salma was on a trip in southern Morocco sponsored by the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). After seeing the progress in Morocco's Sahara provinces, which he was visiting for the first time in 31 years, Mustapha Salma vowed to return to the refugee camps and voice his support for Morocco's autonomy plan to end the 35-year Western Sahara dispute. Bunning pointed out that prominent international human rights groups—including [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Leadership Council for Human Rights](#), the [UN High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#) were critical of the arrest. Other [US Senate](#) and [House of Representatives](#) members have also spoken out.

Earlier this week, Mustapha Salma's father and brother made personal appeals in New York City to the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and international human rights groups to ensure the Mustapha Salma was freed from prison to be with his family and free to speak his mind to refugees still in the camps in Algeria. The father and brother live in Smara, southern Morocco, where Mustapha Salma was kidnapped as a young boy by Polisario raiders who killed four family members.

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202.309.0372[cdark@moroccanamericancenter.com](mailto:cdark@moroccanamericancenter.com)**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:****Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2010**

## **International Women's Forum Spotlights a Decade of "Elevating the Status of Women" in Morocco**

**Mbarka Bouaida, Chair of Moroccan Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee, shares inspiring story of women's empowerment in Morocco with international women's policy forum**

**Atlanta, GA** (Sept. 29)— Mbarka Bouaida, youngest member of Morocco's Parliament and chairwoman of its Foreign Affairs Committee, spoke yesterday as an honored guest at the International Women's Luncheon in Atlanta about Morocco's notable success in advancing equal rights for women. The Luncheon, held for the first time as a part of the Leon H. Sullivan Foundation's Africa Policy Forum, provided its attendees, primarily young African and African-American women in politics, business, academia, broadcast journalism, and entertainment, with the opportunity to share their perspectives on struggles and triumphs of women in Africa and the African Diaspora around the world.

"Soon after His Majesty King Mohammed VI assumed the throne in 1999, he made women's rights a top priority," said Ms. Bouaida. "We enacted electoral reforms in Morocco in 2002 that set a minimum number for female representatives in our Parliament," she told the gathering. "In the last national legislative elections in 2007, we surpassed that minimum and now have more women in Parliament than ever before."

Ms. Bouaida noted that despite strong initial opposition by some religious conservatives, Morocco enacted unprecedented reforms to the Family Law in 2004, which governs many aspects of women's lives, including marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance.



Mbarka Bouaida, Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee in Morocco's Parliament, shares success stories in women's empowerment at International Women's Panel during Leon H. Sullivan Foundation Africa Policy Forum in Atlanta, GA

"For those who challenged that 'women's rights' ran contrary to Islamic Law, the King consulted religious scholars who provided Koranic citations of support for each of the proposed reforms," Ms. Bouaida explained. "Today, women can choose for themselves to get married, divorced, confer nationality to foreign-born children, and many other things that we could not do freely just a few years ago."

In closing remarks, Ambassador Andrew Young, former US Ambassador to the UN and Chairman of the Leon H. Sullivan Board of Directors, who visited Morocco earlier this year, expressed his admiration for Morocco's efforts to ensure women's rights and the demonstrated commitment to "elevate the status of women" of His Majesty King Mohammed VI and his scientist wife, Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Salma.

While the consensus at the luncheon was that Morocco's considerable progress is clear evidence women can take leadership roles in African, Arab, and Muslim societies, Ms. Bouaida stressed that more is yet to come.

"Currently, on our legislative agenda is an initiative to support and promote small businesses, especially those owned by women, and young female entrepreneurs," said Ms. Bouaida. "The achievement of full equal rights for women is a continuing struggle across many areas, and in Morocco we are tackling each area one by one."

(For media inquiries and interview requests for Ms. Bouaida during her US visit, please contact Calvin Dark, [cdark@moroccanamericancenter.com](mailto:cdark@moroccanamericancenter.com), 202-309-0372.)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Sunday, October 31, 2010**

## **Reported Shooting of Sahrawi Leader Imprisoned by Polisario in Algeria Draws Condemnation, Grave Concern—25 Days After Promised Release**

**Urgent appeal goes out to Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and UNHCR**

**Washington, DC** (Oct. 31, 2010)—Almost a month after the Polisario Front's promised release, Mustapha Salma Ould Sidi Mouloud has reportedly been shot and seriously injured trying to escape continued imprisonment and harsh interrogation by Polisario and Algerian security. There has been no public confirmation of the whereabouts of the outspoken Sahrawi leader, who was Polisario chief police inspector, since his arrest Sept. 21 for alleged "treason" and "espionage" as he tried to rejoin his family in Algeria's Tindouf refugee camps and speak out for Morocco's compromise autonomy plan to end the 35-year-old Western Sahara conflict.

Late yesterday the Action Committee for the Release of Mustapha Salma Ould Sidi Mouloud reported that the Sahrawi leader's family received information he was shot in the leg by a member of the Algerian security and Polisario militia that has held him under close guard, preventing contact by any family member.

Earlier in the day, before this news, Moulay Ismaili, the Sahrawi leader's father, urged the international community to intervene to end the suffering being inflicted by the Polisario and Algeria to make his son give up his support of Moroccan autonomy to bring peace to the region and "freedom and dignity" to Sahrawis.

"Twenty-five days ago the Polisario promised the world they would free Mustapha Salma, but they did not," said Robert Holley, Executive Director, Moroccan American Center for Policy. "Now, our worst fears are being realized. It is clear Algeria and the Polisario can't be trusted at their word. It should be very clear they can't be trusted with Mustapha Salma's safety. This man's life is at risk. International human rights advocates—Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and UN High Commissioner for Refugees—need to hold the Polisario and Algeria accountable for this outrageous conduct and insist Mustapha Salma be freed, now."

When the Sahrawi leader was jailed last month, [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Leadership Council for Human Rights](#), and [UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) were among international human rights advocates criticizing the arrest. Other [US Senate](#) and [House](#) members also spoke out. Bowing to the outcry, the Polisario announced he would be released October 6. But there has been marked silence since.

The Sahrawi leader was kidnapped as a boy from Smara, southern Morocco by Polisario raiders who killed four family members. He was reunited with his father for the first time in 31 years on a UN-sponsored family visit to southern Morocco this summer. Seeing the progress in Morocco's Sahara provinces, he vowed to return to the camps and voice his support to refugees for Morocco's autonomy plan to end the Sahara dispute.

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## **Members of Congress Pledge to Address Inhumane Conditions and Theft of Humanitarian Aid in Polisario Refugee Camps**

**Washington, DC (May 12, 2008)** – Last week, members and staff of the U.S. Congress met with former Sahrawi refugees who recently returned from the Polisario camps in southern Algeria. These refugees—some held in the camps their entire lives—shared eye-witness accounts of human rights abuses and the diversion of international humanitarian aid by the Polisario Front.

“We can make sure that the dollars we send are used in the way the Congress intended it to be used, making sure that the aid is going to the people and that is not being resold and making sure that the people have the freedom to leave the camps when they want to and make sure that the humanitarian conditions are as we expect in any camp around the world,” said **Rep. Corrine Brown** (D-FL), an active member of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus and the Caucus for Women's Issues.

Rep. Brown pointed out that Congress can adopt resolutions and urge the United Nations to lead investigations into the conditions in the camps to make sure that the humanitarian aid reaches those it is intended to assist. This pledge to encourage oversight by the US Congress was welcomed by **Naba Deddah El Meki**, a former Polisario humanitarian aid coordinator who shared her accounts of systematic corruption and theft with the Congresswoman.

The former Sahrawi refugees also visited the offices of **Rep. Robin Hayes** (R-NC), **Rep. Lynn Woolsey** (D-CA), **Rep. John Boozman** (R-AR), **Rep. Dale Kildee** (D-MI), **Rep. John Lewis** (D-GA), **Rep. Betty McCollum** (D-MN), **Sen. Russ Feingold** (D-WI), **Rep. Robert Aderholt** (R-AL), **Sen. Sam Brownback** (R-KS), **Rep. Keith Ellison** (D-MN), **Rep. Pete Hoekstra** (R-MI), and **Sen. Patrick Leahy** (D-VT).

After speaking with the former Sahrawi refugees about the lack of freedom of movement in the camps Congressman Ellison said that if these conditions exist, he would do what he could.

“International pressure, particularly from the United States Congress, is the most effective tool to bring an end to the suffering of the Sahrawi refugees and their families,” said Robert Holley, Executive Director of the Moroccan American Center for Policy. “Until Algeria and the Polisario realize that the international community will no longer tolerate this shameful humanitarian crisis, the refugees will not have the choice to leave the camps.”

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## **Former Refugees in Washington, DC this week speak out for thousands still held in Polisario camps**

**Washington, DC (May 5, 2008)** – This week, a group of former Sahrawi refugees held by the Polisario Front in southern Algeria—some for their entire lives—have come to United States to meet with US government officials, media, and human rights organizations. Their mission is to speak out on behalf of their own families and the tens of thousands of other refugees still being held in the tightly-controlled Polisario camps.

Among the group of former refugees are: **Naba Deddah El Meki** (a former Polisario humanitarian aid coordinator who witnessed systematic corruption and theft), **Naha Al Salek Sidi** (a handicapped mother of two, who was used by the Polisario to solicit medical supplies from international NGOs – supplies which were subsequently sold), **Salma Essalek** and **Said Abderahman** (a pregnant woman and her husband who made their nighttime escape through a minefield, chased by Polisario soldiers), **Al Afia Hammidi** (a mother of five who, with the assistance of UNHCR, last week won the battle to force the Polisario to return her two youngest children) and **Brahim Al Selem** (a former Polisario police officer who was imprisoned for speaking out against the Polisario, and who has first-hand knowledge of secret prisons for unwed mothers, and the extensive smuggling and contraband network operating in the region).

Their testimonies are hardly unique; they represent hundreds of similar accounts witnessed by international organizations, such as the UN High Commission for Refugees and the World Food Program. Too often, the Polisario Front has used the Western Sahara political impasse to distract attention away from this on-going humanitarian crisis. In fact, just two weeks ago, the UN Secretary General's Personal Envoy for the Western Sahara, Peter Van Walsum acknowledged that there is also a "moral dilemma" to the situation and lamented that the intolerable status quo is "too readily accepted [. . .] by deeply involved supporters of the Frente Polisario, who do not live in the camps themselves [. . .]."

"It is vital for the international community to be aware of these inhumane conditions and denial of refugee rights under international law, including the most basic freedom to leave the Polisario controlled refugee camps," said Robert Holley, Executive Director of the Moroccan American Center for Policy. "The overall situation in the Western Sahara is not merely a political conflict, but an unconscionable humanitarian crisis that must be addressed."

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**The Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP)** is a non-profit organization whose principal mission is to inform opinion makers, government officials and an interested public in the United States about political and social developments in Morocco and the role being played by the Kingdom of Morocco in broader strategic developments in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East.

For more information, please visit [www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org)



## On World Refugee Day 2008, the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants details abuses in Polisario refugee camps

**Washington, DC (June 20, 2008)** – Today, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) marks World Refugee Day 2008 and calls the international community to action on behalf of the more than 30 million refugees dispersed in conflicts across the globe. On this occasion, the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) released its annual report detailing the plights of these often ignored refugee communities, including the tens of thousands of Sahrawi refugees currently being held by a rebel separatist group, known as the Polisario Front, in southern Algeria.

The USCRI's *World Refugee Survey 2008* details the stifling and deteriorating conditions for the tens of thousands of Sahrawi refugees held captive by the Polisario Front with the "acquiescence of the Government of Algeria." Specifically, the USCRI's findings confirm past accounts by hundreds of former Sahrawi refugees that there is no freedom of movement in the tightly-controlled Polisario camps. According to the *Survey*, "[the] Polisario forbade return to the Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara [...] and arrested those who expressed an interest in doing so."

The *Survey* also revealed that the Sahrawi refugees under Polisario control were forced to undergo military training, that unwed refugee mothers were confined to a detention center and that Polisario military officials "reportedly opened fire [...] upon at least one pair of persons attempting to cross the sand wall separating the camps from Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara." The USCRI further highlighted the role of Algeria in this on-going humanitarian crisis, particularly its complicity in the systematic diversion of international humanitarian aid. "[Algeria's] refusal to allow a registration census prevented UNHCR from profiling the population for humanitarian and protection needs or monitoring aid distribution," outlined the *Survey*.

For the complete USCRI's *World Refugee Survey 2008*, please visit [www.refugees.org](http://www.refugees.org)

Earlier this month, the *New York Times* ("Western Sahara's Conflict Traps Refugees in Limbo", June 4, 2008) highlighted the testimonies of six former Sahrawi refugees who recently visited the U.S. to speak out on behalf of their family members and thousands of others still being held by the Polisario Front. (For more information about the former refugees' visit to the U.S., please visit [www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org)) Their accounts, along with the extensive findings by the USCRI, underscore the urgency for the international community to call upon Algeria and the Polisario Front to open their camps and allow the refugees the choice to leave or stay.

"Refugees are not unique because they are away from home," declared António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, on World Refugee Day 2007. "What sets them apart is that they cannot return there."

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## The Tindouf, Algeria Camps – Refugees or Hostages?

Tens of thousands of Sahrawi refugees live in harsh and inhospitable desert refugee camps in southwestern Algeria under the control of the Polisario Front and their sponsor, Algeria. **These refugees are not free to leave these camps and return to Morocco.** Instead, they are hostage to the political ambitions of the Polisario Front leadership and their supporters in Algeria. They are being deprived of adequate food, clothing, and medical supplies by the Polisario leadership that routinely steals much of this aid for sale on black markets in Algeria, Mauritania, and Mali. UN agencies have documented this chronic diversion of aid, yet the Polisario continues to ask for increased aid donations from concerned United Nations relief and refugee organizations, despite the acknowledged lack of any real accountability for the humanitarian assistance.

Below are vignettes of eight refugees who have managed to successfully flee the camps and return to Morocco within the last 18 months. Over the years, nearly 7000 refugees have fled the camps and their squalid conditions, human rights abuses, and the pervasive political repression of the Polisario Front that has run these camps through authoritarian rule for more than 30 years. Many thousands remain in the camps. How many no one knows for certain because the Algerian government and the Polisario Front have refused to allow a census of the

population to objectively validate the number of refugees.

These stories are a very small sample of thousands of similar testimonies from everyday people about broken families, thievery, abuse, political hypocrisy, and the continuing complicity of the international relief agencies in this tragedy.



We believe that it is time for the international community to insist that the international norms and conventions governing the rights of the refugees in the camps be respected by Algeria and the Polisario Front. We urge the United Nations Security Council, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, and the World Food Program to accept their responsibilities and insist on ending this humanitarian crisis through concrete steps that address the lack of accountability in the camps.

We hope that the testimonies of these eight everyday but representative former refugees will encourage you to expose this situation and bring needed pressure on the international agencies and the Security Council to end this masquerade and protect the refugees. Only by insisting on full disclosure of the conditions in the camps, carrying out a census, and requiring accountability for humanitarian aid will their lives improve.

## Recent Returnee Profiles



**Naba Deddah El Meki** was born in Morocco in 1966. Telling no one, including her closest family members, of her plans to flee the camps for fear that she would be prevented from leaving, she returned to Morocco with her 25 year old daughter in February 2008. Her mother, five sisters, and one brother still reside in the refugee camps in Algeria. Two other adult children are in school in Algeria but were not living in the camps when she and her oldest daughter fled to Morocco. She had lived in the camps since 1975. She was a district coordinator for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the refugees living in four separate neighborhoods of Smara refugee camp and has extensive first hand knowledge of the routine theft and sale for profit of this aid by the Polisario leadership and its close associates.

**Naha Al Salek Sidi** was born in Dakhla refugee camp in 1978 and returned to Morocco with her two infant children during a UN sponsored family visit program in January 2008. She told no one of her intention to remain in Morocco with her children when she departed on the UN family visit program for fear that she would not be allowed to go. Her husband, mother, three brothers, and a sister still reside in the camps. Naha Al Salek Sidi, who is handicapped, worked in the office of humanitarian assistance for the handicapped at the Polisario headquarters camp in Rabouni. She has extensive first hand knowledge of the theft and sale for profit by the Polisario of medical supplies and equipment provided by international humanitarian NGOs intended for the handicapped.



**Salma Essalek and Said Abderahman** – Salma and her husband Said were born in the refugees camps in 1983 and 1980 respectively. They returned to Morocco together in November 2007, taking the dangerous route over the desert through minefields and Algerian and Polisario patrols reaching the defensive military berm constructed by the Moroccan army. Salma is expecting a child. The young couple decided to flee the camps to ensure that their unborn child would not have to grow



up in the same miserable conditions that they had endured. In a pre-dawn departure, the couple engaged a smuggler to take them to the berm. They were dropped off several hundred meters from the berm when a Polisario patrol began to pursue them. A tense stand off between Moroccan soldiers at the berm and the armed Polisario patrol ensued, but eventually the soldiers were able to rescue the young couple and bring them to safety through the mine fields. Both have extensive family still in the camps, but neither told anyone of their planned flight to Morocco.

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**Al Afia Hammidi** was born in Morocco in 1970 and was taken to the camps as a child along with three brothers. Her brothers previously had fled the camps and returned to Morocco. She returned to Morocco with three of her five small children in January 2008 on a UN sponsored family visit. Her husband knew that she intended to stay in Morocco and is currently caring for their two remaining small children in the camps. She has formally petitioned the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to repatriate her two remaining children to join her in Morocco. Her husband is in full agreement with this request as he also has aged parents to care for in the camps. However, to date neither the UNHCR nor the Polisario Front has replied to her request. Despite the family's wishes, the two small children are still confined in the camps by the Polisario.

**Al Salek Oulay Ezzine** was born in the camps in 1979. He, along with his wife and young daughter fled the camps with the aid of a smuggler and returned to Morocco in February 2007. He was a member of the Polisario Front's national police force. He has first hand information about human rights abuses by Polisario authorities, including information about secret detention centers *and a prison compound for unwed mothers and their children*, which he saw first hand during the course of his work. He says the special prison still existed when he fled the camps in February 2007.



**Brahim Al Selem** was born in Morocco in 1974 and was taken to the camps as a child. He returned to Morocco with his sister and her two children in August 2007 with the aid of a smuggler in a truck carrying international humanitarian assistance supplies diverted from the refugees to black markets in Mauritania. His wife remains in the camps. He was previously arrested, a year before his eventual escape from the camps, for expressing openly his dissatisfaction with the Polisario Front regime and saying that he wanted to return to Morocco. He was jailed for two and a half months. He has first hand knowledge of the extensive theft of humanitarian aid, including medical equipment and supplies, and the routine practice of smuggling and bribery through which the Polisario leadership and its allies continue to profit.

**Bamba Omar Cheikh** was born in Morocco in 1967. He returned to Morocco in May 2007. He succeeded in smuggling his parents out of the camps, but was arrested by the Polisario, who had been tipped off by his brother, a ranking Polisario Front official, for the smuggling of their parents and his plans to smuggle out his own wife and children. A cousin, who is a Minister in the Polisario Front government, eventually got him freed from jail. With the help of a friend who was a smuggler, he eventually succeeded in fleeing the camps with his wife and children in 2005. He reestablished his family in Morocco in 2007 and is currently operating a tourist oriented private business in the Saharan territory. He had been sent to Cuba by the Polisario in 1981 as a young adolescent for training. He spent 9 years in Cuba and was eventually trained as a professional diver. He has direct knowledge of the Polisario Front's extensive smuggling operations in humanitarian assistance and other contraband goods.



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## Basic Findings from Interviews with Recent Returnees from Tindouf<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

***They saw the Algerian helicopter chasing the truck they were fleeing in. They jumped from the truck and ran for about a kilometer to safety with the Moroccan security forces. Two of them made it. Five had to go back. They do not know what happened to them..***

Tens of thousands of refugees are currently being held by the Polisario Front, an Algerian-backed separatist group, in one of the most inhospitable environments on Earth—the Sahara desert. Yet most of the world doesn't know about them... For over 30 years these people, who belong to various tribes known as Sahrawis, have been caught in the middle of a conflict over the future of the Western Sahara. This territory, historically linked to Morocco, was once colonized by Spain, an occupation opposed by the Polisario Front. When Spain withdrew, Morocco reasserted its historic ties to its southern region, only to be rebuffed by the Polisario, which demanded independence until their control. Since that time, the Polisario Front continues to prolong the dispute—and the suffering—of the refugees held in the Tindouf camps of southern Algeria.<sup>2</sup>



In 2007, Morocco launched an historic initiative to resolve the conflict through a credible political compromise – full autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty. While negotiations based on this proposal carry on under UN auspices, the plight of the refugees drags on. The prospects for a near-term solution are hard to determine. Yet something must be done to help the refugees. Since the conflict began, numerous NGOs and United Nations organizations have tried to shed light on the

<sup>1</sup> This report was compiled from face-to-face interviews in the south of Morocco conducted in January 2008 by Robert M. Holley, former Foreign Service Officer and Executive Director of the Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP); and Jordan Paul, Director of Government Affairs at MACP.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the conflict in the Western Sahara, including Morocco's historic autonomy initiative, please visit [www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org).

This information has been produced by the Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP).

[www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org)

MACP is a registered agent of the Government of Morocco. Additional information is available at the Justice Department in Washington, D.C.

harsh conditions of life in the refugee camps and to ensure that those detained there enjoy basic freedoms. Very few people are listening. Little is known about the conditions of refugee life in the camps around Tindouf, Algeria, because information in and out of the camps is so tightly controlled. There is little information about the status of the refugees. Some critical questions:

- Are their basic rights, as defined by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), being observed?
- Is there sufficient humanitarian aid for their families?
- What about freedom of movement, the ability to work and move freely, and basic safety?
- What has happened to the families separated by his conflict?
- Are there any eye-witness testimonies from people who have escaped from the camps to freedom in Morocco that can detail life in the camps and provide insights into conditions there?

**This report begins to answer those questions.** There are refugees who have escaped and are ready to tell their stories. Over the past 30 years, thousands of Sahrawis have fled the Polisario camps for Morocco, Mauritania, the Canary Islands, Europe, and elsewhere. The **Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP)** has spoken with hundreds of former refugees over the years who left the camps to resettle in Morocco, their traditional homeland.<sup>3</sup>

In January, 2008, MACP conducted a series of interviews to find answers to these questions. Open-ended interviews were held with 30 former refugees in Laayoune and Dakhla in southern Morocco. Most of those interviewed had been back in Morocco for less than six months and all had returned within the last year. Some had come back only days or weeks before the interview. The sample included men and women, old and young, former Polisario military and police officers, teachers, smugglers, "small business" people, and average everyday camp residents. Each person was interviewed individually; there were no group interviews. The interviews were done in a private setting. Questions were posed through an interpreter and each interview lasted on average about 75 minutes. Interviews were focused on their lives and their personal stories, not on their political views on the Western Sahara.

The interviews covered the following topics:

- Freedom to return to Morocco
- Means used to return to Morocco
- Reasons for wanting to leave the camps
- General freedom of movement issues
- Availability of humanitarian aid
- Availability of other basic food and non-food necessities
- General quality and conditions of life in the camp
- Attitudes about the Polisario leadership
- Access to information about the world outside the camps

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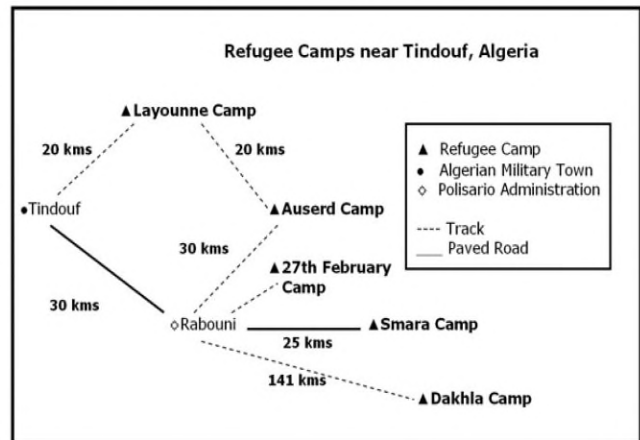
<sup>3</sup> For example, 70 former refugees were interviewed by MACP in a series of group sessions in November 2006.

What follows is a description of the refugees' accounts about the harsh conditions they endured in the camps, the difficulties they faced when they tried to escape, and the toll on family members still held in the camps. Many of these stories have never been shared publicly before.<sup>4</sup>

**The key finding shared by all those interviewed is that without exception the Polisario forbids the refugees to leave the camps and return to Morocco. They have no freedom of movement; they have no freedom of choice.**

### Refugee Life in the Tindouf Camps

No one really knows how many, but approximately 90,000 refugees are spread out among the Polisario controlled camps in the Tindouf desert region of southern Algeria. It is impossible to determine the exact number of inhabitants in these camps because for the last 30 plus years both Algeria and the Polisario Front have repeatedly refused to allow the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to conduct a census of the camps to establish the actual size of the population.<sup>5</sup> Without a census, it is impossible to ensure that appropriate humanitarian aid is delivered to sustain the refugees. Also, as confirmed by many of those MACP interviewed as well as international reports, this lack of oversight makes it much easier for corrupt Polisario officials to sell the humanitarian aid on the black market in Algeria and neighboring Mauritania.



The following themes appeared over and over during the interviews as reasons why the refugees sought to leave the camps and seek a better life in Morocco:

- Inadequate food supplies for the family
- Poor educational opportunities
- Very few work opportunities
- Lack of or no money
- Dislike of Polisario leadership and bad governance
- Poor health care
- Belief that life would be better for them in Morocco

<sup>4</sup> The identities of the interviewees as well as some dates and places have been concealed to protect the families of those interviewed who are still held in the Polisario-controlled refugee camps.

<sup>5</sup> For more information, please visit the website of the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (<http://www.refugees.org/countryreports.aspx?id=1978>)

- In general, difficult living conditions with no prospect for relief in sight
- Desire to rejoin family in Morocco – many of whom had fled the camps earlier
- Bad weather conditions (It is unbearably hot in the summer when most of those in the leadership and their close friends, family, and associates leave the camps for cooler areas. This is common knowledge according to those interviewed.)

## Survival and Humanitarian Aid

Overall, daily life in the camps is largely occupied with the struggle to meet basic everyday needs. Humanitarian aid is delivered monthly and includes small rations of rice, lentils, flour, edible oils, a little sugar, and a few days supply of tea. During the course of the interviews, it became clear that **the humanitarian aid that is supposed to last for a month usually runs out and is quite insufficient.** Sometimes it stretches to two weeks, not much further. There are no fruits, vegetables, or meat included in the humanitarian aid supplies. These food staples must be purchased by camp residents either in the local camp markets (more expensive) or in Tindouf. All those interviewed reported that allocated humanitarian aid was grossly inadequate to sustain nutritional requirements, and that this aid had been progressively reduced over the previous two years.

Most of those interviewed confirmed that it is common knowledge that the Polisario leadership and their associates are stealing the humanitarian aid (both food and non-food) and selling it for their personal profit in the markets in Mauritania and Algeria. Former police officials, as well as admitted smugglers and average camp residents, confirm that the Polisario openly traffic stolen humanitarian aid, and many had witnessed this theft first-hand. Some of those interviewed even escaped the camps on the back of trucks carrying smuggled humanitarian aid to Mauritania.

The numerous accounts of the Polisario's corruption of the humanitarian aid efforts further corroborated the findings from the 2006 investigation by the Inspectors General of the World Food Programme and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights of mismanagement of humanitarian aid by the Polisario.<sup>6</sup>

It also became evident from the refugees' testimonies that **smuggling contraband materials through the Polisario controlled camps is big business.** They described a system in which the Polisario leadership and those with close ties to them are making substantial sums of money through contraband traffic. There are also other "small scale" smuggling operations that go on which are not directly connected to the Polisario leadership. The system survives through bribes for Polisario and Algerian law enforcement officials. This smuggling also includes human trafficking of sub-Saharan Africans being moved north for onward travel to Europe as illegal immigrants, and oil and gas, medicines, cigarettes, and humanitarian aid. (None of those interviewed admitted to knowledge of arms or

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<sup>6</sup> For more information, please see the Center for Individual Freedom's exclusive report "UN Mismanagement Plagues Aid Program in Western Sahara" ([http://www.cfif.org/htdocs/freedomline/un\\_monitor/in\\_our\\_opinion/UN-Mismanagement-Plagues-Aid-Program-Sahara.htm](http://www.cfif.org/htdocs/freedomline/un_monitor/in_our_opinion/UN-Mismanagement-Plagues-Aid-Program-Sahara.htm))

drug trafficking through these networks). What is clear is that the Polisario leadership and its associates reportedly control most of this contraband traffic.

This culture of corruption and Polisario patronage is so pervasive in the refugee camps that it is threatening traditional Sahrawi tribal structures and societal customs and norms. Those interviewed describe the progressive development of a kind of "class system" in the camps which began in the late 1990's. The leadership and those associated with them are becoming the "wealthy" and "middle class" strata, with most camp residents being among the "have-nots", dependent on humanitarian aid and small enterprise activity to meet daily needs.



This disparity is becoming more visible as the leadership has the newest cars, color TVs, better housing, and the ability to vacate the camps during the height of the summer heat. There is also a common perception that being close to the leadership requires membership in the right tribe and fraction. Life is still tribal in the camps and former police officials report that their most common camp duty (other than collecting bribes, which they readily admit) is breaking up fights that have begun because of tribal disputes. **Those interviewed were uniformly critical of the Polisario leadership for its corruption, favoritism, and arrogance.**

So, with insufficient aid coupled with Polisario corruption, the refugee has become quite resourceful in order to make up for the difference between what they need and what they receive. Most of those interviewed said that an average family needs approximately US\$250-\$350 per month for basic food needs not covered by the humanitarian aid. However, the lack of a formal economy complicates this already difficult task. According to those interviewed, salaries are uncommon, even for police, military officials, and teachers. Those who are paid, are paid very small sums. This is particularly common among police officers who, lacking a salary, have created a system of eliciting bribes from smugglers to survive.

The interviews also uncovered other instances of how the refugees cope. Several took the difficult step of undertaking small enterprise market operations which required making difficult journeys to Tindouf or Mauritania to buy goods and then re-sell or trade the items to other camp refugees. Others set up small shops offering services to the refugees that were otherwise unobtainable.

## Escape, Family Separation, and Contact with the Outside World

In general, people reported that life in the camps was extremely difficult. Although cell phones are available, the costs are quite high. Without cell phones, contact with the outside world for many is limited. This enforced separation from family members in Morocco is very hard on them since Sahrawi society is traditionally centered on kinship relationships.

Those interviewed said that the Polisario continues to tell people that life in Morocco is repressive and that they will be tortured, jailed, or worse if they return. According to accounts of those who have resettled in Morocco, the sacrifices made to return are worth the hardship because their lives are much better than what was expected. Most of those interviewed said few people, especially the younger generation, believed the Polisario's propaganda anymore, especially since they have access to information via cell phone or intermittent satellite television from Morocco that tells a different story.



Most of those interviewed said that they believed that nearly everyone, except the Polisario leadership and those who were close to them, would return to Morocco or elsewhere to be reunited with family if they were free to do so. The gap between the desire to return and making it happen is wide and dangerous.

Once the decision is made to flee the camps, the refugees told no one, not even close family members out of fear that the Polisario authorities would learn of their plans and put them in jail. During one interview, **a recent escapee from the camps said that he left without telling anyone because he knew of four people who were put in jail for a year for just talking about leaving the camps.** Additionally, according to one of the refugees, it is not possible to trust anyone in the camp since one of the best ways make money was to work as an informant for the Polisario.

Most refugees returned to Morocco through Mauritania using a variety of ruses to get out of the camps past fixed camp and border check points and roving Polisario and Algerian patrols. Some of those interviewed returned through the open desert to the Moroccan military defensive positions along the berm erected in the late 1980s to inhibit Polisario attacks inside Morocco from Polisario safe havens in Algeria. This is a dangerous route through minefields and **a couple who took this route was fired on by Polisario guards during their escape.**

A common ruse to exit the camps was to tell authorities at the camp entry/exit checkpoints or roving patrols that one was going to the countryside or to do business or visit a relative in Mauritania.

The trip itself is relatively expensive for camp residents. The cost runs on average about \$500 for the trip to Mauritania. Some had friends or relatives with transportation who would take them, but most said that the person driving the vehicle was unaware that their passengers intended to return to Morocco. Two adults in the sample (one with some, but not all of her children) decided to stay in Morocco during an official UNHCR family visit trip.<sup>7</sup> Another mother interviewed is still trying to have her remaining small children in the camps returned to her in Morocco. Her husband still resides in the camps with his ailing parents and she reports that he agrees with her desire to bring the remaining children to Morocco. It is not known what happens to family members left in the camps when others choose to remain in Morocco.



Movement from one camp to another camp requires clearance from the Polisario authorities when leaving the camp, but this seems to be easily completed. A former policeman said they checked IDs against a "Wanted List" of names during the registration. A clearance is required before leaving.

There are Polisario police checkpoints at the exits and entrances in the camps. Movement from the camps to Tindouf in Algeria for shopping appears easy to do, with proper clearance, provided one has the means to do so. Movement from the camps out to the countryside also appears easy to do, though this also requires clearance when departing the camps. Movement from the camps to Mauritania previously required separate individual Polisario authorization papers until last summer (2007). A former Polisario police official reports that now only drivers of vehicles are required to obtain an official permission paper if the destination is Mauritania. Passengers must have their Polisario identification with them and persuade any police check that they are only going to Mauritania to visit relatives or do business. Mauritania does not require people to have a passport to enter if they are in possession of a Polisario identification document.

Some of our sample returned to Morocco through Mauritania using an individual authorization to visit Mauritania when that was required of everyone to do so, using some ruse or official connection to obtain the authorization. Others entered during the same period without permission to travel to Mauritania. Most of those in the sample who went to Mauritania without permission avoided Polisario checkpoints.

There is access to mobile phones, although it was clear that the expensive phone rates restrict frequent calling. There is also a fair amount of access to small black

<sup>7</sup> The UNHCR program provides for exchanges of family members on a limited scale via aircraft. The program is notoriously underfunded and the Polisario has imposed constraints on those participating. Since March 2004, more than 3000 family members have visited each other, and expansion of the program as a confidence building measure is on the agenda of the autonomy negotiations.

and white televisions while the wealthy have color TV. There are a few internet cafes in the camps, but access to some web pages is reportedly blocked. People do not have individual laptops or the means to connect to the internet outside the cyber cafes. People can see news from outside the camps including broadcasts from the regional channel in Laayoune, Morocco. However, even those with access to the limited technology must still be cautious when communicating with the outside world. During one of the interviews, **a former refugee explained that he hesitates to call his brother in the camps so that the Polisario will not know of his whereabouts and possibly punish the family he left in the camps.**

### **More Human Rights Concerns**

The stifling human rights situation was best summarized by **one former refugee who simply didn't like the way of life or the lack of freedoms in the Tindouf camps. He tired of having no choices and being subject to go to jail for simply saying that he didn't like the Polisario.**

An interview with a former Polisario police officer revealed the existence of secret detention centers where political dissidents and others, either individually or in small groups are kept in holes dug into the ground,. The police officer said that these special facilities were not commonly known among camp residents or even among all police authorities. According to this officer, **one of the jails is merely a big hole in the ground with wooden planks over the hole, next to a hospital so no one can tell it's a jail. The guards bang on the planks constantly as punishment so the prisoners can't sleep.**



Another former police officer with firsthand knowledge of the human rights abuses confirmed that there is a special prison for unwed mothers, which corroborates what MACP interviewers had previously learned. **Unwed mothers and their children are detained in this special prison unless/until some man agrees to marry them or their family members admit her wrongdoing and agree to raise the child.** If

neither of these things occurs, the women are forced to raise their children in this secret prison. This former police officer said that the existence of this special prison is not commonly known and that he had never heard of it until he was assigned to duty there.

The situation is even worse for children in the camps because educational opportunities are limited and reportedly decreasing. According to interviews with two refugees who taught in the make-shift Polisario run "schools", it appears that, at most, less than 8,000 children are receiving what could be described as primary

and middle school education. According to the estimates of the two teachers, there are about 15 primary schools, one middle school, and no secondary schools. **One of the former refugees explained that when he was 6, he was taken away from his family and sent to military school where they trained him how to use weapons.** In addition, approximately 800 students are dispersed between Algeria, Cuba, and other locations for secondary and post-secondary education. Those who received advanced education, if they haven't defected to other countries, have little to no opportunities when they return to exercise any real "profession" or "livelihood" in the camps.

### **Messages for "America"**


The single most often repeated item when asked what message they would like conveyed to Americans about life in the camps was that the situation needed to be brought to a quick resolution so that people in the camps could return to Morocco and be reunited with their families. Most of those interviewed also said that they believed that nearly everyone, except the Polisario leadership and those who were close to them, would return to Morocco or elsewhere to be reunited with family if they were free to do so.

# The History of the Western Sahara

A  
Timeline

The sovereignty of the Western Sahara remains the subject of a dispute between Morocco and the Polisario Front, a separatist group based in southern Algeria. Morocco reasserted its sovereignty over the territory after Spain withdrew its colonial interests from the area in 1975. The Polisario Front has challenged Morocco's control over the Western Sahara.

The Moroccan Government has undertaken a sizable economic development program in the Western Sahara to provide economic, political and social infrastructure for the region's residents. Today, international efforts are underway to encourage a political settlement between Morocco, the Polisario Front, and Algeria that would resolve sovereignty over the Western Sahara through autonomy.

<p>1578 to 1727 Moroccan Kings rule over the territory currently known as the Western Sahara</p> <p>1884 Spanish colonization begins</p>	<p>"By giving the people of the Western Sahara a true voice in their future through the full benefits of autonomy as presented by Morocco, a credible political solution can be achieved." -Former U.S. Sec. of State Madeleine Albright, June 6, 2007</p>	<p>1991 UN Security Council approves the establishment of Mission des Nations Unies pour l'Organisation d'un Référendum au Sahara (MINURSO)</p> <p>Cease-fire declared in the disputed Western Sahara region</p>
<p>1956 Morocco claims independence from France Morocco reclaims the Western Sahara at the UN for the first time</p> <p>1958 King Mohammed V formally lays claim to the Sahara</p> <p>1963 The UN includes the Western Sahara on the list of non self-governing territories</p> <p>1965 The UN General Assembly adopts its first resolution calling on Spain to decolonize the Sahara</p> <p>1973 The Polisario Front is founded and stages its first attack</p> <p>1974 Algeria begins to oppose Moroccan policy on the Sahara and trains Polisario guerrillas</p> <p>1975 The Green March takes place in which 350,000 unarmed Moroccans march South into the desert to reassert the sovereignty of the Sahara from the Spanish</p>		<p>1997 Former US Sec. of State James Baker III appointed as UN Special Envoy in the Sahara region</p> <p>Houston Accord is signed between Morocco and Polisario establishing the implementation of a referendum to decide the future of the Western Sahara</p> <p>2000 UN Sec. Gen. Kofi Annan presents the Security Council with four options to break the impasse in the Western Sahara: referendum, autonomy, partition, or complete withdrawal</p> <p>2003 James Baker III announces the "new Baker Plan" for Self-Determination which describes a proposed Western Sahara Authority to administer the territory autonomously until 2007 or 2008, when the referendum would be held</p>
<p>Morocco signs Madrid Agreement which seeks to transfer control of the Sahara to a three party administration divided between Morocco, Spain and Mauritania</p> <p>Spain officially terminates its administration of the Sahara</p> <p>1976 The Polisario declares the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and raises the flag of "Western Sahara"</p> <p>1977 Spanish-Moroccan fishing agreement is signed; the Polisario begins attacks on Spanish fishing vessels</p> <p>1990 Morocco and the Polisario accept a UN peace plan, in which a referendum will be held</p>	<p>"[T]he Kingdom [of Morocco] has proposed a serious and credible autonomy plan as a basis of negotiation [...] and it constitutes a new proposal element after years of stalemate." -French President Nicolas Sarkozy, October 23, 2007</p> <p>"We believe the Moroccan proposal to provide real autonomy for the Western Sahara provides a serious and credible option, and we hope that the Polisario will engage in discussions on this proposal as a realistic starting point that could lead toward resolution of the dispute." - US State Dept. Deputy Spokesperson Tom Casey, January 11, 2008</p>	<p>2005 Dutch ambassador Peter Van Walsum is confirmed as the new UN Sec. Gen. Special Envoy to the Western Sahara</p> <p>2007 Morocco releases autonomy under sovereignty plan for the Western Sahara which is endorsed by the United States, Spain and France</p> <p>Morocco and the Polisario Front conduct first two rounds of negotiations</p> <p>The Polisario Front threatens a return to armed conflict with Morocco</p> <p>2008 Third round of negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario Front takes place in January; a fourth round resumes in March</p> <p>Parties to the negotiations agree to a fifth round of negotiations to take place later in 2008</p>



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**37,000 Moroccans in largely peaceful march for reform; Amnesty International lauds "maturity" of protesters & police; Human Rights Watch says Morocco's "calm response" should be "rule, not exception" in volatile region**

***Streets back to business; on visit, US Senator John McCain cites Morocco's progress on reforms in past decade, respect for citizens' rights, underscores differences with others in region***

**Washington, DC** (February 22)—As Morocco returned to business Monday following largely peaceful demonstrations for continued reforms in more than 30 cities, Amnesty International (AI) commended Moroccans' "maturity" and Human Rights Watch (HRW) said Morocco's restraint and "calm response" to Sunday's protest "should be the rule, not the exception for tolerating peaceful dissent" in the region.

HRW noted that "Thousands of Moroccans in cities across the country demonstrated in favor of political reform on February 20, 2011. Mostly peaceful demonstrations and marches took place in towns and villages largely without interference from police, who in some areas were barely in evidence."

HRW added that "Morocco's demonstrators encountered none of the deadly force utilized by the security forces against protesters in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Bahrain, and Yemen. Security forces allowed Moroccan citizens to march peacefully to demand profound changes in how their country is governed."

"We applaud the maturity shown by the Moroccan authorities," said AI in a statement, adding that "we are satisfied with the behavior of the security forces." It also praised the "maturity" shown by demonstrators.

On Monday, Moroccan officials put the number of protesters nationwide Sunday at 37,000, a moderate turnout for a country that regularly sees much larger demonstrations. The protests, which are legal in Morocco when sanctioned by the authorities, took the form of sit-ins, rallies, and demonstrations.

"In many ways, this was Morocco at its best," said former US Ambassador to Morocco, Edward Gabriel, who witnessed the demonstration in Rabat. "Protesters were respectful and polite, but intent on expressing their legitimate concerns that government work better for them. They wanted the government to quicken the pace of the far-reaching political, social, and economic reforms Morocco has instituted in the last decade. In most locations, there was no violence, no heavy-handed tactics, just people showing their desire to make Morocco a better place, with more freedom, democracy, and jobs."

"The positive example Moroccans are setting is one that others in the region would do well to observe, and US policymakers should be more active in supporting," said Gabriel. "It certainly stands in stark contrast with the dreadful violence in Libya and other parts of the Middle East/North Africa region in recent weeks."

US Senator John McCain (R-AZ) in Morocco on Friday before the protests noted that "we have seen progress during the last 10-15 years" in Morocco's respect for human rights and advances in its parliamentary system.

Among the key indicators and advances experts point to in citing Morocco's progress to date:

- \* The 2004 reform of the *moudawana* (family code) gave women equal rights in marriage, divorce, and child custody; and there are now ten times more women in Morocco's parliament than in 2000.
- \* More than 90% of Moroccan children are enrolled in primary school (the number of enrolled girls has increased more than 87% since 1990) and illiteracy is down to 30% with the goal of complete eradication by 2015.
- \* Life expectancy has increased 7 years since 1990 and Morocco's comprehensive social development strategy (\$2 billion National Human Development Initiative) has cut poverty from 15 to 9 percent over the last decade.
- \* Morocco has nearly 30 political parties and there have been two sets of national and local elections over the last decade certified as "free and fair" by the international community.
- \* Morocco has a strong civil society with more than 30,000 NGO's (non-governmental organizations) helping people meet socioeconomic challenges, advocate reforms, and promote cultural awareness.

###

**The Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP)** is a non-profit organization whose principal mission is to inform opinion makers, government officials and interested publics in the United States about political and social developments in Morocco and the role being played by the Kingdom of Morocco in broader strategic developments in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. For more, please visit [www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org)



## FAQ: Reforms in Morocco

### **Moroccan People to Vote on Constitutional Referendum; "Yes" Vote Giant Step towards Constitutional Monarchy Moroccan people 'will have final say' in July 1 national referendum**

#### **OVERVIEW**

For more than a decade, Morocco has been moving incrementally towards greater reform and democratic change. Beginning with the appointment of an opposition leader as Prime Minister in 1998, to the enactment of their historic family law in 2004 that greatly enhanced women's rights and led to the establishment of the *mourchidates* program (women religious counselors working in mosques and community centers), to revisions to the political parties and media codes, as well as holding elections deemed "free and fair" by the international community, Morocco is no stranger to the call of the Arab Spring.

On June 17, 2011, after over a decade of discussion, debate, and reforms, the King of Morocco proposed that political and social change be accelerated through the adoption of a series of constitutional amendments that will establish a constitutional monarchy with separation of powers, enhanced responsibilities for local and regional governments, and clear support for the multicultural, multi-religious character of Moroccan society. The people of Morocco will vote to accept or reject the proposed amendments in a referendum on July 1. This will be the first chance for a nation in the region to transition from the Arab Spring to an Arab Summer.

The referendum gives the Moroccan people the opportunity to take charge of their political futures by validating changes that will:

- Clearly establish that the Head of Government (Prime Minister) will be appointed from the party with the highest number of votes in the popular election.
- Reduce the King's executive prerogatives to appointments in consultation with or upon the recommendation of the Head of Government, as in other constitutional monarchies.
- Further empower the Parliament with broad legislative powers.
- Include recognition of Morocco's cultural identity of diverse ethnicities, religions, languages, and traditions.
- Restate emphatically Morocco's commitment to equality of all its citizens, the protection of human and civil rights, equal protection before the law, and other guarantees.

**For the Full Text of His Majesty King Mohammed VI's June 17<sup>th</sup> speech, go to:**

[http://www.map.ma/eng/sections/main1/hm\\_the\\_king\\_adresse/view](http://www.map.ma/eng/sections/main1/hm_the_king_adresse/view).

## **International Support for Constitutional Reforms**

- The US Department of State said it is "encouraged by the proposals put forward by the king to transform Morocco's democratic development through constitutional, judicial, and political reforms." The European Union called the reforms "a major step" signaling "a clear commitment to democracy and respect for human rights." It added that new measures would continue "the Kingdom's already-launched reform process" and advance the "separation of powers," "independence of the judiciary," "regionalization," and "equal rights for men and women."
- French President Nicolas Sarkozy said the advances were "exemplary," and put Morocco on "a path of profound, peaceful, and modern transformation." Britain welcomed Morocco's "commitment to reform" and Spain also congratulated the Moroccan leader. The 47-member Council of Europe went so far as to make Morocco its first "partner for democracy" among nations in the region.
- United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon welcomed the Constitutional reform, commended "the people and the Government of Morocco for the peaceful manner in which they have been conducting the national process of political reforms." Arab League Secretary General, Amr Moussa, praised Morocco's reforms as "an important step on the way to securing the pillars of democracy," which "we hope it will continue and deepen in the coming period."
- Policy experts and leading newspapers agree. "What's so important about what the Moroccan King has done is that he is forging a different model of change in the Arab world," said Kenneth M. Pollack, Director, Saban Center for Middle East Policy at The Brookings Institution. If Morocco continues the "bold vision" of its "quiet revolution," Pollack said, "it will be the model of what meaningful, gradual, peaceful change in the Arab world could and should look like" and "transform not just Morocco, but the entire region."
- Dr. J. Peter Pham, Director, Michael S. Ansari Africa Center, The Atlantic Council said that the path Morocco is choosing "sets an example in terms of reforms that pay heed to history, religion and culture," and would resonate across the MENA region.
- "The Arab Spring has broken out in Morocco," said David B. Ottaway, Senior Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center, who called the "new constitution requiring an elected rather than an appointed prime minister, the first such step in any of the eight monarchies or even most of the democratic republics of the Arab world."
- While "the brightest expectations of the Arab Spring have crashed with the bloody crackdowns in Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain," said The Wall Street Journal, "the news out of Morocco last weekend offers a timely glimmer of the potential upside in this tumultuous year." "King Mohammed VI, responded to demands for democracy with political reform, not tear gas and bullets" and "If Moroccans seize this opportunity, they could set a favorable example for the rest of North Africa and the Middle East."
- "Morocco could now become a crucial theater as the Arab Spring moves toward summer," said the Washington Post. "The Moroccan reform, which will be put to a referendum on July 1...could also serve as a model for Jordan's King Abdullah II and Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, both of whom are considering similar incremental measures."

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is Happening in Morocco?**

Constitutional reform in Morocco is a process that has been moving forward for more than two decades. Specific reforms have been driven by two major factors: the vision of the King's leadership and changes in the environment that require a redefinition of forms of governance and relations between citizens and the government.

The amendments to be voted on July 1st will take Morocco from an "executive King" form of government to a "citizen King" who shares powers with an executive Head of Government representing the largest party in Parliament, and a Parliament that has the primary legislative role in the government. A separate and independent Judiciary backed up by processes and institutions that promote transparency, respect for civil and human rights, and equality across the diversity of the country being formally enshrined in the Moroccan Constitution, are prominent outcomes of the proposed changes. In addition, specific "rights" and "guarantees" will ensure that individual citizens have the protections and opportunities to have a government that is accountable for its actions and transparent in its dealings.

### **What Does it Mean?**

The adoption of these amendments defines Morocco as a constitutional monarchy wherein the Monarch, as Head of State, has specific roles and responsibilities that are distinct from those of the Head of Government. With the enhanced powers to the Parliament, a separate and independent Judiciary and related institutions, and the explicit demarcation of people's rights, the concrete road to democratic governance and balance of powers has been firmly laid. How far and how quickly Morocco travels that path will be affected by many factors, not the least of which is the commitment by Moroccan civil society, political parties, politicians, the private sector, and others to taking full advantage of the opportunities that these amendments hold.

This form of government draws from multiple experiences: in the UK and Spain there is a royal Head of State; likewise, in France and other countries, there is a distinction between the functions of the Head of State and the Head of Government. How Morocco implements its changes will in large part reflect lessons learned and future opportunities that emerge from the Moroccan experience going forward.

### **Why is this Important?**

This is occurring at a time when the region is in turmoil and there is great uncertainty. Unlike Egypt, which has voted on very narrow changes to its Constitution, and Tunisia, which must make a full overhaul of its Constitution, Morocco has a Constitution that has evolved to meet the needs of the people as they become more familiar with and more confident in their ability to exercise their rights and duties as citizens.

These proposed changes will lay the foundation for a dynamic, responsible government, capable of responding to and initiating actions that address the many challenges of governing in a complex society. And it should be expected that there will be more proposed changes in the future as Morocco learns from implementing these amendments and Moroccans take more and more control of their futures.

## **What is Morocco's track record on reforms prior to the constitutional changes announced by King Mohammed VI on June 17?**

As with any leader, and more so with a King with religious and political responsibilities, the basis for leadership is the trust built with the people. King Mohammed VI is well aware that his reign is different from that of his father, and that is why he chose to build on earlier reforms, generate supporting coalitions, and define new directions for Morocco. Among the most notable aspects already in place before the 2011 constitutional reforms:

- National and local elections recognized by international observers as free and fair.
- A thorough reform of the family law that granted women equal standing before the law in matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance, and other important measures that contribute to women's rights.
- The completion of an Equity and Reconciliation Commission, including public and televised hearings, into past human rights abuses in the country wherein the State recognized its responsibilities and has compensated victims of abuse.
- The establishment of independent human rights institutions to promote respect for human rights and the rule of law and to investigate allegations of abuse, which has drawn recognition from the US and the EU.
- Funding programs such as the National Human Development Initiative to improve the quality of life and economic opportunities for Morocco's most disadvantaged urban and rural populations.
- Housing programs designed to eliminate shanty towns by 2015.
- Increased funding for women's education, especially young girls in rural areas.
- Revised commercial codes and procedures to attract foreign direct investment to provide jobs for young Moroccans.

## **What is the February 20 movement?**

Feb 20 began as a core group of young people concerned with jobs, transparency, and power sharing, who motivated others to join, including trade unions, academics, and people from all strata of society. While their agenda reflects many of the concerns of the Moroccan people, there is no consensus around a preferred set of solutions. And there are signs that the organizers have steadily lost ground to better organized Islamists and leftists with far more radical goals that were not part of the original Feb 20 demands.

## **What are the key proposed amendments to the Moroccan constitution with respect to the separation of government powers? What powers remain vested in the King? Will he have any role in the legislative process?**

The King was the "chief executive" of the government and appointed the key members of the judiciary, influenced the choice of government ministers, and provided guidance for major policy decisions. Parliament could review and discuss laws but could not unilaterally amend them. Under the proposed amendments, that would change.

- A strong Parliament will exercise legislative powers, enact laws, control the Government, and assess public policies.
- Effective parliamentary control mechanisms will include motion of censure, committees of inquiry, referral to the Constitutional Court, convening of special sessions.
- The Prime Minister is replaced by a Head of Government, appointed from the party that wins the general election.
- The Head of Government is answerable only to the Parliament.
- The Head of Government has extensive powers, leads the cabinet, manages the administration, and enjoys extensive prerogatives in the appointment of senior civil servants.
- The Head of Government can dissolve Parliament; the King may also dissolve Parliament after consultation with Head of Government.
- The King retains control over national security and religious affairs through newly established National Councils that include appointments by the King and representation by the Head of Government.

**What are the primary proposed amendments to the Moroccan constitution with respect to freedoms and human rights? What steps are being taken to ensure the independence of the Judiciary?**

The protection of human and civil rights has become the major issue linking all the various political and advocacy groups in the Kingdom. Closely tied to this is the need for an independent Judiciary which is insulated from external influences and intimidation, and is maintained by professional members who are well-trained for their responsibilities. With the creation of an independent National Human Rights Commission earlier this year and the strengthening of the Anti-Corruption Agency, Morocco had already taken key steps to greatly improve human and civil rights protections. The proposed changes continue this progress.

**Human Rights**

- Prohibition of all forms of discrimination on the basis of sex, color, creed, culture, social or regional background, language, or disability.
- Morocco ratifies the primacy of international conventions concerned with human rights and the rights of women and children.
- Sets up of an Authority for the achievement of gender parity and the fight against all forms of discrimination.
- Legislation to be enacted that implements affirmative action measures to encourage access to elected office for women.

**Judicial Independence**

- The Judiciary becomes an independent power, ensuring genuine protection of rights and guaranteeing compliance with the law.
- Prohibition of interference or any kind of pressure on the work of judges.

- Status of judges reinforced by an organic law that establishes the principles of an independent judiciary.
- Establishes a transparent Constitutional Court with power to check the constitutionality of legislation.
- Any citizen can bring a Constitutional challenge.

**The King appointed a commission of experts who advised on the Constitutional reforms. Who were the individuals appointed to this commission? Who did they consult during the process?**

The Commission was made up of scholars, experts, members of political organizations, and those with experience in Constitutional reform. Consultations were extensively conducted by the Commission and included political parties, labor organizations, human rights NGOs, women's advocacy groups, youth organizations, lawyers associations, and employers' associations, and were also open to public comment and recommendations through a widely publicized webpage designed to allow individuals to contribute to the process [www.reforme.ma](http://www.reforme.ma).

**Some critics have argued that elected representatives of the Moroccan people should have drafted the amendments to the constitution. Why were popularly elected representatives not tasked with amending the constitution?**

It is not unusual for a council of experts to work on a draft for a new constitution. This is regular practice in many countries around the world. Elected representatives were consulted during the drafting process. What is fundamentally important is that the people of Morocco be given the opportunity to pass judgment on the outcome through a popular vote on whether to accept the proposals. As King Mohammed VI made clear in his speech March 9, it is the people of Morocco who will "have the final say."

**Do you believe that Moroccan citizens will notice a practical difference in the way they are governed and the way they live their lives over the coming years as a result of these amendments? In what way?**

The impact will be felt on several levels including:

- Locally, the central government will cede significant power to locally elected officials and representatives directly elected by the people.
- Local, regional, and national courts will have extensive latitude to rule on cases brought by citizens including issues of human rights abuses; whistleblowers will be protected under new statutes for the anti-corruption programs; and access to attorneys and protections against police abuse are also strengthened.

**What has been the reaction of the Moroccan people to the proposed constitutional amendments?**

While the vast majority of Moroccans have been overwhelmingly positive, some objections have been raised concerning the speed of the ratification process, the desire for more amendments, and other issues. The basic questions regarding the proposed amendments are how far, how fast? Many former critics have said that they were surprised at how far King Mohammed VI was prepared to go at this time to strengthen the nation's commitment to democratic rule and social equality. Others are concerned that implementation will undercut the spirit of the amendments.

This is where the United States can play an important role, by supporting the reform process, keeping abreast of developments, offering technical expertise, and continuing to expand pro-democracy and economic growth programs with Morocco.

# Morocco on the Move

## Roundtable

# The Western Sahara Crisis: Why US Leadership is Needed Now

Tuesday, April 3, 2012

2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

1777 F Street, NW, First Floor, Washington, DC 20006



The Western Sahara crisis, the increasing ties to al-Qaeda, and the increasingly desperate humanitarian situation in the Tindouf refugee camps in the Western Sahara crisis and promoting durable solutions for Sahrawi refugees. The roundtable will feature a panel of international experts and will include a Q&A session with the panelists. The roundtable will also include a presentation of international calls for a political settlement and continued praise of Morocco's autonomy plan as "[serious, realistic, and credible](#)" negotiations remain at a standstill. Now is the time for US leadership to put actions behind its words in order to resolve the Western Sahara. Firm and proactive US leadership in resolving the Western Sahara conflict is an opportunity for a "win-win" strategy that will help shape America's strategic need for consistent and viable responses to last year's Arab uprisings. This will have immediate strategic benefits for US policy, stability in the region, and the [Sahrawi refugees](#), still displaced after more than 30 years.

Please join us for a roundtable including the following panelists:

[Ambassador Michael Ussery](#), Former US Ambassador to Morocco

[Dr. J. Peter Pham](#), Director, Michael S. Ansari Africa Center, The Atlantic Council

[Robert Holley](#), Senior Policy Advisor, Moroccan American Center for Policy

Please RSVP with Name and Affiliation to [tmaxted@beckermanpr.com](mailto:tmaxted@beckermanpr.com)

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# FAQ: Morocco's 2011 Parliamentary Elections

## Morocco has held free and fair elections monitored by US and international observers in the past. How is this election different?

The upcoming elections are the first following broad constitutional reforms passed by a national referendum in Morocco in July. As in the past, nearly 4,000 Moroccan, US, and international observers, including the National Democratic Institute and Morocco's National Human Rights Council, are working with Moroccan civil society leaders to train and assist in carrying out the elections as well as ensuring against irregularities on election day.



## What are the Constitutional reforms and how will they strengthen Morocco's democracy?

Some of the key reforms:

- ☑ Establish that the Head of Government will be appointed from the party that wins the most seats in the Parliament in the upcoming elections.
- ☑ Expand the powers of the Head of Government and the Parliament, giving them broad legislative powers.
- ☑ Empower Moroccans with more control and leadership at the local government level—making local and regional officials directly accountable to voters.
- ☑ Establish independent agencies to guarantee civil and human rights protections.
- ☑ Establish an independent judiciary with a newly mandated Constitutional Court.

## Were the Constitutional reforms the King's response to the unrest of the Arab Spring?

### KEY DATES

**March 9, 2011** – King Mohammed VI announces the creation of an advisory commission tasked with consulting with government and civil society leaders, political parties, trade unions, and youth groups to make proposed reforms for Morocco's Constitution.

**June 17, 2011** – The King announces the drafting of a new Constitution with unprecedented and far-reaching reforms.

**July 1, 2011** – The proposed reforms are approved in a national referendum.

**July 30, 2011** – The King calls for prompt parliamentary elections.

**November 25, 2011** – Moroccans vote in national parliamentary elections.

Reform has been under way in Morocco for decades and these efforts have improved women's rights, civil and human rights, press freedom, the business environment, social development, and education. The most recent reforms were in the making well before the Arab Spring began. Moroccan leaders acknowledge that the peaceful demonstrations provided a robust space for its citizens to express their views on reforms under way in Morocco, thus quickening the pace of their implementation.

## How is Morocco's reform process unique in the region?

Other countries in the region have suffered uprisings, violent repression, and the overthrow of governments. In Morocco, reforms have been proposed, debated, passed, and have begun to be implemented without regime change, and through largely peaceful demonstrations. These reforms are part of an ongoing process that has made Morocco a model of reform and stability for decades.

## Is the King really giving up significant powers?

Like other Constitutional monarchs, the King will now be obliged under the new Constitution to appoint the Head of Government from the party with the highest number seats in Parliament. He will also make appointments in consultation with or on the recommendation of the Head of Government. The current reforms reflect the King's vision for Moroccan subjects to become empowered Moroccan citizens.

# FAQ: Morocco's 2011 Parliamentary Elections

## What will the elections mean for women in Morocco?

When the King of Morocco came to power a little over a decade ago he publicly acknowledged the lack of rights for women in his nation, declaring, "How can society achieve progress while women, who represent half the nation, see their rights violated and suffer as a result of injustice, violence, and marginalization[...]"

Since he came into power, there have been major achievements for women's rights. Seven Ministries are headed by women, and 12% of Morocco's Parliament are women. Reforms to the electoral law require that a minimum of 60 of the 395 seats (15%) in Parliament go to women. The new Constitution enshrines women's equality as a national principle and provides safeguards and initiatives aimed at guaranteeing their equal status and opportunity in all aspects of society.

## What role will youth have in the elections?

Youth in Morocco are a key to its successful future and their vocal activism and grassroots awareness campaigns have played an important role in the vibrant national dialogue on democratic reform and social development. Reforms to the electoral laws require that 30 seats in the new parliament be set aside specifically for candidates under the age of 35 to ensure young people's participation in the new government. Moroccan leaders have widely acknowledged that attention to demands of the youth—and their participation as registered voters and potential candidates—are key elements of the new reforms and the consultative process that produced them.

## What is the likely political leaning of the new Parliament?

It is unknown which party or coalition of parties will win the highest number of seats in the election. It is certain is that Moroccans will have the opportunity to freely exercise their Constitutional right to elect leaders whom they believe will best lead the country to implement social, political, and economic reforms. At this moment, lively, public campaigns are underway by a diverse group of political parties promising reforms, jobs, and social and civil protections.

## What do the elections and democratic reforms mean in the context of the Western Sahara dispute?

Unlike Sahrawis, people from the Western Sahara, held in refugee camps controlled by the Polisario in Algeria, the Sahrawis who live in the Moroccan-administered Western Sahara enjoy the full rights and responsibilities guaranteed by the new Constitution—including full and equal participation in the upcoming elections to choose representatives in Morocco's national Parliament. In the past, voter participation by Sahrawis in the Moroccan-administered Western Sahara has been higher than in any other region and several of the most active and prominent members of Parliament are Sahrawis.

## Isn't there a call to boycott the elections?

As in any free society, there are a small number of people in Morocco exercising their right to call for a boycott. While it is counter-productive for these small groups to attempt disrupt the reform process—instead of actively participating in it—their call does represent the broad expansion of the right to free expression that has occurred in Morocco over the last decades.

## How can the US/International Community support Morocco's democratic reform efforts?

Morocco, recently elected as a Non-Permanent Member to the UN Security Council for 2012-2013, continues to play a pivotal role internationally in finding peaceful, durable solutions to conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa. Its track record of reforms and its ongoing efforts to strengthen its democracy—such as the upcoming elections—provide an example for the region which should be enthusiastically and publically supported by the United States and the international community.

For more information, visit <http://www.moroccoonthemove.com/> - Follow on Twitter @MorocOnTheMove



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, December 6, 2011**

**CONTACT:** Jerry Schranz, 201.465.8020 [jschranz@beckermanpr.com](mailto:jschranz@beckermanpr.com)

**\*\*MEDIA ADVISORY\*\***

## **Roundtable: What's Next for Morocco? Assessing Opportunities & Challenges After Elections**

**Washington, DC** (December 6, 2011) — On Thursday, December 8, an expert panel will offer their insights on the challenges and opportunities facing Morocco after its recent parliamentary elections. Specifically, how were the elections conducted? What were the results and what do they mean? What are the likely outcomes of forming a coalition government and implementing reform under the new Constitution? What are the implications for the region and for US policy?

The roundtable will take place  
on

**Thursday, December 8, 2011 at 10:00 am to 12:00 pm**

at

**1777 F Street, NW, First Floor, Washington, DC 20006**

Participants include:

**[Dr. Anouar Boukhars](#)**, Asst. Professor of Political Science & International Studies, McDaniel College

**[Shari Bryan](#)**, Vice-President, [National Democratic Institute](#)

**[Edward M. Gabriel](#)**, former US Ambassador to Morocco

**[Lahcen Haddad](#)**, Recently Re-Elected Member of Parliament for the Popular Movement (MP)

**[Robert Holley](#)**, Executive Director, Moroccan American Center for Policy

**Please RSVP with Name and Affiliation to [cdearing@moroccanamericancenter.com](mailto:cdearing@moroccanamericancenter.com)**

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To the Emperor of Morocco  
Great and magnanimous Friend,

Since the date of the letter, which the

## Morocco-US Strategic Dialogue

Consultation. Cooperation. Progress.



Moroccan American Center for Policy

2012

The United States, having unanimously ap-  
to the supreme executive authority in this Nation,  
Majestys letter of the 17th of August 1788, which,  
of the dissolution of the late Government, remained  
has been delivered to me. I have also received the Ser-

# FAQ: The Morocco-US Strategic Dialogue

Moroccan American Center for Policy

*On September 13, 2012, Morocco and the United States launched a Strategic Dialogue—one of about two dozen such agreements in existence and the only one in North Africa. Under the leadership of King Mohammed VI and the last three US Administrations, the Morocco-US relationship has advanced on economic, political, social, and security fronts. This Strategic Dialogue is yet another milestone in the Morocco-US relationship that has lasted more than two centuries.*

## What is the Morocco-US Strategic Dialogue?

The Morocco-US Strategic Dialogue is a formal framework that provides a means to deepen bilateral cooperation on strategic issues and high priority objectives. Through regular consultations between Moroccan and US senior officials, cooperation will become institutionalized so that progress and pursuit of shared goals remain unaffected by changes in administration, leadership, and personnel.

## Why is a Strategic Dialogue with Morocco important for the United States now?

The Morocco-US Strategic Dialogue will allow the US to coordinate its foreign policy interests and values more closely with Morocco and to benefit from Morocco's experience and strategic importance in the region. Morocco has a long history of cooperation and partnership with the US on a wide range of issues. The Strategic Dialogue formally recognizes the significance of the Morocco-US relationship and the advances achieved from this relationship over the past decade, including the Morocco-US Free Trade Agreement, the Millennium Challenge Compact, and Morocco's designation as a major non-NATO ally.

Morocco has worked most recently with three US Administrations to strengthen bilateral relations and to implement the two countries' shared future vision for the Middle East and North Africa. The Strategic Dialogue provides an opportunity to address new challenges and promote shared interests and values in the region. The recent uprisings and turmoil from the 'Arab Spring' demonstrate that now more than ever the US needs a strong, reliable, and influential ally in the region. As such an ally, and in its current role as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, Morocco is an important partner for the US in pursuing peaceful resolutions for conflicts like those in Syria and Mali.

## What are the expected benefits of the Morocco-US Strategic Dialogue?

Through regular high-level meetings, Morocco and the US will identify the most critical areas for cooperation and develop and implement action plans aimed at furthering each country's foreign policy objectives – such as counterterrorism cooperation, democracy promotion, regional economic development, civil society empowerment, and resolution of the Western Sahara conflict.

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# Rationale for a US-Morocco Strategic Partnership

Moroccan American Center for Policy

## Introduction – Why a Strategic Dialogue Makes Sense

In March 2011, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William J. Burns called Morocco, “a model of economic, social, and political reform.”<sup>1</sup> He also noted, “...the partnership between the United States, Morocco and the Moroccan people is a very high priority for President Obama and Secretary Clinton.” His statement reflected recognition by the US government of all that Morocco had achieved under the leadership of King Mohammed VI over the past decade in terms of political and economic reform. It likewise offered recognition of the importance of a strong Morocco-US relationship in which the two countries cooperate on a broad range of issues from counterterrorism and economic liberalization to policy towards Iran and Syria.

Morocco has received many of the key elements of a strategic partnership with the United States - a free trade agreement (FTA), designation as a major non-NATO ally, a Defense Consultative Committee, and a Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact, as well as other military aid and development assistance. These elements offer recognition of the significant reforms initiated in Morocco since King Mohammed VI ascended to the throne, and his close collaboration with three US presidents. As Secretary Clinton recently said, “...everywhere I go in the region and beyond, people ask me if they could have a free trade agreement like Morocco and if they can have a Millennium Challenge grant like Morocco. And I tell everyone, we did not give that to Morocco; Morocco earned it.”<sup>2</sup> Ties between the US and Morocco are firmly in place as the two countries begin a Strategic Dialogue to identify issues and define modalities for greater collaboration.

The Strategic Dialogue takes on even greater importance and urgency given the significant changes in the MENA region over the past nineteen months and the challenges these pose to US interests, from terrorism and instability in the Sahel and West and Central Africa, to the need to promote economic growth and jobs that contribute to regional stability and security.

## Shared Interests and Values: How Morocco and the US Act as Strategic Partners

The growing importance of Morocco’s partnership to the United States is in part due to its performance in reform and development - as its progress grows and expands, the partnership with the US has been strengthened. As noted, Morocco has many of the

elements of a strategic ally, as have a small number of other countries. What makes the Strategic Dialogue so important, especially at this time, is that it reflects the recognition of Morocco's importance as a pillar of shared interests and values in a very challenging region.

## US-Morocco Relations

Morocco's historical relations with the US are well known. Morocco was the first country to seek diplomatic relations with the Government of the United States in 1777, and the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the two countries, which dates to 1787, is the longest unbroken treaty relationship in US history.<sup>3</sup> During World Wars I and II, Morocco was aligned with the allied forces and provided support to both American and British troops. During WWII, Morocco hosted one of the most pivotal meetings of allied leaders in Casablanca, during which President Roosevelt offered support for Morocco's fight for independence against France.<sup>4</sup> Following Morocco's independence in 1956, the US and Morocco worked to improve bilateral cooperation between the two countries. Morocco was a staunch ally in the fight against the proliferation of Communism in the region and the two countries cultivated their partnership during the Cold War through a series of visits by high-level government officials.

After the end of the Cold War, US military and economic assistance remained at a relatively low level. However, since the 1980s, Morocco has grown as a major US ally in the Maghreb. Yahia Zoubir, Professor of International Relations and International Management at the Marseille School of Management notes several reasons for this: Morocco's support for the 1991 Gulf War; instability in Algeria, which placed Morocco, "once again in the role of bulwark against extremist, anti-Western forces;" Morocco's role in US-led peace initiatives in the Palestinian-Israel conflict; and Morocco's free market reforms that coincide with American ideological goals.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001, Morocco showed solidarity and renewed its commitment as a strong ally of the US. The US initiated a dialogue with Morocco regarding its role in the war on terror and since then security cooperation has greatly increased.

Today, the US-Morocco relationship has never been stronger and the countries cooperate in many fields, highlighted by their common commitment to combat terrorism, promote free trade and economic development, and support democratic reforms and human rights. Morocco's regional importance to the US is highlighted in the State Department's 2012 background note; "As a stable, comparatively moderate Arab Muslim nation, Morocco is important to U.S. interests in the Middle East as well. Accordingly, US policy toward Morocco seeks sustained and strong engagement and identifies priorities of economic, social, and political reform; conflict resolution; counterterrorism/security cooperation; and public outreach."<sup>6</sup> Congress' annual report on Morocco supports this assessment, noting, "...the U.S. government views Morocco as an important ally against terrorism and as a free trade partner."<sup>7</sup>

## Rationale for a US-Morocco Strategic Partnership

Most importantly, since ascending the throne King Mohammed VI has accelerated democratic and economic reforms in close collaboration with three US presidents, making Morocco an even more important ally, as well as a model for modernity in the region.

### US-Morocco Security Cooperation

The United States has defined international terrorism as the "greatest security threat to the United States."<sup>8</sup> At present, the group that presents the greatest terrorism threat is al-Qaeda and its affiliates, and therefore, in the 2010 National Security Strategy released by the White House, the United States defined defeating al-Qaeda and its affiliate groups as a top priority.<sup>9</sup> In order to combat the terrorist threat and ensure international cooperation, the US works to deny safe havens for terrorists and strengthen at-risk states. It does so by working with its allies to strengthen national military and security capacity, working to disrupt terrorist operations through financial and legal means, and promoting programs to reduce the appeal of violent extremism.

Morocco has demonstrated its leadership on security issues by undertaking important measures to combat domestic terrorism and cooperating with the United States and other regional allies. Morocco has taken a variety of approaches to combating terrorism, including establishing specially trained counterterrorism military units, blocking terrorist access to financial resources, restricting illegal immigration, controlling Islamic extremists, promoting religious and ethnic tolerance, and accelerating greater economic growth and inclusion. According to Matthew Chebatoris of the Jamestown Foundation, "the strategy is comprehensive in nature and sets out multiple objectives which illuminate Morocco's position as a beacon of hope in the often tumultuous North African political environment."<sup>10</sup>

Morocco maintains intelligence relationships with the FBI and CIA, and the Directors of both organizations have visited Morocco in the past for consultations. Morocco is part of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, has hosted and participated in NATO military exercises, and has joined NATO's Operation Active Endeavor, monitoring the Mediterranean Sea for terrorists. Through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative, launched in 2005, Morocco is part of US training and support to partner countries to prevent terrorism by enhancing border and aviation security, promoting democratic governance, and building public support against extremism.<sup>11</sup>

Morocco, as a result of its major non-NATO ally status, is eligible for priority delivery of defense material, participation in defense research and development programs, and a beneficiary of US government loan guarantee programs for the purchase of military materiel.<sup>12</sup> Morocco has purchased \$3 billion of US defense equipment, which has greatly benefitted US companies and promoted US jobs. Recent purchases have included 24 F-16 aircraft, 2T-6 training aircraft, 90 AGM-D Maverick air-to-ground missiles, 200 Abrams M1A1 tanks, night vision goggles, advanced AM 120-C7 air-to-air

medium-range missiles systems, and 26 M198 155 mm towed guns. The sale of F-16s was of particular importance since, as noted by the Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency, it contributed to the foreign policy and national security objectives of the United States, "by enhancing Morocco's capability to support US efforts in the global war on terrorism."<sup>13</sup>

Just as key Moroccan military personnel are trained in the US, as the 2012 Congressional Budget Justification notes, "...the Moroccan military offers a significant force multiplier for US initiatives to promote regional stability on the African continent through military education. The Moroccan military trains several other African and European militaries in their schools and training facilities," thus contributing to peace and security in all of North Africa.<sup>14</sup>

### US-Economic Cooperation

The United States' economic agenda promotes economic growth through reforms and market-based trade liberalizing policies. The US uses two primary tools to accomplish these goals: free trade agreements and development assistance.

#### *US-Morocco Free Trade Agreement*

As Gregory White, Associate Professor of Government at Smith College argues, the FTA is itself an example of Morocco's strategic importance to the US; "the crucial thing to stress with a free trade agreement - both in terms of its economic and strategic dimension - is that it constitutes a *policy choice* on the part of a government. This is especially important to bear in mind with respect to a low middle-income country like Morocco, which is sometimes cast as powerless in the international arena."<sup>15</sup> It is also an acknowledgement of Morocco's efforts at economic reform. Speaking in 2012 Secretary Clinton noted, "...everywhere I go in the region and beyond, people ask me if they could have a free trade agreement like Morocco and if they can have a Millennium Challenge grant like Morocco. And I tell everyone, we did not give that to Morocco; Morocco earned it. Morocco demonstrated what it takes to be in a free trade agreement and to meet the very high standards of the Millennium Challenge Corporation."<sup>16</sup>

The FTA has opened up the Moroccan market for a number of US exporters and also increased US competitiveness vis-à-vis Europe. Since the US-Morocco entered into force in January 2006, bilateral trade has tripled and the value of US exports has risen from \$481 million in 2005 to \$2.86 billion in 2011.<sup>17</sup> This translated into a trade surplus with Morocco of \$1.26 billion in 2010, a 3,505% increase over the \$35 million trade surplus of 2005.<sup>18</sup> The agreement has benefitted multiple economic sectors in the US; for example, it facilitates access of Virginia and Iowa-produced soybean, corn, and beef in the rapidly-expanding Moroccan market for these products. Thus, although Morocco is not one of the US' biggest trading partners, the trade relationship has been valuable to the United States and Morocco.

**Rationale for a US-Morocco Strategic Partnership***US-Morocco Economic Development*

The United States has increased aid to Morocco in recent years to assist with countering terrorism, democratization, fighting poverty, and building trade capacity. For Fiscal Year 2012, the US government requested \$43.6 million in development assistance for Morocco. As noted in the Congressional Budget Justification, US objectives in providing development assistance to Morocco include promoting political reform and addressing the challenges of the youth in order to maintain government stability. USAID works to promote sustained economic growth, invest in people through improvements the educational system, and promote democracy and good governance. Each of these areas offers opportunities to engage youth, as well as other segments of society, in order to bring a broader array of groups into public life. Morocco also receives development assistance through the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), a regional democracy-promotion program. MEPI provides small grants to Moroccan NGOs working to advance peace, participatory democracy, and prosperity for Moroccan citizens. Approximately \$1 million per year is awarded to Moroccan NGOs for civil society capacity building projects, public awareness campaigns, civic responsibility outreach efforts, and other key factors in democratic development, including programs to empower women, create jobs, improve education, and further judicial and legal reform.<sup>19</sup>

The US also works to promote development through the MCC, created by Congress in 2004 to supplement other US foreign assistance programs for countries committed to good governance and economic freedom. The goal of the \$697.5 million 2007 MCC compact with Morocco is to reduce poverty through sustainable economic growth by increasing productivity and improving employment in high potential sectors.<sup>20</sup> In a 2007 speech, CEO of the MCC Ambassador John Danilovich noted that the compact is "a clear indication of Morocco's ongoing commitment to reform, liberalization, and modernization," as good governance and economic freedom are the foundation of all MCC compacts.<sup>21</sup> The MCC compact is likewise designed to complement and further the reform agenda already underway in Morocco. Like the FTA, the MCC compact is a testament to Morocco's progress on political and economic reform and a symbol of the US-Morocco partnership.

**US-Morocco Cooperation on Issues of Regional and Global Importance***Religious Freedom*

Morocco is an example of religious tolerance in the Arab world. King Mohammed VI has been outspoken about the importance of Holocaust remembrance and for his efforts has been praised as a leader by the Conference of Jewish Presidents. In a 2009 press release, the Conference noted, "this is the first time an Arab head of state has taken such a clear stand on the Shoah...This courageous act by His Majesty King Mohammed VI to recognize the historical truth and universal significance of the Holocaust and the need to educate the Arab and Moslem world about its impact on mankind is especially remarkable."<sup>22</sup> The Jewish leaders added that this same advocacy of tolerance has been

in evidence in His Majesty's treatment of the Jewish community of Morocco, which boasts a 2,000-year history in the country. Although Morocco is not widely recognized as a current leader in the Middle East peace process, it is widely acknowledged as a tolerant nation and is looked to as an example of moderation in an increasingly extremist world.

### *Nuclear Non-Proliferation*

Morocco is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and has cooperated with the United States on non-proliferation issues since 1994. Ken Baker of the US National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) noted, "From the beginning, Morocco embarked on a transparent nuclear energy program and strived to meet and exceed all international nonproliferation obligations. With technical assistance from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United States, France and other partners, Morocco continues to be a model for establishing a responsible nuclear energy program."<sup>23</sup> Morocco has also worked with NNSA on the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism to build and enhance global capacity to prevent and respond to nuclear and radiological emergencies. Furthermore, it has been supportive of international efforts undertaken by the United States to confront the threat of non-peaceful nuclear weapons developments. Morocco has been supportive of the sanctions regime against Iran, both during its present time on the Security Council and before.

### *Energy Security*

Although the proliferation of alternative forms of energy and alternative sources of oil and natural gas has decreased US dependence on oil from the Middle East, the region still remains vitally important to US energy security, both as a source of energy and as vital transport link. Morocco is actively engaged in oil and gas exploration and has developed the infrastructure to act as a key energy transit location. Part of the Maghreb-Europe Natural Gas Pipeline, which brings natural gas from Algeria to Spain, Portugal, and the rest of Western Europe, passes through Morocco.<sup>24</sup> Morocco thus contributes to the EU's energy security as a strategic transit country for Algerian gas and as an exporter of electricity to Spain.

Morocco also has a potentially important role to play in the alternative energy market – one that could ultimately be vital for the energy needs of Western Europe. Morocco is currently undertaking the most ambitious renewable energy program in North Africa.<sup>25</sup> The country aims to develop enough solar, wind, and hydroelectric power to meet 42% of electricity demand by 2020.<sup>26</sup> The objective of Morocco's \$9 billion solar power plan is to increase Morocco's energy independence and eventually develop enough energy to export to Europe. If successful, Morocco will become an important player in energy security in the Mediterranean and a potential model for the development of renewable energies in North Africa.

**Rationale for a US-Morocco Strategic Partnership***Support of other US Foreign Policy Initiatives*

Morocco has been very supportive of important US foreign policy initiatives. Morocco was the first Arab state to condemn Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and sent troops to help defend Saudi Arabia; ended diplomatic relations with Iran in 2009; voiced support for the international community's efforts in Libya in 2011; and has participated in the "Friends of Syria" group, hosting its upcoming meeting.<sup>27</sup> Since taking its seat as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Morocco has further demonstrated its leadership. Morocco authored the draft resolution on Syria, which called for a ceasefire, expressed grave concerns at the deteriorating situation, and condemned gross violations of human rights. In a 2012 press point, Secretary Clinton praised Morocco's leadership on important international issues; "On Syria, I thank the foreign minister for the important role that Morocco has played, first within the Arab League and second within the Security Council. Morocco is in a unique position to help shape the international community's efforts, and it is imperative that we continue working today."<sup>28</sup> Lastly, the United States has recognized Morocco's important support for US military operations in the Middle East and North Africa. The 2012 Congressional Budget Justification defines Morocco as a key partner nation in supporting the US strategic goal of enhancing US interoperability throughout the African continent.

*Relations with the International Community*

Morocco's geostrategic location at the crossroads of the Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, and its close ties to its neighbors throughout the Mediterranean are also an important part of its relationship with the United States. Morocco shares the EU objective of promoting security and stability in the Mediterranean and North Africa. Toward this end, Morocco cooperates with the EU on counterterrorism and is an important player in the fight against drug trafficking and illegal migration to Europe.<sup>29</sup> The EU works with Morocco to confront both drug trafficking and migration through programs to: improve intelligence sharing; strengthen the capacity of Morocco's border control and surveillance; provide specialized training for judges, police, and border officials; and strengthen legislation on drugs, trafficking, and terrorist financing.<sup>30</sup>

Morocco is also committed to building stability in the Middle East and Africa. In the past decade, Morocco has contributed to peacekeeping efforts throughout the continent. As of June 2012, Morocco had over 1,600 troops, military observers, and police serving in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, ranking 17<sup>th</sup> in terms of worldwide contributions.<sup>31</sup> Moroccan security forces are currently contributing to the maintenance of African peace and security with the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the UN Operation in the Côte d'Ivoire. Moroccan personnel also served with the UN Supervision Mission in Syria.

Morocco has likewise worked in sub-Saharan Africa to foster economic and social development, thus promoting a US strategic goal of trade liberalization and economic development. It has concluded commercial and tariff agreements with fifteen countries

in Africa and is a leading investor in the emerging markets there – markets Morocco sees as serious, credible, and solvent. In a 2009 report for the UN Conference on Trade and Development, Morocco was named as one of the top 20 investors in Africa from 2003-2007, one of only two African countries listed.<sup>32</sup> Morocco also plays a key role in fostering educational development in sub-Saharan Africa. Currently, 10,000 students from that area are enrolled in Moroccan universities; many Central and West African countries look to Morocco for management training that contributes to the formation of a viable civil service capable of promoting real socio-economic development.<sup>33</sup> These types of programs and relationships promote development and security through the region.

## Other Issues of Potential Strategic Importance

### *Global Food Security and the Role of Phosphates*

Another issue that has the potential to become strategically important is global food security and the role of phosphates in ensuring it. It is widely acknowledged that ensuring global food security is one of the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; both the United States and the United Nations have dedicated Offices of Global Food Security and remain engaged to find solutions to feed an ever-growing population. The United States defined the importance of food security in its 2010 National Security Strategy, noting, “The United States is working with partners around the world to advance a food security initiative that combats hunger and builds the capacity of countries to feed their people. Instead of simply providing aid for developing countries, we are focusing on new methods and technologies for agricultural development.”<sup>34</sup> What is less widely-acknowledged is the importance of phosphates, a key component in fertilizers, in confronting food insecurity, despite the reality that fertilizer is an essential element in modern agricultural production and was a key driver of the agricultural productivity gains made during the “Green Revolution.”

Phosphorus must become an important part of the debate on how to confront global food insecurity. This is all the more important because the supply of phosphorus is finite and there are no substitutes for it in agricultural use.<sup>35</sup> As Morocco is the largest reliable supplier of phosphorus, it has an extremely important global role to play in enhancing the longevity of this critical commodity.

Morocco is home to the largest phosphate reserves in the world and is the biggest exporter of phosphate rock and phosphoric acid in the world. It is also a major exporter of phosphate fertilizers.<sup>36</sup> It has made a commitment to ensuring stable production while promoting world food security and sustainable development. Given its market share, Morocco is well-placed to become not only the largest supplier of phosphates, but also a key part of the solution to addressing food insecurity given ever-present resource realities.

**Rationale for a US-Morocco Strategic Partnership**

## Values: The Promotion of Democracy and Human Rights Abroad

Democracy and respect for human rights have long been central components of US foreign policy; the United States was founded on the principles representative government and individual freedoms, and these values continue to define US policies at home and abroad. The US acknowledges that Morocco shares these values. After the King's March 2011 speech on constitutional reform, the State Department noted, "...we fully support the aspirations of the Moroccan people in their efforts to further consolidate the rule of law, raise human rights standards, promote good governance and work toward long-term constitutional reform. The United States values Morocco as a key strategic partner and we stand ready to work with the government and the people of Morocco to realize their democratic aspirations."<sup>37</sup>

The US has likewise acknowledged Morocco's efforts to promote equality and address abuses of the past. In 2012, Secretary Clinton noted, "Morocco stands as an example, as a model of what can be achieved. Moroccans are strengthening their own democracy. Young people are having a say in their own future. His Majesty King Mohammed VI has begun the process of reform. We see women's rights protected and expanded, a more transparent and accountable government, establishing the Arab world's very first truth commission on human rights."<sup>38</sup>

It is evident that the US sees Morocco's potential in guaranteeing representative government and human rights protections for its citizens; Morocco has been praised as a model in joint meetings with the US, and the Strategic Dialogue provides yet another forum in which Morocco and the US can collaborate on human rights.

**Summary**

The US-Morocco Strategic Dialogue provides both parties with opportunities for greater cooperation and collaboration on issues ranging from economic growth and jobs promotion to promoting resolution of the Western Sahara conflict and achieving the full benefits of the Morocco-US Free Trade Agreement. This meeting, coming at a time of many transitions and challenges in the region, indicates the pivotal role that Morocco does and can play as a leader in the region for reform and development, as well as a recognition of the importance of the work of King Mohammed VI during the past decade.




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<sup>1</sup>"Under Secretary Burns' Statement at the Moroccan MFA." *United States Department of State*, February 27, 2011, <<http://morocco.usembassy.gov/burns-mfa1.html>>.

<sup>2</sup>"Secretary Clinton's Remarks with Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs Saad-Eddine Al-Othmani After Their Meeting." *United States Department of State*, February 26, 2012, <<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2012/02/184667.htm>>.

<sup>3</sup>"Background Note: Morocco." *United States Department of State*, March 12, 2012,

<<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>>.

<sup>4</sup> "Relations in the Modern Era, World War II and Beyond." *United States Diplomatic Mission to Morocco*, <<http://morocco.usembassy.gov/modern.html>>.

<sup>5</sup> Zoubir, Yahia H. and Karima Benabdallah-Gambier. "The United States and North Africa Imbroglia: Balancing Interests in Algeria, Morocco, and the Western Sahara." *Mediterranean Politics* 10, no. 2 (2005): 181-202, pp. 188-189.

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<sup>11</sup> Pham, J. Peter. "U.S. Interests in Promoting Security across the Sahara." *American Foreign Policy Interests* 32 (2010): 242-252, p. 244.

<sup>12</sup> White, Gregory W. "Free Trade as a Strategic Instrument in the War on Terror?: The 2004 US-Moroccan Free Trade Agreement." *Middle East Journal* 56, no. 4 (Autumn 2005): 597-616, p.598-599, pp. 606-607.

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<sup>15</sup> White, p. 607.

<sup>16</sup> "Secretary Clinton's Remarks with Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs Saad-Eddine Al-Othmani After Their Meeting."

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<sup>18</sup> "The U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement," *United States Department of Commerce*, October 12, 2011, <<http://export.gov/FTA/morocco/index.asp>>.

<sup>19</sup> Areiff.

<sup>20</sup> "Millennium Challenge Compact with the Kingdom of Morocco." *Millennium Challenge Corporation*, <<http://www.mcc.gov/documents/agreements/compact-summary-executive-morocco.pdf>>.

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<sup>27</sup> "Background Note: Morocco."

<sup>28</sup> "Secretary Clinton's Remarks with Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs Saad-Eddine Al-Othmani After Their Meeting."

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<sup>31</sup> "Ranking of Police and Military Contributions to UN Operations." *United Nations Peacekeeping*, June 30, 2012, <[http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2012/june12\\_2.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2012/june12_2.pdf)>.

<sup>32</sup> Airault, Pascal. "L'appel du Sud." *Jeune Afrique*, November 3, 2009, <<http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Articles/Dossier/ARTJAJA2547p064-066.xml0/-Afrique-diplomatie-Mohammed-VI-RASD-Diplomatie-l-appel-du-sud.html>>.

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# The US and Morocco Share a Long History of Friendship

## Moroccan American Center for Policy

- ☑ Morocco was the first country to formally recognize the United States.
- ☑ The United States negotiated its first formal treaty of commerce and friendship with Morocco. Negotiations began in 1783, and resulted in the signing in 1786 of the Moroccan-American Treaty of Friendship. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, both future US Presidents, were the American signatories.  
<http://rabat.usembassy.gov/history.html>  
<http://rabat.usembassy.gov/early.html>  
<http://rabat.usembassy.gov/strengthening.html>
- ☑ During World War I, Morocco was aligned with the Allied forces and in 1917-1918 Moroccan soldiers fought victoriously alongside US Marines at Château Thierry, Mont Blanc, and Soissons. During World War II, Moroccan national defense forces aided American and British forces operating in the area.  
<http://rabat.usembassy.gov/modern.html>
- ☑ Morocco hosted one of the most pivotal meetings of the allied leaders in World War II. President Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Free French commander General Charles De Gaulle, met for four days in the Casablanca suburb of Anfa in January 1943 to discuss the war and agreed to launch their continental counter-push against Axis aggression through a beachhead landing on the French Atlantic coast. At this meeting President Roosevelt also ensured he would do all in his power to support Morocco's wish to be independent of the French.  
<http://rabat.usembassy.gov/modern.html>
- ☑ Following Morocco's independence in 1956 President Eisenhower communicated to King Mohammed V that "my government renews its wishes for the peace and prosperity of Morocco," to which the King reassured the President he would be a staunch ally in the fight against the proliferation of Communism in the region.  
<http://rabat.usembassy.gov/modern.html>
- ☑ Today, that friendship continues with extended cooperation in many fields, highlighted by our common commitment to combating terrorism and cooperating militarily through the 2002 bilateral Defense Consultative Committee, under which the partners hold joint military exercises and training programs, and the designation of Morocco as a major non-NATO Ally in 2004.  
<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/trend-lines/12141/global-insider-morocco-and-u-s-stay-close-as-war-on-terror-evolves>  
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>
- ☑ The 2012 State Department report on Morocco concluded that, "As a stable, democratizing, and liberalizing Arab Muslim nation, Morocco is an important supporter of key US interests in the Middle East." US policy toward Morocco is based

on sustained and strong engagement, and identifies priorities for reform, conflict resolution, counterterrorism cooperation, and public outreach.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

- ☑ Morocco's counter-terrorism efforts involve close cooperation with the US. As the Department of State affirms, "Morocco was among the first Arab and Islamic states to denounce the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States and declare solidarity with the American people in the war against terror."

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

- ☑ Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, Morocco showed solidarity and renewed its commitment as a strong ally of the US. The US initiated a dialogue with Morocco regarding its role in the war on terror. A number of people suspected of being part of the al-Qaeda network have since been prosecuted in Morocco. Cooperation between Morocco and the US includes data sharing, law enforcement partnership, improvement of capabilities to oversee strategic checkpoints, and termination of terrorist organization financing.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L0255298.htm>

- ☑ Morocco and the US likewise maintain strong economic relations. In 2004, US Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick and Minister-Delegate of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Taib Fassi-Fihri signed the groundbreaking US-Morocco Free Trade Agreement, signaling the beginning of a new period of cooperation and economic growth between the United States and Morocco.

<http://www.fas.usda.gov/info/factsheets/moroccofta.asp>

- ☑ This was further strengthened when the US awarded Morocco a \$697.5 million Millennium Challenge Account Compact in 2007, the largest ever agreement signed up until that time. The MCC program focuses on improving the economic sustainability of agricultural sectors, upgrading the medina/city of Fez, and enhancing the market capabilities of women-run cooperatives.

<http://www.mcc.gov/pages/countries/program/morocco-compact>

- ☑ The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and its predecessor agencies have managed an active and effective assistance program in Morocco since 1953. The Peace Corps has also been active in Morocco since 1963 and more than 4400 volunteers have served there. Currently, there are over 250 volunteers in Morocco working in the areas of health, youth development, small business, and the environment.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm#relations>

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=learn.wherepc.northafr&cntry=morocco>

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**DRAFT**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Tuesday, December 4, 2012**

## **King Mohammed VI, Sec. Clinton to meet on strategic partnership, Morocco urges 'political will to build peace, curb extremism in region'**

**Morocco Deputy Foreign Minister Amrani meets with US officials, [Atlantic Council](#) on Mali, Syria**

**Washington, DC** (Dec. 4) — Morocco Deputy Foreign Minister Youssef Amrani met with US officials today [in Washington](#) to prepare for strategic talks in Morocco on December 11 between His Majesty King Mohammed VI and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. King Mohammed VI and Secretary Clinton will discuss concrete steps Morocco and the US can take in their strategic partnership to address crises in Mali and Syria, advance the Middle East peace process and regional humanitarian concerns, and deepen US-Morocco bilateral ties.

At an [Atlantic Council forum](#), Mr. Amrani said Morocco and the US are working together closely on a number of specific initiatives resulting from the formal [Morocco-US Strategic Dialogue](#) agreed to in September, including a [US-Moroccan Business Development Conference](#) that convened in Washington for the first time today.

In December, Morocco also assumes the rotating Presidency of the [UN Security Council](#), where it is working with the US on the deteriorating situations in Mali and Syria. Action on Syria will likely follow the international "[Friends of Syria](#)" meeting Morocco is hosting in Marrakech Dec. 12, which [Sec. Clinton](#) is expected to attend.

"We know what has to be done to build peace," said Mr. Amrani. "We need to show the political will to do it."

He said "the [interconnection](#) between drug-trafficking and al-Qaeda-linked extremists" in the Sahel and Central Africa "poses a great threat to the international community. If we don't fight it, it will create instability and failed states across the region. What happened in [Mali can happen in other countries.](#)" Amrani said "African nations must take the lead," pointing to the current [two-track approach](#) of dialogue and military pressure.

Mr. Amrani said economic development and job creation were crucial parts of a multi-prong strategy to "build peace and prosperity and curb the rise of violent extremism in the region." So too are political freedoms and democratic reforms. But [he added](#), "democracy is a culture and expression of political will. Countries without a history of civil society need transition time to build it, which can be complicated, long, and difficult."

Amrani said that Morocco, which began its reforms more than a decade ago under the leadership of [King Mohammed VI](#), can play an important role as a regional leader and model with its strong civil society, tradition of tolerance and consensus-building, and respect for individual rights.

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**The Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP)** is a non-profit organization whose principal mission is to inform opinion makers, government officials, and interested publics in the United States about political and social developments in Morocco and the role being played by the Kingdom of Morocco in broader strategic developments in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. For more, please visit [www.moroccoonthemove.com](http://www.moroccoonthemove.com)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Thursday, November 29, 2012**

## **King Mohammed VI, Sec. Clinton to Meet in Morocco on Mali, Syria Crises, Strategic Partnership**

**Morocco's Deputy Foreign Minister Amrani in Washington on week of Dec. 3 for preparations**

**Washington, DC** (Nov. 29) — Morocco's Deputy Foreign Minister Youssef Amrani will be in Washington, DC on December 3 to prepare for Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's upcoming strategic discussions in Morocco with His Majesty King Mohammed VI. Secretary Clinton and King Mohammed VI will meet on December 11 in Morocco to discuss specific steps Morocco and the US can take within their strategic partnership to overcome security challenges in Mali and Syria, address the Middle East peace process and regional humanitarian concerns, and deepen the US-Morocco bilateral relationship.

Morocco has become an increasingly important strategic partner for the US since [King Mohammed VI](#) began, more than a decade ago, to advance democratic reforms in a progressive manner, successfully avoiding the chaos and uncertainties that have troubled much of the region over the past two years.

In addition, as a non-permanent member of the [UN Security Council](#) and a bilateral partner in the new [Morocco-US Strategic Dialogue](#), Morocco and King Mohammed VI have recently played an increasingly important role on the international stage, helping the US and its allies to address the pressing crisis in Syria and now Mali.

On December 12, Secretary Clinton will join the fourth "[Friends of Syria](#)" meeting, which Morocco is hosting in Marrakech. More than 100 delegations are [expected to attend](#). The goal is to reach agreement on a common strategy for ensuring a political transition, mobilizing aid for refugees caught in the humanitarian crisis, and addressing regional security implications. Morocco has worked closely with the US to advance a common and progressive position among Arab nations on the crisis.

\*\* To set up an interview with Mr. Youssef Amrani, Morocco's Minister Delegate of Foreign Affairs, please contact: Garth Neuffer at 202.470.2055, [gneuffer@moroccanamericancenter.com](mailto:gneuffer@moroccanamericancenter.com).

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Thursday, December 13, 2012**

## **World leaders recognize Syrian opposition in Marrakech; King Mohammed VI urges UN Security Council to support transfer of power**

**Washington, DC** (Dec. 13, 2012) — Leaders from 114 countries and organizations gathered in [Marrakech, Morocco](#) Wednesday for a summit of the "Friends of Syria" alliance and [officially recognized](#) the newly formed Syrian opposition coalition as the "[legitimate representative](#)" of the Syrian people.

World leaders including [Morocco's King Mohammed VI](#), [US President Barack Obama](#), and [French President François Hollande](#) have now joined the global alliance in calling for a speedy transfer of power to end the violence in Syria that has taken more than [42,000 lives](#) and caused thousands to flee to neighboring countries.

In his [address](#), King Mohammed urged members of the UN Security Council, over which Morocco currently [presides](#), to adopt "a unified, resolute stance as quickly as possible to spare the Syrian people further tragedy and suffering, and to support the transfer of power in Syria for the establishment of a democratic, multi-party system."

King Mohammed applauded "the dynamism of the Syrian opposition for unifying the full spectrum of political opinion, at home and abroad," which he said "culminated in the Doha Declaration on the establishment of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, headed by Sheikh Moaz al-Khatib."

"This is a major political achievement for the Syrian opposition, which gives it legitimacy in the transition period," as it works to fulfill the hopes of the Syrian people in building a democratic Syrian state, said King Mohammed. He added that this should also facilitate efforts by the international community "to provide support to the coalition in a collective, efficient and orderly manner, according to each one's capabilities and competencies."

Earlier this fall, King Mohammed ordered the setting up of a Moroccan [field hospital](#) at the Zaatari camp in Jordan — which he visited in October — that has aided more than 40,000 Syrian refugees. As part of a broad international humanitarian aid effort, Morocco has also sent 2,000 winterized tents, tons of foodstuff, medicine, and blankets to benefit the refugees in both Jordan and Turkey.

**\*\*[Full text of King Mohammed VI remarks to the 4<sup>th</sup> ministerial meeting of the "Friends of Syria"](#)**

**\*\*[Key findings/conclusions of the "Friends of Syria" meeting in Marrakech](#)**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Thursday, May 10, 2012**

## **200 Days of Captivity—and Counting—for Western Aid-workers Seized in Polisario-run Camps by al-Qaeda Offshoot**

**\$60 million ransom demanded for aid-workers & Algerian diplomats held in northern Mali**

**Washington, DC** (May 10) — Today marks more than 200 days of captivity for Western aid-workers Rossella Urru of Italy and Ainhoa Fernández de Rincón and Enric Gonyacons of Spain, [kidnapped October 23](#) from the Polisario-run refugee camps near Tindouf in Algeria by an al-Qaeda offshoot, the [Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa](#) (MUJAO), reportedly with assistance from [camp insiders](#). [News accounts](#) indicate the kidnap victims are believed to be held [in northern Mali](#).

Last week, [MUJAO](#) demanded \$60 million for the two women aid-workers, Urru and Rincón, as well as for the seven diplomats it abducted April 5 when northern Mali was overrun. No mention was made of Gonyacons, the [third hostage](#). The ransom demand was seen as a [setback](#) in efforts to free the hostages. MUJAO says [negotiations continue](#) for the two women.

Al-Qaeda's [consolidation of power](#) in [northern Mali](#), which this week saw the [burning of a UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) in [Timbuktu](#), highlights the increasing [volatility](#) in [Africa's Sahara/Sahel](#). This poses a [growing danger](#) to the region. New reports from [Carnegie Endowment](#), [Atlantic Council](#), and [International Center for Terrorism Studies](#) document that the Polisario-run camps are becoming a recruiting ground for terrorists and traffickers.

Members of the Polisario-run camps are reported to be involved in [drug](#) and [arms trafficking](#), [armed incursions](#) into [Mali](#), as well as being [mercenaries](#) for Qaddafi in Libya, and involved in [kidnappings and collaboration](#) with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The [Carnegie Paper](#) calls deteriorating conditions in the camps "a tinderbox waiting to explode" and links between AQIM and members of the Polisario-run camps "a major security threat to the Maghreb and the Sahel."

Since 1990, international support for the camps has exceeded \$1 billion—and US aid [exceeds \\$300 million](#). Given escalating security concerns, [a new report](#) recommends that US support to UNHCR for the camps also be used for durable solutions to resettle refugees and improve [humanitarian conditions](#).

**\* For a Report/Chronology on Polisario-camp member links to AQIM/traffickers, go to:**  
<http://moroccoonthemove.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/thecasefordurablesolutions-chronology.pdf>

**For more on Morocco, go to: [MoroccoOnTheMove.com](http://MoroccoOnTheMove.com). Follow us on Twitter- [@MorocOnTheMove](https://twitter.com/MorocOnTheMove)**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Monday, April 11, 2011**

## **As Libyan Opposition Rejects AU Plan Leaving Qaddafi in Power, Rebels Reportedly Capture Algerian Mercenaries, Accuse Algeria of 'Turning Blind Eye' to Hired Guns Crossing Border to Support Qaddafi**

**Washington DC (April 11)** – As Libyan opposition leaders today [rejected](#) a peace proposal by the African Union that fails to include removal of Moammar Qaddafi, Agence France Press (AFP) is reporting that the [Libyan rebels](#) have captured 15 mercenaries from Algeria and rebel leaders are accusing Algeria of failing to prevent mercenaries from crossing into Libya to help the Qaddafi regime cling to power.

According to AFP, Libyan rebels said Sunday they had captured 15 mercenaries who identified themselves as Algerians. Rebel leaders said they also captured a local supporter of the Qaddafi regime, who was serving as guide to the mercenaries, during a battle in the eastern Libya town of Ajdabiya.

Commenting on the capture, rebel spokesperson Shamsiddin Abdulmolah accused Algeria—one of only two Arab League countries to vote against the international coalition effort to protect Libyan civilians—of backing Qaddafi and “turning a blind eye” to mercenaries crossing the border to help Qaddafi quash the rebellion. “It’s sad,” he told AFP, “the same kind of dictatorship we have here, they have over there” in Algeria.

Algeria put out a statement to AFP Sunday “categorically” denying any involvement in “this alleged mercenary operation.”

“The Libyan rebels need more than denials from neighboring countries of complicity in helping Qaddafi bring in these mercenaries to suppress his own people—they need it to stop,” said Robert M. Holley, Executive Director, Moroccan American Center for Policy. “Continued evidence that the fight for democracy in Libya is being undermined by outside marauders for hire should be of great concern to the international community. It is difficult enough for the rebels to fight off Qaddafi’s regular army, even with the UN-sanctioned no-fly zone in place. Algeria needs to make a serious, concerted effort to ensure that its citizens are not crossing the border as paid thugs to support one of the most brutal dictators in the world.”

Morocco continues to provide humanitarian assistance to support the Libyan people’s efforts to achieve greater democracy. It was a key supporter in the 20-2 Arab League vote in favor of an internationally sanctioned no-fly zone over Libya to protect civilians from being slaughtered by Qaddafi’s military forces.

\* For an English version of the AFP story, via News24, go to: <http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/15-Algerian-mercenaries-seized-in-Libya-20110410>

\* For the French version of the AFP story, go to: <http://www.algerie360.com/algerie/les-rebelles-libyens-disent-detener-15-mercenaires-algeriens-et-en-avoir-tue-trois/>

###

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Tuesday, May 1, 2012**

## **Ambassadors Selwa Roosevelt, Edward Gabriel honored as "Arab Americans of the Year"**

**Washington, DC** (May 1, 2012) — On Saturday, Ambassadors Selwa "Lucky" Roosevelt, White House Chief of Protocol for President Ronald Reagan, and Edward M. Gabriel, US Ambassador to Morocco during the Administration of President Bill Clinton, [were honored](#) in Detroit, Michigan as "[Arab Americans of the Year](#)" for their distinguished service to their country and communities.

The 41<sup>st</sup> annual event hosted by the Arab American Community Center for Economic & Social Services ([ACCESS](#)) drew nearly 2,000 national and local civic leaders and members of the public at the Detroit Marriott. It coincides with the "[Patriots & Peacemakers](#)" [exhibit](#) at the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn, MI, which highlights Arab Americans in public service.

Roosevelt served as chief of protocol for the United States from 1982-1989 — longer than anyone has held that position. She was born in Tennessee to Lebanese immigrants and lived there until her marriage in 1950 to Archibald B. Roosevelt, Jr., grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt.

Gabriel, who served as US Ambassador to Morocco from 1997-2001, has been actively engaged in Arab-American relations and issues for decades. He presently serves as Vice Chairman for the American Task Force for Lebanon and heads the Moroccan American Center in Washington, DC, which promotes US-Moroccan relations.

"I have been blessed in my life to be able to give to my community and my country, and to fulfill dreams that at earlier times in my life I dared not even contemplate," said Gabriel. "Yet there is no greater honor than to contribute in some small way to the heritage my mother and father gave to me. Tonight is the greatest honor I could be given."

Presenting the awards were Theodore Kattouf, former US Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates and current president of AMIDEAST, a nonprofit supporting international education and development in the Middle East and North Africa; and Peter Tanous, a previous "Arab American of the Year" honoree, Lynx Investment president, and former army lieutenant who received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 1994.

**For more on Morocco, go to: [MoroccoOnTheMove.com](http://MoroccoOnTheMove.com). Follow us on Twitter- [@MorocOnTheMove](https://twitter.com/MorocOnTheMove)**

###

**The Moroccan American Cultural Center (MACC)** is a not-for-profit 501 c(3) organization which works to build stronger cultural and educational ties between Morocco and the U.S. through its support of programs that enhance bilateral relations and cooperation. Created in 2003 as an initiative of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, MACC has undertaken a range of projects which include hosting events that celebrate and share the rich diversity of Moroccan culture, and supporting programs that enhance cultural and educational ties between the U.S. and Morocco as well as across the Maghreb. For more information, go to [www.MoroccoOnTheMove.com](http://www.MoroccoOnTheMove.com).



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, June 3, 2011**

## **Experts Warn of Risk to US if 'Arab Spring' Turns to 'Season of Discontent,' Call for US to Partner with Reformers to Spur Growth, Positive Change**

**Resurgent al-Qaeda, returning mercenaries, will exploit Libya chaos and arms to spread violence**

**Washington DC** (June 3)—Foreign policy experts at two forums this week examined the seismic changes of the 'Arab Spring' and focused on the importance of US and European engagement with progressive leaders in the Middle East and North Africa for determining whether the current unrest will lead to reform, repression, or violent revolution.

Well-armed [mercenaries recruited by Col. Qadhafi](#) from Mali, the Polisario Front in Algeria, and elsewhere, and resurgent terrorists from [al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb \(AQIM\)](#), are stocking up on arms from Libya and are eager to exploit unrest in the region after Osama bin Laden's death.

At an [Atlantic Council symposium](#), "Preventing the 'Arab Spring' from Becoming the 'Season of Discontent,'" policy experts discussed the uncertain forecast and how to promote positive change in this pivotal part of the world.

Analyst Geoffrey Porter said "every country in the Middle East and North Africa is different" and must be understood on its own terms. Dr. Anouar Boukhars of McDaniels College pointed to Morocco where "reform efforts have strengthened its legitimacy," citing King Mohammed VI's March 9 speech on constitutional reforms. Dr. J. Peter Pham, moderator of the panel, said Morocco's reforms were "triggered by an inside reality and not imposed from the outside," and successful reform in other countries must be "internally driven."

Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies emphasized the importance of understanding that the 'Arab Spring' unrest is being driven by demand for economic as well as political change. Long-term solutions will require strategic choices in an uncertain climate.

Ambassador Edward Gabriel said the US and Europe can play a key role in promoting positive change. He proposed a [3-part "long-term strategy"](#) with countries that have taken reform seriously," such as Morocco and Jordan, to build partnerships for growth and "strategic dialogue" to better understand change shaping the region.

[Prof. Yonah Alexander](#) of the International Center for Terrorism Studies warned that al-Qaeda and state-sponsored terrorism are "alive and well" in the Maghreb and Sahel, where terrorist incidents have risen 500% since 9/11 and are a global as well as regional threat. He also noted the concerns expressed by NATO officials about mercenaries in Libya.

At the [Association for the Study of the Middle East & Africa \(ASMEA\)](#) forum, "Terrorism in North Africa After bin Laden," investigative reporter Richard Minter warned "AQIM is taking advantage of the 'Arab Spring' to expand and grow." Professor Richard Rene Laremont of SUNY said AQIM's "narrative was weakened because change came through mass civil demonstrations, not terrorism," but that it would be reinvigorated if reforms aren't realized.

Spanish journalist Jose Maria Gil Garre, noted that AQIM has succeeded in part because it can "depend on support of military elements of the Polisario," a separatist group based in Algeria, as local guides to "carry out its arms trafficking, kidnapping, and drug-trafficking in the Sahel."

Mohammed Benhammou, of the Moroccan Center for Strategic Studies, said that "600 members of the Polisario" answered the call for mercenaries in the Libyan conflict, because decades ago "Qadhafi was the father of the Polisario"—"now they are returning the favor." Benhammou warned the "Libya civil war has provided an opportunity to transfer weapons into the Sahel and AQIM."

He added that while "Morocco has been a model for the region" with its reforms, "Algeria has taken a wait and see attitude." Benhammou cited the need for "economic integration" in the region, which currently has one of the lowest cross-border trade rates in the world. Laremont added that Algeria needs to "realize it is in its interest to stop bickering with Morocco and cooperate" to address economic and security challenges facing the region.

###

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Tuesday, March 1, 2011**

## **US Under Sec. of State says US-Morocco partnership 'more important' than ever, reiterates support for Western Sahara autonomy plan, cites Moroccan reforms**

**Washington, DC** (March 1)—Calling Morocco “a model of economic, social, and political reform,” William J. Burns, Under Secretary for Political Affairs for the US State Department, met with Morocco’s Foreign Minister Taib Fassi Fihri in Rabat Sunday, where he underscored the importance of US-Morocco relations in the current regional unrest, and reaffirmed US backing of Morocco’s autonomy plan to resolve the Western Sahara dispute.

“The partnership between the United States, Morocco and the Moroccan people is a very high priority for President Obama and Secretary Clinton,” said Burns at a joint press briefing with Fassi Fihri in Rabat. “It’s never been more important than at this moment.”

Burns reiterated US support for Morocco’s compromise solution to resolve the decades-long Western Sahara conflict: “The United States continues to believe that the Moroccan autonomy proposal is a serious and credible plan,” he stated at the joint press briefing, reported the *Maghreb Arab Press*.

“This is a moment of profound change across the region. People are continuing to seek freedom and dignity and opportunity,” said Burns. “Pursuit of those aspirations will take different shapes in different societies,” he said. “In Morocco, there is a strong record of efforts under the leadership of King Mohammed VI to open up opportunities.” Morocco “continues to face many challenges,” but “it’s been a model” of reforms. “Civil society organizations have grown rapidly and there is a will to continue down the path of reform and modernization.”

Fassi Fihri shared Burns assessment of the importance of Rabat-Washington relations and Morocco’s concern with regional events. He said Morocco was closely following international efforts to address the situation in Libya and is concerned about reports of the use of foreign forces in Libya.

“The United States will continue to do everything that we can” to support Morocco’s ongoing reforms and modernization, said Burns, “in the spirit of our partnership through the Millennium Challenge Account, through energetic efforts to expand trade and investment opportunities, including a major American trade mission that intends to come to Morocco in the coming months.”

“Morocco continues to demonstrate its commitment to openness and show that reforms, not repression, are the answer for advancing the rights of its citizens and stability of its civil society,” said Robert Holley, executive director, Moroccan American Center for Policy. “That difference makes Morocco a valuable partner for the US, and an important player in the region. Morocco deserves America’s support, in actions as well as words, to resolve the Western Sahara impasse, which continues to be a source of instability in North Africa.”

###

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Trade & Investment Center

## **US-Morocco Trade Doubles as US Business Leaders Hail Morocco as "Progressive," "Strategically Located," & "Stable" Partner in a Region of "Growing Demand"**

Morocco's Minister of Industry, Commerce, & New Technologies to Visit Six US Cities Next Week to Meet with US Business Leaders

**Washington, DC (April 7, 2011)** – Last week, a delegation of US corporate leaders traveled to Morocco to explore the rapidly growing business and investment opportunities it has to offer across a variety of sectors. Representatives from nearly 20 US companies, including Lockheed Martin, Cisco Systems, FedEx, Raytheon, Motorola Solutions, and General Dynamic IT, met with private sector leaders and top Moroccan government officials at a time of tremendous bilateral growth between the US and Morocco, a key hub for accessing markets in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

In return, from April 10-19, His Excellency Ahmed Chami, Morocco's Minister of Industry, Commerce & New Technologies, will visit Chicago, Columbus, Seattle, Detroit, New York City, and Boston to meet with business leaders to discuss specific opportunities for increased sales and investments with Morocco. With a graduate degree from UCLA, the former director for Microsoft South East Asia Minister Chami is emblematic of the leadership appointed by His Majesty King Mohammed VI to lead the dynamic growth strategies undertaken by Morocco in sectors ranging from tourism and value-added agriculture to components manufacturing for automobiles and aircraft.

At the conclusion of the delegation's visit to Morocco, LaMar Willis, General Dynamics IT VP of Strategic Program Development commented, "I think that the Moroccan government here is very progressive. Logistics-wise, Morocco is very strategically located—with good sea ports, airport infrastructure, and road investment. I think Morocco presents good opportunities and I would encourage US businesses to consider it. There is a very clear indication from the Moroccan government that they want US businesses and are willing to work with us."

In 2006, Morocco and the US entered into a Free Trade Agreement and bilateral trade between the two countries has since doubled, reaching \$2.6 billion in 2010. More and more US companies are taking advantage of the growing economic opportunities thanks to the FTA with Morocco—the only African country that has an FTA with the US.

Earlier this month, [Bridgestone Corporation](#), the world's largest tire and rubber company, opened a new tire sales facility in Casablanca, Morocco. Bridgestone, which "aims to further strengthen its business in Morocco's highly promising market," called Morocco "a key region in which rapid economic expansion can be anticipated."

NEC Unified Solutions, international specialists in communication solutions for small, medium, and large enterprises in both the private and public sectors, has [partnered](#) with a Moroccan company, Encom, to distribute communication servers and applications for the growing SMB and Enterprise market segments.

"We are seeing a growing demand for our solutions across the North Africa region and needed a partner that understands the market and our evolving technology," said Frits Neyndorff, Vice President for the Middle-East & Africa operations of NEC Unified Solutions, in last week's announcement.

"Morocco has witnessed in the last decade, substantial political, economic, social and legal reforms and has made considerable progress in enhancing the investment climate to attract foreign direct investment," said Rabia El Alama, The American Chamber of Commerce in Morocco. "Morocco offers almost infinite opportunities for US businesses interested in using this country as a platform for production and export to other regional markets. Morocco is [I know it's a quote there's a missing word here: "set," "well-positioned," or "poised"]to become a regional hub for key industries such as aeronautics, automobile, IT and off-shoring, as well as a distribution hub for North and Sub Saharan Africa, Europe, and the Middle East."

###

The **Moroccan American Trade and Investment Center (MATIC)** was established under the Royal Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI as a vehicle to promote the Moroccan-US FTA. MATIC is an American based non-profit trade association that assists the country of Morocco in its quest to encourage economic growth and stability through the promotion of its private sector.

For more information, please visit [www.moroccanamericantrade.com](http://www.moroccanamericantrade.com)



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Thursday, March 1, 2012**

## **Sec. Clinton praises Morocco as leader for peace, democracy in region— Reaffirms Moroccan autonomy solution in Western Sahara as 'serious, realistic, credible'**

**Washington, DC** (March 1) – Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, [speaking to press in Rabat](#) on Sunday with Moroccan Foreign Minister Saad Dine El Otmami, praised Morocco as a leader on Arab Spring reforms and a key partner for peace in the region. She described Morocco's autonomy initiative to resolve the Western Sahara conflict as "serious, realistic, and credible" and reiterated that US policy "has remained constant." The US [policy](#) supporting a solution based on autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty to end the decades-old dispute has earned the backing of three US Administrations—Bill Clinton, George Bush, and Barack Obama—as well as that of bipartisan majorities in both Houses of Congress.

Clinton noted that Morocco-US relations [date back to 1777](#), when "Morocco was the first nation to recognize America's independence." More than two centuries later, [Clinton said](#), "Morocco once again is leading the way." She praised last summer's Constitutional referendum and the November Parliamentary elections, which "signaled an acceleration of reforms that began under his Majesty King Mohammad VI more than a decade ago." [Clinton said](#) Morocco "is a very good model for others who are also seeking to have their own democratic reforms."

"Morocco and the US are bound by strong longstanding relations that keep developing year after year," [Foreign Minister El Otmami](#) said, describing Clinton's visit as an opportunity for the two countries to agree on setting up a mechanism for regular political consultation to further reinforce bilateral cooperation. "We also agreed to foster our economic cooperation, raise US investments in the Kingdom and strengthen relations between the two country's businessmen." He said the US and Morocco have signed economic cooperation accords including a Free Trade Agreement in 2006, and are both concerned with preserving stability in the region.

Clinton's visit capped a three-day trip to North Africa that included stops in Algeria and Tunisia, where she met with representatives from Morocco and 70 other nations and international organizations in the "Friends of Syria" coalition. In Rabat, [Clinton praised](#) "the important role that Morocco has played" in leading the international effort on Syria, "first within the Arab League and second within the Security Council." Morocco [began](#) a two-year term on the UN Security Council in January, and earlier this month presented a UN Security Council resolution on Syria that won broad support from the international community.

"Personally, I was very pleased to see Sec. Clinton once again reiterate strong US support for Morocco's autonomy initiative as a continuing US policy aimed at finally resolving the Western Sahara issue," said Michael Ussery, former US Ambassador to Morocco. "This is now the third time Secretary Clinton has made it clear that US policy views Morocco's initiative as 'serious, credible, and realistic,' and has encouraged an end to the dispute based on a reasonable political compromise that best serves the interests of the people and the region as a whole.

\* For Sec. Clinton's remarks at Joint Press Briefing, go to: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2012/02/184667.htm>

**For more on Clinton's trip to Morocco, visit [MoroccoOnTheMove.com](http://MoroccoOnTheMove.com)  
and follow us on Twitter - [@MorocOnTheMove](https://twitter.com/MorocOnTheMove)**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, May 27, 2011**

## **As Libya Toll Mounts, US Congress Urged to Scrutinize Gadhafi's Recruitment of Mercenaries from Algeria-backed Polisario to fight NATO, Rebels**

**Cong. Diaz-Balart: 'Those who take up arms against US, allies must pay consequences'**

**Washington DC** (May 27)—As international concern grows over the mounting toll of fighting in Libya, Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) is urging his colleagues in Congress to give "serious attention" to increasing evidence that members of the Algeria-backed Polisario Front are among those "being recruited and participating as mercenaries in Col. Gadhafi's murderous campaign against the Libyan people." Earlier this month, the [International Criminal Court](#) issued arrest warrants for Libyan leaders, calling their mercenary recruiting a "crime against humanity."

In a [letter to fellow members](#), Diaz-Balart wrote, "I believe these charges, received from Libyan opposition leaders and reported to both NATO and the press against the Polisario, merit our serious attention in Congress." Diaz-Balart, who serves on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Agencies, added that, "Those who take up arms against the US and its allies must be made to pay the consequences for their choices."

Diaz-Balart cited a [recent column](#) in *The Hill*, "Mercenaries in Libya: Gadhafi's Hired Terrorists," by former US Ambassador to Morocco Edward Gabriel, who wrote that "in Libya, terrorism has a different, yet disturbing face, where hired mercenaries are terrorizing the Libyan opposition." Citing reliable reports in the London [Telegraph](#) and elsewhere, Gabriel said "senior NATO officials have received information that Moammar Gadhafi is spending millions to hire mercenaries from the Polisario Front in Algeria," and "hundreds of Polisario mercenaries are being paid \$10,000 each" to join Gadhafi's military campaign against his own people.

Gabriel's column also noted that Algeria, which was one of only two Arab League nations to oppose a UN no-fly zone in Libya, has been charged by [Libyan rebel leaders](#) with "turning a blind eye" to mercenaries crossing into Libya, even allowing [Algerian planes to fly mercenaries](#) into Libya. Most recently, [500 combat-equipped light trucks](#) have reportedly been sent to Libya from Algeria.

Despite repeated denials, the evidence and international concern continue to mount about complicity by Polisario and Algerian leaders in Gadhafi's efforts to reinforce his mercenary army. Earlier this week, the [Council on Foreign Relations](#), "Libya: NATO's Report Card" (5/25), cited "consistent reports" on the "use of prohibited mercenaries" including from Mali and the Polisario. It said this was a factor in NATO's difficulty in enforcing an effective arms embargo in the Libyan conflict, the death toll of which is now estimated to top 15,000.

"The continued complicity by Polisario and Algerian leaders in these criminal actions is simply unacceptable," said Robert M. Holley, Executive Director of the Moroccan American Center for Policy. "They continue to deny any involvement in Gadhafi's murderous mercenary campaign, but show no willingness to stop it. I am heartened to see interest in the US Congress in holding the Polisario and Algeria accountable for their tacit, if not explicit, assent in this outrageous behavior. Indeed, there must be consequences for taking up arms against the US and its allies, in direct contravention of a UN Security Council mandate."

**\* For a copy of Cong. Diaz-Balart's letter, go to:**

[http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.com/upload/media/LETTER\\_DearColleague%20from%20Cong.%20Mario%20Diaz-Balart%205-26-11.pdf](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.com/upload/media/LETTER_DearColleague%20from%20Cong.%20Mario%20Diaz-Balart%205-26-11.pdf)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Saturday, June 2, 2012**

## **Experts Warn al-Qaeda Consolidating Position in Northern Mali** **More than half of Westerners kidnapped in Africa now held hostage there**

**Washington, DC** (June 2) — An [experts panel](#) hosted by the [Carnegie Endowment](#) and [Atlantic Council](#) warned Thursday that al-Qaeda terrorists are consolidating their position in northern Mali — buoyed by drug-trafficking, kidnapping ransoms, Libyan arms, and an influx of extremists. As the international community deliberates next steps on the Mali “meltdown,” [analysts worry](#) about the spread of an [Arc of Instability](#) across Africa’s Sahel.

“Terrorists are consolidating their position by the day in northern Mali and the international community just talks,” said [Maman Sidikou](#), Niger’s Ambassador to the US. He cited the influx of Libyan arms, kidnappings, and control by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) of drug-smuggling routes. “Al-Qaeda has the resources, arms, and ideology to turn young people’s minds. They are the driving force.” Why would international leaders “wait while this turns into another Afghanistan?”

For [Western aid-workers](#), Rossella Urru of Italy and Ainhoa Fernández de Rincón and Enric Gonyacons of Spain, it was day 222 of captivity since their [Oct. 23 kidnapping](#) from a Polisario-run refugee camp near Tindouf in Algeria, reportedly assisted by [camp-insiders](#). They are [believed held](#) in northern Mali by an al-Qaeda offshoot, [Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa](#) (MUJAO), that [threatens](#) to kill one of them if its ransom demands aren’t met. More than half of Westerners kidnapped in Africa are now held in northern Mali, [news reports](#) indicate.

“Northern Mali is turning into a Star Wars bar of extremists from across the region,” said [Dr. J. Peter Pham](#), Director, Atlantic Council’s Ansari Africa Center. “The last thing Africa needs right now is another Failed State” attracting bad actors. He added that “pragmatism” holds together the ideologically diverse groups now in control — Tuareg-led separatists, Ansar Dine Islamists, AQIM, and MUJAO.

“The meltdown in the north came in conjunction with the coup in the south,” said [Anouar Boukhars](#), co-leader of Carnegie’s Mauritania working group and assistant professor, McDaniel College. He and panelist [Rudolph Atallah](#), senior fellow, Atlantic Council, outlined the complex history that provided the “ingredients for the conflagration.”

Al-Qaeda’s [consolidation](#) in [northern Mali](#) underscores growing [volatility](#) across [Africa’s Sahel](#). [Multiple reports](#) are linking [instability](#) in the region to other militants and groups in the Maghreb and Sahel, including members from the [Polisario-run camps](#).

**For more on Morocco: [MoroccoOnTheMove.com](http://MoroccoOnTheMove.com). Follow us on Twitter- [@MorocOnTheMove](https://twitter.com/MorocOnTheMove)**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, December 23, 2011**

## **Congress, President Approve Extending US Aid for Morocco Reforms to Western Sahara, Advance US Policy Backing Moroccan Autonomy Solution**

**For first time, directs that US aid to Morocco can be used in W. Sahara; Urges State Dept to make resolving W. Sahara dispute a US foreign policy priority; Important steps to bolster, extend Morocco's reform agenda**

**Washington, DC** (Dec. 23, 2011)—Congress has approved and the President today signed a bill taking action to extend US assistance for Morocco's reforms to the Western Sahara and advance the longstanding US policy calling for a solution to the Western Sahara conflict based on autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty. The action —included in the 2012 Omnibus Spending Report—for the first time directs that US program assistance to Morocco may be used in all "regions and territories administered by Morocco," including the Western Sahara.

The report puts tangible actions behind US policy supporting Moroccan autonomy in Western Sahara, which is [backed](#) by strong bipartisan majorities in the US Senate and House of Representatives, as well as the past three Administrations. It notes Congress "remains concerned with resolving the dispute over the Western Sahara" that for decades has been an obstacle to cooperation, stability, and security in the region, and urges the State Department "to prioritize a negotiated settlement" to the dispute based on autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty.

"The US must continue to seek a fair, just, and enduring solution to the Western Sahara in order to promote regional integration and protect US security interests in the region," said **House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen** (R-FL) in the [Congressional Record](#). "Morocco is an important strategic partner, and I support its continuing reform efforts to make it a more democratic and prosperous nation. Last month's elections in Morocco were another important step toward building a more democratic and inclusive country. The level of participation in the election of a new parliament demonstrates popular support for this reform agenda. I support the democratic aspirations of the Moroccan people and encourage its new parliament and government to follow through on constitutional and other reforms to protect fundamental freedoms and human rights."

For the first time, US program support for Morocco's reforms may be extended to economic and social development in the Western Sahara. This includes US assistance to expand the role of civil society, promote women's rights and entrepreneurship, enhance governance and institutions, facilitate democratic reforms and election monitoring, improve entrepreneurial and small business opportunities, address the growing youth population challenge and need for educational opportunities, improve the delivery of health care services and prevention, and increase the use of renewable energies to promote economic development and protect the environment. Congress has also asked the State Department to produce a report highlighting the steps Morocco has taken to advance human rights and reform in the Western Sahara and elsewhere in the country.

"As the region continues to be shaken by Arab Spring turmoil and transition, this measure represents clear US support for Morocco's efforts to provide economic development for its citizens," said **Singleton B. McAllister**, former senior counsel to the House Budget Committee and general counsel for the US Agency for International Development (USAID) under President Clinton. "For the first time, US program assistance will support Morocco's efforts over the last three decades to raise the quality of life for those living in the Western Sahara."

"This is great news and the logical next step in US support for our longtime ally, Morocco," said **Robert Holley**, Executive Director, Moroccan American Center for Policy. "The Western Sahara dispute has been a roadblock in the region for too long, impeding improved relations, economic integration, and security cooperation. Given the events of the past year, it is a roadblock that it's high time was removed. This action by Congress is an effective use of US aid funding, enabling assistance to be directed where it can have the most positive impact. Ultimately, it will help extend Morocco's reform agenda and improve stability and security across the region."

**For more about Morocco's economic development efforts and democratic reforms, visit [MoroccoOnTheMove.com](http://MoroccoOnTheMove.com) and follow us on Twitter - [@MorocOnTheMove](https://twitter.com/MorocOnTheMove)**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Wednesday, November 30, 2011**

## **Experts at Congressional Hearing Warn of Threat to US from Nigeria-Based Boko Haram, Link to AQIM**

**Cite danger of expanding terrorist ties across Africa's Sahel, flooded by Libyan arms**

**Washington, DC** (Nov. 30)—At a hearing today of the House Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, experts warned that the Nigeria-based militant group, Boko Haram, is posing an emerging threat to US interests and the US homeland. The panel also heard compelling evidence that Boko Haram has established links to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which is expanding a broad network of terrorist ties to militant groups across Africa's Sahel, including Somalia-based al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and members of the separatist Polisario Front based in Algeria.

"The US intelligence community has underestimated the threat potential of terrorist organizations in the recent past," said a bipartisan report released at the hearing: [Boko Haram - Emerging Threat to the US Homeland](#). "Boko Haram's attacks are occurring at their greatest frequency since the sect emerged from hiding in 2010." The report warns, "AQIM is making a focused attempt to extend its area of operations and sphere of influence into the Sahel and sub-Saharan Africa." An alliance between Boko Haram, AQIM, and other militant groups, the report concludes, could "prove costly for the stability of Africa, the Sahel, and American interests."

The hearing was convened by Representative Patrick Meehan (R-PA) and Representative Jackie Speier (D-CA), respectively the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, who also authored the bipartisan report.

The report cites a recent warning by US General/AFRICOM head Carter Ham that a potential alliance of AQIM with Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, and other militant groups in the region "would be a very, very dangerous outcome" for the US. Recent news of [Libyan arms](#) smuggled to the Sahel and evidence of AQIM "outsourcing" abductions and other terrorist acts to [Polisario members](#) in Algeria add urgency to the threat.

Testifying at the panel, Peter Pham, Director, Ansari Africa Center, Atlantic Council, said "the fact that Boko Haram in recent months has been able to simultaneously expand its operations beyond its base in northern Nigeria and dramatically upgrade its tactical capabilities ought to be a wake-up call to both the Nigerian government and the international community." Of reported Boko Haram-AQIM links, Pham said "AQIM has a history of contracting out kidnappings to mercenary groups and disaffected groups in the region, including Polisario fighters." He cited Boko Haram, AQIM, al-Shabaab, and the Polisario as the most problematic militant groups in the region.

Lauren Ploch, Specialist in African Affairs, at the Congressional Research Service told the panel that "Boko Haram or AQIM may try to acquire weapons systems from former Libyan stockpiles, including surface-to-air missiles, which some reports indicate may be flowing south through Niger" and into Nigeria. She noted that Nigeria is one of only a few West African countries with direct flights by US airlines to and from the US.

In a letter submitted to the Committee for the hearing, Robert Holley, Executive Director, Moroccan American Center for Policy, cited serious concerns "about the growing ties between AQIM and the refugee camps administered by the Polisario Front near Tindouf, Algeria," which "have become an obvious recruiting ground for AQIM and their allies like Boko Haram." He noted that AQIM's recent kidnapping of Western aid workers from the Polisario-run camps, reportedly with Polisario insider help, mirrors AQIM's hiring of Polisario veterans to kidnap Spanish nationals in 2009, which is documented by Mauritania court records.

**\*\* To view a video playback of the hearing, go to:**

<http://homeland.house.gov/hearing/subcommittee-hearing-boko-haram-emerging-threat-us-homeland>

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Tuesday, October 23, 2012**

## **Hundreds of Jihadists pour into northern Mali from Polisario-run camps, Sudan, to aid al-Qaeda-linked groups**

**Washington, DC** (Oct. 23, 2012) — [Agence France Press](#) has reported that "hundreds of jihadist fighters poured into Mali over the weekend" to reinforce the al-Qaeda-linked extremists who seized control of northern Mali seven months ago. The news comes as regional leaders [prepare a plan requested by the UN Security Council](#) for military action to take back northern Mali and prevent it from becoming a [haven for terrorists](#) in the region.

"They are coming from the [Polisario-run] camps of Tindouf in Algeria, from Senegal, from Ivory Coast, from everywhere," [said](#) Habib Ould Issouf, a leader for the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), an offshoot of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) that controls the northern Mali city, Gao.

AFP [said](#) the influx was confirmed Sunday by Malian security officials and residents in Gao and Timbuktu. A Gao resident reported 10 pick-up trucks packed with armed fighters arriving at MUJAO's main office. In Timbuktu, another resident said "more than 150 Sudanese Islamists arrived in 48 hours"

The news corroborates an October 8 editorial by the Paris-based magazine [Jeune Afrique](#). Citing a study shared by European and Maghreb intelligence sources, the [editorial](#) said that hundreds of new recruits are joining northern Mali extremist groups from the Polisario-run refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria and elsewhere in the region, and have been paid 4,000 Euro hiring bonuses.

The [US](#) and [Morocco](#) have both urged that western and northern African nations tighten border security to combat the increased flow of extremists, as well as weapons and drugs.

"[Multiple reports](#) warn that the dismal conditions in the Polisario-run refugee camps make them [fertile ground](#) for terrorist [recruiting](#)," said Jordan Paul, Executive Director, Moroccan American Center for Policy. "These camps are a clear danger to refugees the Polisario has forced to live there, to aid-workers targeted by kidnappers, and now increasingly to regional security. After 36 years, it's time the refugees be given the right to leave if they want."

For more on Morocco and the region, visit <http://www.moroccoonthemove.com/>.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, February 3, 2012**

## **Study Warns of Rising al-Qaeda Threat in North Africa**

### **Urges closing Polisario camps which have become recruiting ground for terrorists**

**Washington, DC** (Feb. 3)—A new study by the International Center for Terrorism Studies (ICTS) warns that al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) poses a "dangerous threat" to the region and beyond, as it seeks to exploit Arab Spring instability and expand terrorist ties to other militants across Africa's Sahel. The report recommends closing the Polisario Front's refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria, which the study says "are a recruiting ground for terrorists, traffickers, and other criminal enterprises." It calls on the US and international community to "prioritize" resettling the refugees.

The study, "[Terrorism in North, West, & Central Africa: From 9/11 to the Arab Spring](#)," authored by Yonah Alexander, Director, ICTS, was released yesterday afternoon at the 14th annual ICTS terrorism review at the National Press Club, hosted by the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies.

"Osama Bin Laden has been killed, but his ideas and al-Qaeda affiliate organizations are alive and kicking," said Alexander, at the National Press Club. "One of the most troubling is AQIM in North Africa, which has links with weapons and narco-trafficking, militants in Nigeria, and Polisario mercenaries who fought for Qaddafi in Libya."

Among the report's key recommendations: "Shut down the refugee camps run by the Polisario near Tindouf, Algeria because they are a recruiting ground for terrorists, traffickers, and other criminal enterprises." It adds that "The US and international community should prioritize permanent refugee resettlement in line with existing international protocols and agreements."

The study and reliable news media report that Polisario members have been arrested and accused of criminal activities which include [drug](#) and [arms trafficking](#), [gun battles](#) in [Mali](#), AQIM kidnappings in [Mauritania](#) and [Algeria](#), and fighting as [mercenaries](#) for Qaddafi in Libya. Two months ago, AQIM-linked assailants abducted three Western aid workers from a Polisario headquarters camp, reportedly with help [from Polisario insiders](#) who gave the assailants arms and directions to the victims.

"Of grave concern," says the report, is that AQIM has established links to other militant groups and a "safe haven" in Africa's Sahel, along an "arc of instability that stretches from the Red Sea and is poised to reach to the Atlantic." It calls the largely "ungoverned areas" a potential "terrorist breeding ground" and cites AQIM ties to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen, al-Shabaab in Somalia, Boko Haram in Nigeria, and Polisario militants in Algeria. The study says AQIM also has links to "Latin cartels for 'drugs-for-arms' smuggling into Europe through terrorist-trafficking networks in the Sahel that include members of the Polisario."

The annual ICTS report, which chronicles attacks by al-Qaeda and other terrorists in the region since 9/11, also offers a nine-country survey of developments since the Arab Spring. Among its key findings:

- \* Since 9/11, attacks by AQIM and other terrorist groups in the Maghreb and Sahel jumped more than 500% from their low point to reach a new high in 2009, and remain at a dangerously high level in 2011.
- \* Al-Qaeda is poised to take advantage of Arab Spring events "to destabilize the region even further."
- \* AQIM is taking advantage of the 35-year-old Western Sahara conflict for "expansion and also recruitment of hard-core Polisario members among the Sahrawi refugee camps in Algeria."

**For the full report click on: "[Terrorism in North, West, & Central Africa: From 9/11 to the Arab Spring](#)"**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Wednesday, November 7, 2012**

## **HM King Mohammed VI congratulates President Obama on winning 2<sup>nd</sup> term, commits to advancing Morocco-US Strategic Partnership**

**Washington, DC** (Nov. 7) — HM King Mohammed VI sent a [message of congratulations](#) today to President Barack Obama on his re-election to a second term as President of the United States. His message underscores a strong commitment to deepen the bilateral ties and strategic partnership between Morocco and the US, most recently enhanced by the launch of a formal Strategic Dialogue in September in Washington, DC.

The King's message, as reported by [MAP](#), is as follows:

Dear Mr. President,

On the occasion of your re-election as President of the United States of America, it gives me great pleasure to send you my warmest congratulations, together with my most sincere wishes for good health, happiness and continued success in your lofty mission and in your endeavors to lead the American people towards further progress and prosperity. Your re-election for a second term reflects the vibrancy and effectiveness of American democracy. It is also a strong indication of the great confidence placed in your wise leadership. This re-election attests to the high esteem in which you are held, given your human qualities, your political acumen and your wise decisions based on consultation, realism and compromise.

Allow me to take this opportunity to say how much I value the solid, longstanding relations between our two nations, and how eager I am to continue working with you, Mr. President, to further develop and expand our bilateral ties. The strategic partnership between our two countries has undoubtedly given fresh impetus to our bilateral relations and opened up vast, promising prospects. The Kingdom of Morocco reiterates its keen desire to pursue consultation and coordination with the United States of America with a view to developing mechanisms to make sure our promising partnership leads to concrete projects that benefit key sectors in our respective countries and serve as models of solidarity and complementarity in the region.

I avail myself of this opportunity to say how much Morocco – its King, government and people – appreciates your great country's concrete support for the in-depth reforms I am resolutely spearheading to achieve sustainable development in my country, and for the various initiatives undertaken to fulfill major regional and national objectives, including our constructive endeavors to set up a complementary, integrated Maghreb Union and promote a regional environment in which the peoples concerned can enjoy security, prosperity and stability.

I should like you to know, Mr. President, that I fully share your earnest ambition regarding the achievement of sustainable development in Africa. Morocco will always stand by your side to uphold the ideals of freedom, justice, equality and dignity, to foster good governance and shared progress, to promote the lofty human values of tolerance and intercultural, inter-faith coexistence and to reject all forms of violence, extremism and insularity. My country will do whatever it can to contribute to the emergence of a better, safer, more peaceful and more equitable world which is committed to upholding the principles of solidarity and to international legitimacy.

Given the depth of our historical relations and also our strategic partnership and cooperation today, I keenly look forward to pursuing our consultations and concerted action at the highest levels on all issues of common concern, in regional and international forums, in order to serve the best interests of our peoples.

In this regard, and to further strengthen its firm alliance with your great nation, my country is fully prepared to support all common initiatives and endeavors to tackle the major security challenges and growing perils threatening regional and international peace. These challenges and perils require concerted efforts so that they may be resolutely and effectively dealt with, in the framework of a solid alliance involving credible partners who share a firm belief in the need to spare our region the risks of terrorism and partition, and who look forward to the emergence of a safe, stable and solidarity-based world.

Once again, I should like to congratulate you on earning the American people's trust in your able leadership and to wish you continued success in your mission.

For more, visit <http://www.moroccoonthemove.com/>. Also follow us on Twitter - [@MorocOnTheMove](#)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Monday, July 4, 2011**

## **King Mohammed VI Sends Message to President Obama as US, EU, France, and Spain Praise Historic Morocco Vote, Support Democratic Reforms Promoting Rights and Rule of Law**

**Vote Breakout Shows Strong Turnout in Regions Across Morocco**

**Washington, DC** (July 4)—As praise from world leaders continues for Morocco's historic July 1 vote approving its Constitutional reforms, His Majesty King Mohammed VI sent a message to President Barack Obama expressing July 4<sup>th</sup> congratulations and pride in the 'long-standing friendship' and 'strategic partnership' that has defined the two nations' relations for more than two centuries. In 1777, Morocco was the first nation to recognize US independence and in 1787 it signed America's longest "Treaty of Friendship and Peace."

In his message, [King Mohammed VI](#) reiterated "the strong commitment of Morocco to the principles of democracy" and "the fight against all forms of extremism" and "violence," as well as supporting the "values of tolerance" the two nations share. He noted "the permanent consultation and coordination between the two countries" and Morocco's continued support for US initiatives "to achieve peace and stability in the world and bring just and peaceful solutions to long-lasting conflicts, notably in the Middle East and Africa."

The King's message comes as final votes cast yesterday by voters living abroad indicated that [more than 73 percent](#) of Morocco's 13 million registered voters turned out for the referendum on Morocco's landmark reforms to strengthen its democratic institutions and establish it as a Constitutional monarchy.

According to [provisional results](#), 98 percent of those voting approved the reforms. It is significant that [regional voter breakouts](#) show broad support across Morocco, with turnout exceeding 80 percent in six of 16 voting regions, highest in the three southernmost provinces that are part of the Western Sahara.

"The United States welcomes Morocco's July 1 constitutional referendum," said [Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton](#). She added, "We support the Moroccan people and leaders in their efforts to strengthen the rule of law, raise human rights standards, promote good governance, and work toward long-term democratic reform that incorporates checks and balances. We look forward to the full implementation of the new constitution as a step toward the fulfillment of the aspirations and rights of all Moroccans."

[The European Union](#) praised "the positive outcome of the referendum" on Constitutional reforms and pledged to "fully support Morocco" in its implementation. EU leadership called Morocco's reforms "important commitments to enhancing democracy and respect for human rights, strengthening separation of powers" with a stronger parliament and independent judiciary, and "advancing regionalization" and "gender equality."

[French President](#) Nicolas Sarkozy committed "France's full support for the exemplary process through which Morocco is resolutely and peacefully pursuing its deepening of democracy." [Foreign Minister](#) Alain Juppe called the vote a "clear and historic decision," saying "Morocco has succeeded in four months, peacefully and with dialogue, to take a decisive step," in contrast with a region shaken by "confrontation, sometimes violent." [Spanish Prime Minister](#) Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero also hailed Morocco's vote, saying "The commitment shown by His Majesty to bring about these changes is becoming a reference point for many other countries."

**For Map of Morocco Referendum Voter Turnout by Region, go to:**

<http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/media/Morocco%20Voter%20Turnout%20by%20Region%207-1-11.pdf>

**For Answers to FAQs on Reforms in Morocco, go to:**

[http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/media/SP\\_Constitutional%20Reforms%20FAQ%207June11FINAL.pdf](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/media/SP_Constitutional%20Reforms%20FAQ%207June11FINAL.pdf)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, March 4, 2011**

## **Libyan ex-Minister condemns Polisario members for 'hypocrisy' of joining mercenary army to suppress protesters in Libya; asks Algeria to block transit**

**Youth in Tindouf refugee camps call for protest against Polisario leadership tomorrow, March 5**

**Washington, DC** (March 4)—At the National Press Club today, Libya's former Minister of State for Immigration & Expatriates, Dr. Ali Errishi—the first Libyan official to call on Muammar Qadhafi to step down—condemned members of the Polisario Front for their "hypocrisy" in claiming to fight for freedom and progressive ideals, but joining the mercenary army that Qadhafi is paying to attack Libyan protesters and cling to power.

"I appeal to Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to be a good neighbor," said Errishi, "and stop these people from crossing Algeria into Libya" to join Qadhafi's mercenary army. "The hypocrisy of members of the Polisario who speak of their ideals and progressive values, yet participate in such a viscous enterprise is disheartening," said Errishi, who resigned two weeks ago from a regime he no longer considers legitimate. He served as Minister for Immigration & Expatriates since 2006, and is well known among Libyans as a human rights activist.

Recent news reports allege that Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi has recruited up to 25,000 mercenaries, including Tuareg separatist fighters from Niger, Mali, Algeria, and Burkina Faso, to suppress the popular uprising against his regime, in which, it is estimated, up to 6,000 people have been killed in the deadliest violence yet in the unrest sweeping North Africa and the Middle East.

Dr. Errishi confirmed that well-armed members of the Polisario Front, a separatist organization based near Tindouf in southwest Algeria, which for decades has challenged Morocco for control of the Western Sahara, are among the mercenaries Qadhafi has recruited to prop up his regime, a move which has brought international condemnation.

Tomorrow, March 5, the Polisario leaders face their own protests, as youth in the Tindouf refugee camps that serve as the Polisario's base have called for demonstrations against corruption in the Polisario leadership. The Polisario has maintained the same leaders for more than three decades, as conditions in the camps for refugees have grown steadily worse. The Polisario has continued to refuse serious negotiations on Morocco's compromise autonomy solution for the Western Sahara, which has gained wide backing in the international community, majorities in both houses of the US Congress, and the past three US administrations.

"I sincerely hope Sahrawi refugees who continue to be stranded in the camps in Tindouf send a strong message to their leadership tomorrow," said Robert Holley, executive director, Moroccan American Center for Policy. "It is outrageous that members of the Polisario are likely part of the mercenaries Qadhafi has organized to suppress and kill his own people. The international community should heed Dr. Errishi's call for blockading transit for these hired guns through Algeria and elsewhere. As Dr. Errishi notes, the hypocrisy is disheartening—and a challenge to regional stability."

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, August 24, 2012**

## **Sen. Lieberman: Morocco Plan on Western Sahara Will Boost Stability in Region**

**Al-Qaeda concerns grow as dozens in Polisario-run camps in Algeria reportedly join Qaeda-linked MUJAO**

**Washington, DC** (August 24) — Following a meeting with Moroccan Foreign Minister Saad Dine El Otmani in Rabat Wednesday, Senator Joe Lieberman (CT) [praised](#) Morocco's peaceful model of political reform and urged speedy implementation of its autonomy initiative for Western Sahara, which he [said](#) was a "serious, credible, good, and realistic" proposal that would contribute to improving stability in the region.

Lieberman's [remarks](#) — which reflect the views of bipartisan majorities in the [House and Senate](#) and the [policy](#) of the past three US Administrations — come as [international alarm](#) grows about the danger of advances by al-Qaeda-linked forces in northern Mali and its reach into neighboring countries in Africa's Sahara/Sahel.

[Jeune Afrique](#) reports that in recent weeks "dozens of young people" from the Polisario-run refugee camps near Tindouf in southern Algeria have joined the al-Qaeda-linked Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), based in northern Mali and whose [spokesman](#), Abu Walid Sahraoui, "is himself a former member of the Polisario."

On July 28, [Spain](#) ordered the [UN-assisted](#) evacuation of all of its aid workers from the Polisario-run camps because of the "[serious risk of further hostage-taking](#)" by al-Qaeda-linked forces, which include al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), its offshoot, MUJAO, and Islamist extremist Ansar Dine, that seized control of northern Mali after a March 22 Mali [coup](#). Aid workers from France and Italy [joined](#) the Spaniards in the sudden airlift to Madrid.

Reliable [news reports](#) after the evacuation cite "real concern" about links between members of the Polisario-run camps and MUJAO, evident in last October's kidnapping of three Western aid workers from the Polisario Rabuni headquarters camp, reportedly with [inside help](#). MUJAO released the three July 19 in exchange for [\\$18.4 million](#) and prisoners that [included](#) one from the Polisario-run camps held in Mauritania for his role in the kidnapping.

While Western aid workers have been evacuated, forced to stay are tens of thousands of Sahrawi refugees, who have been [confined to the camps](#) for more than three decades by the Algerian-backed Polisario Front and [denied the most basic rights](#). [Multiple reports](#) have warned the dismal conditions are fertile ground for [recruiting](#) by terrorists and traffickers in the region.

**For more about the [Sahrawi Refugees](#), [Western Sahara](#), and [Regional Security](#) in North Africa, visit [MoroccoOnTheMove.com](http://MoroccoOnTheMove.com). Follow us on Twitter- [@MorocOnTheMove](#)**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Wednesday, November 28, 2012**

## **Media Advisory**

### **Sec. Clinton, Morocco King to meet before "Friends of Syria" summit, coordinate strategic partnership, next steps on crises in Mali and Syria**

#### **Morocco Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Youssef Amrani in Washington week of Dec. 3**

**Washington, DC** (Nov. 28) — Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will travel to Morocco on Dec. 11 prior to the "Friends of Syria" meeting in Marrakech Dec. 12 for strategic discussions with King Mohammed VI on specific steps Morocco and the US can take to address the crises in Mali, Syria, and other trouble spots in the region.

The week of Dec. 3, Morocco's Minister Delegate of Foreign Affairs, Youssef Amrani will be in Washington DC to lay the groundwork for Sec. Clinton's meeting with the King. Mr. Amrani will be available for interviews to discuss details of the US-Morocco strategic partnership and coordinated measures the two nations can take to restore stability, address humanitarian concerns, and overcome security challenges in both Mali and Syria.

Morocco hosts the 4th "Friends of Syria" meeting in Marrakech on December 12 — following previous summits in Tunis, Istanbul and Paris — which brings together senior officials from countries supporting the opposition to President Bashar al-Assad. More than 100 delegations are expected to attend, including Syria's new opposition coalition, to agree on a common strategy to ensure a political transition, mobilize aid for refugees caught in the humanitarian crisis, and address regional security challenges.

Morocco, which is a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, has played a key role in advancing a common and progressive position among Arab nations on the Syria crisis, working with the US on the issue.

On Mali, an emergency summit of West African leaders, including Morocco, earlier this month gave approval to mobilize a 3,300-man regional military force to assist Malians reclaim the northern part of their country, which was overrun this spring by al-Qaeda-linked forces and has become a haven for jihadists streaming in from bordering countries and threatening regional stability. The UN Security Council considers the plan next.

\*\* To arrange an interview with Mr. Amrani, please contact \_\_\_\_\_

For more on Morocco and the region, visit <http://www.moroccoonthemove.com/>.

Also follow us on Twitter - [@MorocOnTheMove](https://twitter.com/MorocOnTheMove)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Tuesday, May 3, 2011**

## **UN Security Council Commends Morocco's Commitment to Human Rights, Urges Algeria-backed Polisario to Improve Refugee Rights**

### **Morocco Vows Marrakech Bombing Will Not Derail Reform**

**Washington, DC** (May 3)—Last week, the United Nations Security Council welcomed Morocco's establishment of the National Council on Human Rights (CNDH) to bolster human rights protection, particularly in the Western Sahara, as it [agreed unanimously](#) to extend the UN peace-keeping mission in the disputed territory. The Security Council also urged the Algerian-backed Polisario Front to respect the rights of Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps of southern Algeria, where they have been confined in deteriorating conditions for more than three decades.

In early March, His Majesty King Mohammed VI [announced](#) the creation of the CNDH as an independent body with the authority to initiate judicial inquiries into human rights violations. It is made up of public officials, NGO leaders, political party representatives, and civil activists, and replaces a predecessor body that performed a solely advisory role.

The Security Council welcomed "the establishment of a National Council on Human Rights in Morocco and the proposed component regarding Western Sahara," and also stressed "the importance of improving the [human rights situation in Western Sahara](#) and the Tindouf camps" run by the Polisario in Algeria. The UN encouraged the Polisario Front and Morocco "to work with the international community to develop and implement independent and credible measures to ensure full respect for human rights."

[Amid allegations of egregious human rights](#) violations in the Tindouf refugee camps in southern Algeria, the Security Council urged the Algerian-backed Polisario Front to cooperate with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to pursue "refugee registration in the Tindouf refugee camps." [According](#) to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Antonio Guterres, Algeria opposes the registration, refusing to accept that it is "simply a humanitarian measure."

The Security Council also called for "inauguration of family visits by land and the continuation of the existing programme by air." Expanding the current UN-sponsored family visit program to include land travel on a 'Road Home' would increase the number of refugees who could reunite with their families in Morocco. Some refugees have been separated from family members for more than thirty years and the current family-visit wait list stands at more than 17,000.

"His Majesty King Mohammed VI has [vowed](#) that the senseless, tragic bombing in Marrakech will not derail Morocco's commitment to accelerating democratic reform," said Robert M. Holley, Executive Director of the Moroccan American Center for Policy. "The international community should join the Security Council in supporting efforts to protect human rights in the region and ease the burden on Sahrawi refugees and their families. Registration in the Tindouf camps is an essential step to accurately count refugees in order to provide necessary humanitarian aid. It is troubling that Algeria and the Polisario continue to reject efforts to identify who exactly is in the camps, especially given [recent reports](#) by senior NATO officials that many of Gaddafi's mercenaries come from the Polisario."

**\*\* For full text of the United Nations Security Council Resolution, please visit:**  
[\[http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10234.doc.htm\]](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10234.doc.htm)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, June 24, 2011**

## **Moroccans Get Ready for Landmark Vote as Constitutional Reforms Win More Praise—from UN, Arab League, and Policy Experts**

**520 polling places opening overseas for Moroccans abroad, including 10 in US, 4 in DC area**

**Washington, DC** (June 24)—As the historic July 1 referendum approaches, Moroccans at home and around the world are preparing to vote on far-reaching Constitutional reforms to strengthen Morocco's democratic institutions and establish it as a constitutional monarchy. Announced June 17 by His Majesty King Mohammed VI after months of input from Moroccan citizens and civil society, the reforms are continuing to win praise from world leaders and policy experts as a positive example of change in the ongoing turmoil of the Arab Spring.

In Morocco, the [campaign for the referendum is already underway](#), with most mainstream political parties and civil society groups backing a "yes" vote on the historic reforms. To facilitate participation for registered Moroccan voters living abroad, Morocco will open more than [520 polling stations worldwide](#) at embassies, consulates, and community centers.

Ten polling stations will be open July 1-3 in the United States—in Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, Orlando, FL, and four in the [Washington, DC area](#), including three in Virginia.

Meanwhile, recognition continues from the international community. [United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon](#) welcomed the reforms and commended "the people and the Government of Morocco for the peaceful manner in which they have been conducting the national process of political reforms."

[Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa](#) praised Morocco's reforms as "an important step on the way to securing the pillars of democracy," which "we hope it will continue and deepen in the coming period." These statements of support join earlier praise from the [United States](#), [European Union](#), [France](#), [Britain](#), [Spain](#), and [Council of Europe](#), which made Morocco its first "partner for democracy" in the region.

Favorable reaction also continues from policy experts. "The Arab Spring has broken out in Morocco," said [David B. Ottaway](#), Senior Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center, who called the "new constitution requiring an elected rather than an appointed prime minister, the first such step in any of the eight monarchies or even most of the democratic republics of the Arab world."

Lead editorials in US newspapers have called attention to Morocco's reforms as an example for the region. "Morocco could now become a crucial theater as the Arab Spring moves toward summer," said the [Washington Post](#). "The Moroccan reform, which will be put to a referendum on July 1... could also serve as a model for Jordan's King Abdullah II and Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, both of whom are considering similar incremental measures."

[The Wall Street Journal](#) said that while "the brightest expectations of the Arab Spring have crashed with the bloody crackdowns in Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain," the "news out of Morocco last weekend offers a timely glimmer of the potential upside in this tumultuous year." It noted Morocco's leader, "King Mohammed VI, responded to demands for democracy with political reform, not tear gas and bullets," adding "If Moroccans seize this opportunity, they could set a favorable example for the rest of North Africa and the Middle East."

In [The Hill](#), former US Ambassador to Morocco, Edward Gabriel, said Morocco has, "taken an unprecedented step in the Arab world to advance a vision of democratic governance and social equality that others in the region would do well to emulate." He added, "The fate of these amendments is now up to the people of Morocco. But it is also now time for the US to make clear to our oldest friend and ally that we will stand behind their courageous and unprecedented effort."

**For the Full Text of His Majesty King Mohammed VI's June 17<sup>th</sup> speech, go to:**

[http://www.map.ma/eng/sections/main1/hm\\_the\\_king\\_adresse/view](http://www.map.ma/eng/sections/main1/hm_the_king_adresse/view).

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, July 1, 2011**

**MEDIA ALERT**

**Moroccans Cast Resounding 'Yes' Vote for Constitutional Reforms in Strong Turnout; US, Others Praise 'Important Step' for Peaceful Change**

More than 70% of registered Moroccan voters participate, 'have final say' approving historic reforms

**Washington, DC** (July 1)—At more than [40,000](#) polling stations at home and abroad, Moroccans turned out in near record numbers today and cast a resounding "Yes" vote to give final approval for Constitutional reforms to strengthen Morocco's democratic institutions and establish it as a constitutional monarchy.

According to [provisional results released this evening](#), 72 percent of Morocco's 13 million registered voters participated in the historic referendum, which took place [without incident](#). Based on the provisional results from today's voting, it was also reported that 98 percent of those who voted supported the reforms. Moroccans abroad can cast ballots through July 3, after which the final tally will be available early next week.

The reforms—announced June 17 by His Majesty King Mohammed VI after input from Moroccan citizens, civic organizations, trade unions, and political parties—are the culmination of decades of Morocco's efforts to democratize and open its political system, and have won international praise as a roadmap for the region.

"We welcome the referendum as an important step in Morocco's ongoing democratic development," said [US State Department spokesman Mark Toner](#). "In this period of profound change, we think it's important and we congratulate the people of Morocco and their leadership for the peaceful referendum." [Spain also praised Morocco's vote today](#), offering its "unfailing support" as Moroccans continued "consolidating democracy."

**For Answers to FAQs on Reforms in Morocco, go to:**

[http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/media/SP\\_Constitutional%20Reforms%20FAQ%2027June11FINAL.pdf](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/media/SP_Constitutional%20Reforms%20FAQ%2027June11FINAL.pdf)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, September 16, 2011**

## **Congress Leaders Create Bipartisan 'Morocco Caucus' to Signal Strong US Support for 'Vital Ally' and 'Regional Leader' of Arab Spring Reforms**

**Congressional Morocco Caucus will build on support from bipartisan majorities in US House and Senate for a key North African partner and America's longest-running ally**

**Washington, DC** (Sept. 16, 2011) — As historic change continues to shift the landscape in North Africa and the Middle East, leaders in Congress announced on September 13 the formation of a bipartisan Congressional Morocco Caucus, committed to "deepening the economic and strategic relationship between the United States and Morocco," which has been a cornerstone of US foreign policy in the region for more than two centuries.

Morocco was the first nation to recognize US independence, in 1777, and signed America's longest "Treaty of Friendship and Peace" in 1787. Its role as a key US partner in North Africa and peaceful example of change has never been more important, with demands for democratic reform and security challenges facing the region today.

"We are pleased to announce the establishment of the Congressional Morocco Caucus for the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress," said the letter to their colleagues signed by Representatives Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL), Loretta Sanchez (D-CA), Michael Grimm (R-NY), and Bennie Thompson (D-MS), who serve as Co-Chairs of the Caucus.

"Morocco has demonstrated its friendship and loyalty to the United States consistently since our independence," the letter says. "Morocco has been a vital, Muslim ally in North Africa," a "vital strategic friend that shares our values and aspirations," and "a regional leader" for change, noting that "in the midst of the Arab spring, Morocco held a national referendum to revise their Constitution and institute far-reaching democratic reforms."

"With the recent events in the region," the Members of Congress said, "US relations with Morocco have taken on a renewed sense of urgency and strategic importance." They conclude, "Now is the time to signal our strong support for Morocco and work together to ensure the success of their democratic aspirations."

Last month, Congress Members sent a [letter to His Majesty King Mohammed VI](#) calling Morocco's Constitutional reform vote an "important milestone" for "meeting the political desires and social freedoms of your citizens."

Support in Congress for Morocco has also focused on the issue of the Western Sahara, with Members in both Houses of Congress expressing concern that the continuing dispute is thwarting efforts to combat rising terrorism and regional instability. In April 2009 a bipartisan majority of [233 US House members sent a letter to President Obama](#) urging support of Morocco's compromise autonomy plan for Western Sahara.

Last year, a bipartisan majority of [54 US Senators sent a similar letter to President Obama](#), urging "more sustained American attention" to resolve the Western Sahara conflict and remove a "major obstacle to stability in the region." The Senators backed "broad autonomy for Western Sahara under Moroccan sovereignty" as the solution, noting its support by the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Administrations.

In Morocco's July 1 Constitutional referendum, voters in the three southern districts that include the Western Sahara posted the highest turnout in the nation, participating at rates of more than 80% of registered voters and joining Moroccans across the country in approving the reforms by a large majority.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, July 15, 2011**

## **Morocco Moving Ahead with Democratic Reforms Says President of Moroccan Human Rights Council on US Visit**

**Amnesty International, Freedom House, World Justice Project, ABA call reforms "important step"; Elections reportedly set for October to elect strengthened Parliament under new Constitution**

**Washington, DC** (July 15)—Morocco is moving forward to implement the new Constitution adopted in its [July 1 national vote](#), which is "a real charter of fundamental rights and freedoms and participatory democracy," said [Driss El Yazami](#), President of Morocco's recently established independent National Human Rights Council (CNDH). El Yazami [visited Washington, DC this week](#) to discuss the Constitutional changes with US officials, human rights groups, and legal experts. He urged reform advocates to support Morocco's efforts to strengthen democratic rights and the rule of law, which may offer a positive example for the region.

"The Moroccan people and King Mohammed VI have shown they have the will to change, and our new Constitution gives us the roadmap," said El Yazami, who spoke at forums at the [German Marshall Fund](#) and [American Bar Association \(ABA\)](#). He said CNDH is already planning workshops to educate law enforcement personnel and other public employees on rights protections adopted in the new Constitution. He also cited progress in establishing an independent judiciary. El Yazami emphasized, in a [Washington Post interview](#), that "the rule of law needs citizens claiming their rights and applying the law." He urged citizens and political leaders to exercise the new power afforded them. In October, Moroccans reportedly will go to the polls to elect members to a newly strengthened Parliament.

Praise and support for Morocco's reforms continues from world leaders—including the [United States](#), [European Union](#), [France](#), [England](#), and [Spain](#)—as well as international human rights groups and other NGOs. In a statement to the press, [Amnesty International](#) said the reforms are an "important step in the right direction."

[David Kramer](#), [President of Freedom House](#), said King Mohammed VI "deserves great credit" for answering calls for change with reforms that are "a positive step forward" and "received a resounding vote of approval." He said "no other Arab monarchy has taken such serious steps," which is "why Morocco's example is so important."

Claude Zullo, Senior Advisor of the ABA's Rule of Law Initiative, said Morocco's Constitutional changes "represent a significant opportunity to advance the reform agenda" and have "broader implications across the region."

Leila Hanafi, Attorney and Programs Manager with The World Justice Project, praised Morocco for the "major improvements in its legislative framework and judicial reforms." She said the country's "biggest challenge will be regulatory enforcement and implementation," and "engaging young people in the law-making process."

El Yazami said he is encouraged by a new "social dynamism" reshaping Morocco, notably among women and youth asserting their rights. He agreed that "significant challenges" lay ahead, including enacting new legislation with broad public input, and creating job opportunities and training for the large number of youth. He credited peaceful demonstrators this spring with helping to expedite reforms. "Constructive criticism is important," he said, "but we also need support and encouragement from reformers in the US and elsewhere."

Professor I William Zartman, Prof. Emeritus at Johns Hopkins University, underlined that "reform in Morocco was underway well before the Arab Spring," and in fact began more than a decade ago, including Morocco's 2004 Family Law revision to strengthen women's rights, and its 2006 Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

"The Moroccan people and their King have made a courageous statement," said Edward Gabriel, former US Ambassador to Morocco. "Against a backdrop of continuing regional turmoil, Moroccans cast a decisive vote to move forward—peacefully. The US has long held Morocco to a higher standard, as a close partner for more than 200 years. Now is the time for those who advocate reform to step up and offer constructive actions as well as words. Helping Morocco set a positive example in the region is very much in America's national interest."

**For FAQs on Morocco's Vote for a New Constitution and a Map of Voter Turnout by Region, go to:**  
[http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/media/FS\\_Election%20Results%208July11wMap.pdf](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/media/FS_Election%20Results%208July11wMap.pdf)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Saturday, November 26, 2011**

## **Morocco Votes for New Parliament in First Election Since New Constitution; Turnout Up More Than 20 percent**

**PJD takes lead in seats; Sec. of State Clinton, UK, France, and others praise Morocco vote as 'important milestone' for peaceful change in region**

**Washington, DC** (Nov. 26) — Moroccans [voted](#) yesterday in the country's first Parliamentary election since recent Constitutional reforms that increased the power of Morocco's Parliament. Voters chose from among [5,873 candidates and 33 different parties to fill 395 seats](#). Seventy seats were set aside for younger adult and women members to ensure Parliament includes new faces reflecting the nation's changing population.

With [288 of 305 local constituent seats decided](#), provisional results show the Justice and Development party (PJD) won 80, Independence party won 45, National Rally for Independents (RNI) won 38, Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM) won 33, Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) won 29, Popular Movement (MP) won 22, Constitutional Union (UC) won 15, and Progress and Socialism Party (PPS) won 11. Under the new Constitution, the head of government is to be appointed from the party with the most seats. [Early results indicate](#) a coalition government will emerge with PJD likely in the lead.

Despite some calls to boycott the election, provisional results show [45.4 percent](#) of Morocco's 13.6 million registered voters participated, an increase of 21.6 percent over the previous parliamentary election in 2007. Almost [4,000 national and international observers](#) oversaw the election.

Secretary of State [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) offered praise for Morocco's Parliamentary election, joining others from the international community:

"The United States stands ready to work with the new parliament and the people of Morocco to strengthen the rule of law, raise human rights standards, promote transparent and accountable governance, and work toward sustained, democratic reform."

Britain and France also commended Morocco's commitment to reforms:

"Along with reforms already being carried out and recent constitutional change, Friday's election reinforces Morocco's reputation as a leader" in the region, said [Henry Bellingham, British](#) Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, & Commonwealth Affairs.

"[France](#) hopes that this election will be a further step in Morocco's march on the path drawn by the King of Morocco, who launched major and key reforms," said [Bernard Valero](#), French Foreign Ministry spokesperson

[Peter Pham, director, Michael S. Ansari Africa Center, Atlantic Council](#) in Washington, called the elections a "historic moment" marking the culmination of a long process of Moroccan democratic reforms. He added that Morocco "did not wait for the 'Arab Spring' to initiate the reform process."

"These elections are an important milestone for Morocco and the region," said Edward M. Gabriel, Former US Ambassador to Morocco and Chairman of the Moroccan American Center. "Building and sustaining a working democracy is an aspiring goal and challenge—for all nations. Morocco has a head start with its history of reforms and tolerance. Its new Parliament must now show it can exercise its power to improve the lives of Moroccans and meet their desire for change."

**For Answers to FAQs about Morocco's Parliamentary Elections, go to:**

<http://moroccoonthemove.wordpress.com/faq-moroccos-2011-parliamentary-elections/>

**For updates, results, commentaries, and the latest news about Morocco's elections, go to [MoroccoOnTheMove.com](http://MoroccoOnTheMove.com), and also follow us on Twitter - @MorocOnTheMove**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, October 21, 2011**

## **Morocco Wins Vote for Seat on UN Security Council—Recognized for Role in Arab Spring Reforms, UN Peacekeeping, & Confronting Security Risks to Region**

**Washington, DC** (Oct. 21)—The United Nations' 193 member [nations voted](#) in New York City today to approve Morocco's bid to serve as one of five new non-permanent members on the UN Security Council in 2012-2013. Morocco received 151 votes from the UN's members in the first round of voting, well over the two-thirds required, and will join the 15-member UN Security Council in January.

As the uncertain outcomes of Arab Spring change continue to reshape North Africa and the Middle East, Morocco has been recognized for its leadership in supporting peaceful democratic reforms in the region, both before and during the Arab Spring, and for confronting the rising threat of terrorism and extremism. Morocco has also been an important ally for UN peacekeeping efforts, and played a key role in mobilizing Arab and international support for the UN-backed effort in Libya that led to the downfall of the Qaddafi regime.

"Morocco is joining the UN Security Council at a time of great challenge," said Robert Holley, executive director of the Moroccan American Center for Policy. "But it can also be a time of great opportunity if world leaders act. Morocco has shown it has a model of reform that can meet its people's aspirations for peaceful change, and also address international concerns for security and stability. What the Maghreb needs now is to end longstanding differences in the interest of greater cooperation and unity in North Africa."

"Morocco understands the importance of democratic reforms for winning the fight against extremism and terrorism," said Yonah Alexander, director, International Center of Terrorism Studies, Potomac Institute of Policy Studies. "Nowhere is this more critical than in North Africa and the Middle East, where reformers and extremists are in a life-and-death struggle. Terrorist attacks have risen more than 500% in North Africa and the Sahel since 9/11. The recent influx of Libyan arms smuggled into the Sahel, the base for *al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb*, is a great concern. Col. Qaddafi may be gone, but his weapons are a threat to the stability of the entire region."

Announcing Morocco's candidacy at the UN last month, [Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi Fihri](#) said the North Africa nation is committed to reinforcing its "partnership for peace" with the UN, and would focus on reducing arms stockpiles, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and enhancing solidarity with developing nations in South-South cooperation.

[Sec. of State Hillary Clinton](#) reiterated US backing for Morocco after its July 1 Constitutional referendum. "During this time of profound change in the Middle East and North Africa," she said, the US appreciates and supports Morocco's "efforts to strengthen the rule of law, human rights and good governance." Meeting in March with Foreign Minister Fassi Fihri, she called Morocco "[a model for others in the region.](#)" The two leaders announced a new "strategic dialogue" to deepen bilateral relations and address regional development and security.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Tuesday, October 16, 2012**

## **US and Morocco Launch New Strategic Partnership to Tackle Economic Development, Democratic Reforms, Terrorism, Syria**

**Washington, DC** (Oct. 16, 2012) — Morocco and the US have announced a wide range of areas for bilateral cooperation — including ongoing democratic reforms, economic growth and jobs, women's empowerment and human rights, interfaith tolerance, countering terrorism, and ending the violence in Syria — in their recently launched [Morocco-US Strategic Dialogue](#).

This new partnership agreement is the result of more than a decade of focused, comprehensive leadership and cooperation by King Mohammed VI with three US Administrations to strengthen Morocco-US relations and implement the two countries' shared vision for the Middle East and North Africa.

"Last year, when citizens of Morocco called for change, Moroccan society, under King Mohammed VI, answered with major constitutional reforms, followed by early elections and expanded authorities for parliament," said Secretary of State [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) on Friday.

US recognition for Morocco's leadership and reforms also came last month during the launch of the Morocco-US Strategic Dialogue, one of less than two dozen such agreements in existence, and the only one in North Africa. Secretary Clinton [said](#) that the US "looks to Morocco to be a leader and a model."

In the [joint statement](#) issued by the two countries Friday, Morocco and US leaders agreed "to advance policies and programs" across a range of issues and shared interests, including ongoing democratic reforms, economic growth and jobs, interfaith tolerance, women's empowerment and human rights, security against a growing terrorist threat, and addressing regional crises in the Sahel, Syria, and elsewhere.

Both reiterated their commitment to find a peaceful, sustainable, mutually agreed-upon solution for the Western Sahara conflict and that Morocco's autonomy plan — supported by three US Administrations and bipartisan majorities of the US House and Senate — is a serious, realistic, and credible solution.

Both countries also emphasized their "commitment to the special and longstanding relationship between the US and Kingdom of Morocco, the first nation to recognize the independence of the US in 1777."

"This new strategic relationship elevates and strengthens America's already long history of close cooperation with Morocco," said Edward M. Gabriel, former US Ambassador to Morocco. "It also helps establish a new anchor for US efforts to ensure the vision both nations share for the future of the region prevails against those who would undermine it through extremist violence and intolerant world views."

Leaders from the two nations will meet regularly in working groups to discuss political, security, economic, and education and cultural affairs, and hold an annual high-level meeting alternately in Rabat and Washington, DC.

**\*\* For the complete text of the joint statement on the first Morocco-US Strategic Dialogue, go to: <http://moroccoonthemove.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/joint-statement-of-first-session-of-us-morocco-strategic-dialogue-12oct2012.pdf>**

**\*\*For answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the Morocco-US Strategic Dialogue, go to: <http://moroccoonthemove.wordpress.com/features/>**

For more on the Morocco-US relationship, visit <http://www.moroccoonthemove.com/>.

Also follow us on Twitter - [@MorocOnTheMove](#)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, September 14, 2012**

## **Morocco-US Strategic Dialogue sets path for closer partnership for peaceful progress, growth, stability in region**

### **Both nations condemn attacks on US embassies**

**Washington, DC** (Sept. 14, 2012) — After all-day meetings of the first [Morocco-US Strategic Dialogue](#) yesterday at the State Department, Moroccan Minister Delegate for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Youssef Amrani said, "this Strategic Dialogue elevates and strengthens the already excellent and mutually beneficial relations between the two countries under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI and President Barack Obama." In his [closing statement](#), Minister Amrani said the meetings were productive and set a framework for advancing peace and progress in the region.

The US and Morocco agreed on a path to secure ongoing democratic reforms, economic growth, tolerance, and stability in a region facing new challenges and change. They set up a framework to work on political, security, and human rights issues; business, energy, energy, education, interfaith relations; and regional issues including the Sahel, Libya, and Syria.

On the important bilateral issue of working together to realistically resolve the Western Sahara, Amrani stressed the commitment of both countries: "As Secretary Clinton has said many times in the past and reiterated today, the compromise political solution that Morocco has put on the table with its Autonomy Initiative is 'serious, credible and realistic.' Secretary Clinton has also emphasized that support for this kind of compromise solution has been unchanged and continues to be the policy of the Obama Administration today."

Morocco and the US launched the dialogue yesterday, with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton calling Morocco "a leader and a model." [Both nations condemned the attack](#) on the US Consulate in Libya and urged tolerance and dialogue to counter those who spread hate.

Finally, the two countries agreed the next meeting of the strategic dialogue will be held in 2013, in Morocco.

For answers to **Frequently Asked Questions about the Morocco-US Strategic Dialogue** and more on the Morocco-US relationship, visit <http://moroccoonthemove.wordpress.com/features/> and follow us on Twitter - [@MorocOnTheMove](#)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Tuesday, April 26, 2011**

## **Senior NATO Officials Report Qaddafi Recruits Mercenaries from Algeria-backed Polisario Front to Fight Rebels and Protesters in Libya**

### **Morocco in talks to seek "political solution" to Libyan conflict within framework of UN resolution**

**Washington DC** (April 26)—The London-based *Telegraph* newspaper is reporting that senior NATO officials have details of Moammar Qaddafi's deal to recruit 450 mercenaries—most of them from the Algeria-backed Polisario Front—to fight anti-government rebels and civilian protesters seeking to overthrow the Libyan dictator.

"Qaddafi is using all his contacts in the region to bring more mercenaries into Libya to defend his regime," a senior NATO officer told *The Telegraph*. NATO officials obtained the information from a defector, a former Qaddafi loyalist involved in negotiating the mercenary deal last month.

The [Telegraph story](#), covered yesterday in the [Washington Post](#), said Qaddafi has also hired mercenaries from Niger and Mali, and possibly from Chad, Congo, Sudan, and even Asia, and Eastern Europe. However, the story said that "a majority" of the 450 mercenaries, who have been hired for two months at \$10,000 each, are "members of the Polisario Front," which is based in southwest Algeria and for more than three decades has been in conflict with Morocco over the Western Sahara.

"The Polisario and Algeria continue to deny any ties with these mercenaries, but these are very serious charges, coming from ever more credible sources," said Robert M. Holley, Executive Director of the Moroccan American Center for Policy. "NATO is responsible for carrying out the UN Security Council's order to protect Libya's civilians. It wouldn't make such accusations lightly. Clearly, hundreds of Polisario fighters can't go to Libya without the tacit, if not explicit support of the Polisario leadership, not to mention Algeria, through which the mercenaries must travel to help Qaddafi. If Algeria, the Polisario Front, and others are giving aid to Qaddafi's acts of terrorism against his own people, in direct contravention of a UN Security Council mandate, it calls into question whether the US should have dealings with them."

Algeria was one of only two countries (along with Syria) out of 22 to vote "no" last month when the Arab League approved an internationally sanctioned no-fly zone over Libya to protect the rebels and protesters.

Morocco was a key supporter of the Arab League vote and is providing humanitarian support to the Libyan people. [Late last week](#) Morocco began talking to representatives on both sides of the Libyan conflict to reach a "political solution" within the framework of the UN resolution.

**\* For a copy of *The Telegraph* article, go to:**

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8464254/Libya-Col-Gaddafi-has-spent-2.1m-on-mercenaries.html>

**\* For a copy of *The Washington Post* coverage, go to:**

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/post/will-obama-allow-gaddafis-mercenaries-to-act-with-impunity/2011/03/29/AFqTjAjE\\_blog.html#pagebreak](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/post/will-obama-allow-gaddafis-mercenaries-to-act-with-impunity/2011/03/29/AFqTjAjE_blog.html#pagebreak)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Wednesday, March 22, 2011**

## **Morocco's Landmark Constitutional Reforms Win Broad Praise from US, EU, France, Britain, Spain, Congress, and Policy Experts**

**Moroccan people 'will have final say' in July 1 national referendum —HM King Mohammed VI**

**Washington, DC** (June 22)—The historic, far-reaching Constitutional reforms announced June 17 by His Majesty King Mohammed VI to strengthen Morocco's democratic institutions and establish it as a constitutional monarchy are winning broad praise from world leaders, the US Congress, policy experts, and commentators. The amendments, which will be voted on by the Moroccan people in a national referendum on July 1, as prospects for the 'Arab Spring' remain uncertain and turmoil continues across the region.

Recognition for Morocco's reforms has come from across the international community. The [United States](#) said it is "encouraged by the proposals put forward by the king to transform Morocco's democratic development through constitutional, judicial and political reforms." [The European Union](#) called the reforms "a major step" signaling "a clear commitment to democracy and respect for human rights." It added that new measures would continue "the Kingdom's already-launched reform process" and advance "separation of powers," "independence of the judiciary," "regionalization," and "equal rights for men and women."

[French President Nicolas Sarkozy](#) said the advances were "exemplary," and put Morocco on "a path of profound, peaceful and modern transformation." [Britain](#) welcomed Morocco's "commitment to reform" and [Spain](#) also congratulated the Moroccan leader. The 47-member [Council of Europe](#) went so far as to make Morocco its first "partner for democracy" among nations in the region.

US Congress Members also praised the reforms. "While much of the Arab world is struggling under tyrannical regimes," said Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart (FL), "Morocco provides an example of how to pursue positive reform." He added, "The people of Morocco will participate in a historic vote on a series of broad and significant constitutional and government reforms July 1."

"I am encouraged by King Mohammed VI's speech," said Rep. Jim Moran (VA), "which underscores his commitment to constitutional, judicial, and political reforms for Morocco. Authentic reforms will only strengthen the longstanding bond of friendship between our countries."

Rep. Steve Rothman (NJ) said "King Mohammed VI of Morocco spoke to his citizens and outlined historic reforms to establish a constitutional monarchy and a democratic parliamentary system of government. As Morocco continues to take greater steps towards democracy, the future of Morocco will increasingly be in the hands of its people—where it belongs. I applaud King Mohammed VI for this bold move."

"King Mohammed VI promised reform and is following through," said Rep. Steve Cohen (TN). "These latest reforms build on Morocco's efforts over the past two decades to empower people politically, socially, and economically."

Policy experts viewed the reforms as a positive development in the region. "What's so important about what the Moroccan King has done is that he is forging a different model of change in the Arab world," said [Kenneth M. Pollack](#), Director, Saban Center for Middle East Policy at The Brookings Institution. If Morocco continues the "bold vision" of its "quiet revolution," Pollack said, "it will be the model of what meaningful, gradual, peaceful change in the Arab world could and should look like" and "transform not just Morocco, but the entire region."

[Dr. J. Peter Pham](#), Director, Michael S. Ansari Africa Center, The Atlantic Council said that while the outcome of uprisings in the Arab region remains uncertain, the path Morocco is choosing "sets an example in terms of reforms that pay heed to history, religion and culture," and would resonate across the MENA region.

**For the Full Text of His Majesty King Mohammed VI's June 17<sup>th</sup> speech, go to:**

[http://www.map.ma/eng/sections/main1/hm\\_the\\_king\\_addresse/view](http://www.map.ma/eng/sections/main1/hm_the_king_addresse/view)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Wednesday, September 14, 2011**

**\*\*MEDIA ADVISORY\*\***

**Turning 'Arab Spring' Green: Moroccan Leaders to Speak at UN on Importance of Water & Renewable Energy for Economic Development**

**Moroccan Energy officials to address Sept. 20 forum  
in New York City at start of 66<sup>th</sup> Session of United Nations General Assembly**

**Washington, DC** (Sept. 14, 2011) — Next week, top officials from Morocco's Ministry of Energy, Agency for Solar Energy (MASEN), and National Electricity Office (ONE) will join business and NGO leaders in a forum at the United Nations in New York City on the key role of "Water and Renewable Energy in Economic, Regional and Local Development." Morocco won praise last year from Earth Day and US EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson for its "commitment to a clean, green economy" and groundbreaking "National Charter for the Environment & Sustainable Development," the first of its kind in Africa and the Arab and Muslim world.

**Public Forum**

**"Morocco on the Move: Water & Renewable Energy Strategy  
in Economic, Regional & Local Development"**

**on**

**Tuesday, September 20, 2011**

**1:15-2:30 PM**

**at**

**United Nations Headquarters, Room 5NLB  
New York, NY**

**Speakers**

- ▶ **Mohammed Taoufik ADYEL:** Director of Economic Studies, Morocco Ministry of Energy, Mines, Water and Environment
- ▶ **Ali FASSI FIHRI:** General Director, Morocco National Electricity Office (ONE)
- ▶ **Mustapha BAKKOURY:** President/Director, Moroccan Agency for Solar Energy (MASEN)
- ▶ **Experts from:** the Water World Council, UNDP, Suez Environnement

**\*\* Note to Reporters:** You must RSVP by Noon, Monday, September 19 to [gneuffer@moroccanamericancenter.com](mailto:gneuffer@moroccanamericancenter.com) or 202-470-2055

**Proper credentials will be required for entry at UN**

**\*\* For more on speaker press availability, contact: Garth Neuffer, at [gneuffer@moroccanamericancenter.com](mailto:gneuffer@moroccanamericancenter.com), 202-470-2055**

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**The Moroccan American Trade and Investment Center (MATIC)** was established under the Royal Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI as a vehicle to promote the Moroccan-US FTA. MATIC is an American based non-profit trade association that assists the country of Morocco in its quest to encourage economic growth and stability through the promotion of its private sector. For more information, please visit [www.moroccanamericantrade.com](http://www.moroccanamericantrade.com).



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Tuesday, February 1, 2011**

## **New Report Warns al-Qaeda is Extending 'Arc of Instability' Across Africa, Threatens to Exploit N. Africa Unrest, W. Sahara Impasse to Target US, Europe**

**Experts panel notes Morocco's success in fighting extremism with balanced focus on security and efforts to reduce poverty, strengthen civil society, empower citizens**

**Washington, DC** (Feb. 1)—An international panel of experts issued a new report and their 13th annual review on terrorism at the National Press Club yesterday, concluding that al-Qaeda has suffered significant losses in its leadership in Pakistan, but has extended its reach to other parts of the world and continues to pose a very dangerous threat to the US and Europe in 2011. The annual seminar, by the International Center for Terrorism Studies (ICTS), Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, brought together US intelligence experts and Ambassadors from Spain and Morocco to examine the growing threat and changing face of international terrorism

"Of grave concern," says the new report, authored by Prof. Yonah Alexander, Director, ICTS, is that "al-Qaeda has established a safe haven and breeding ground" in the failed/fragile states of Africa that border the Sahara, tracing an "arc of instability that stretches from the Red Sea and is poised to reach to the Atlantic." The report is a one-year update of a January 2010 ICTS study documenting the chronology since 9/11 of the rising threat from al-Qaeda and other terrorists in the Maghreb and Sahel of North and West/Central Africa.

Key report highlights:

- \* Al-Qaeda is poised to take advantage of the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt "to destabilize the region."
- \* Since 9/11, attacks from al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other terrorist groups in the Maghreb and Sahel jumped 558% from their low in the period to reach a new high in 2009, and remained at dangerously high levels in 2010.
- \* There is "growing evidence" that AQIM, local traffickers, and possibly Polisario members have linked with Latin cartels to traffic drugs across the Atlantic into Europe.
- \* AQIM is taking advantage of the 35-year-old Western Sahara conflict for "expansion and also recruitment of hard-core Polisario members among the Sahrawi refugee camps in Algeria."

Panelist, Charles Allen, former Assistant Director of Central Intelligence, CIA, said, "Al-Qaeda's central leadership in Pakistan is under heavy attack and has suffered key losses. But Al-Qaeda in North and East Africa is a problem. They are determined to press their attacks, kidnappings, and ransoms on foreign nationals and countries in the region. We have to watch AQIM very closely in Tunisia."

Morocco's Ambassador to the US, Aziz Mekouar, said, "No country is immune. Terrorism can happen here in the US. It can happen in Morocco." Ambassador Mekouar detailed Morocco's comprehensive two-track approach following terrorist attacks in Casablanca in 2003. "First, we passed new laws and increased our focus on security and intelligence. Then we addressed the underlying conditions that feed extremism: working to reduce poverty, increase economic growth and investment, broaden democratic participation by individuals and civil society, and teach the real Islam, which is against violence."

Asked about the recent uprising in Egypt, Allen said he is "concerned about radical elements taking advantage of that nation's unrest," but would have to wait and see how events play out. He noted that for all countries addressing terrorism, "there has to be a balance between security and freedom of expression."

Prof. Alexander added that to effectively combat terrorism, countries need to work together and share intelligence. He said that one of the most urgent needs for enhanced cooperation is to resolve the Western Sahara dispute, which puts an obstacle between Morocco and Algeria.

\* The **report**, "Consequences of Terrorism: Update on al-Qaeda, other terrorist threats in the Sahel & Maghreb," is at: [http://www.potomacinstitute.org/attachments/863\\_2011%20REPORT%20UPDATE%20Maghreb%20%20Sahel%20Terrorism.pdf](http://www.potomacinstitute.org/attachments/863_2011%20REPORT%20UPDATE%20Maghreb%20%20Sahel%20Terrorism.pdf)

\* To view **C-Span video** of panel, go to: <http://www.c-span.org/Events/A-Look-at-Worldwide-Terrorism/10737419257-1/>

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, August 5, 2011**

## **Secretary of State Clinton, Members of US Congress Voice Strong Support for Morocco's Democratic Reforms**

**Praise for Morocco's commitment to human rights, increased freedom and equality, and participatory democracy**

**Washington, DC** (August 5)—Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Members of Congress voiced congratulations and strong support for Morocco's new Constitution, which strengthens and advances the country's commitment to human rights, freedom and equality, participatory democracy and governance.

In her [congratulatory message](#) marking Morocco's July 30<sup>th</sup> National Day, Secretary Clinton expressed the United States' support "during this time of profound change in the Middle East and North Africa" for Morocco's "efforts to strengthen the rule of law, human rights and good governance." She called Morocco's peaceful July 1 referendum approving its new Constitution "an important step toward democratic reform" and said "Morocco is a longstanding friend, partner, and ally of the United States."

A [letter from Congress to His Majesty King Mohammed VI](#) this week called Morocco's vote for Constitutional reforms an "important milestone" and applauded "the new liberties brought forth by the new National Council of Human Rights (CNDH) which include gender equality, the rights of children and young people, the rights of vulnerable groups, and the oversight and coordination of a national plan to promote human rights." The letter — signed by Reps. Steve Cohen (D-TN), Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL), Gary Ackerman (D-NY), Michael Grimm (R-NY), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Billy Long (R-MO), James Moran (D-VA), Christopher Murphy (D-CT), Charles Rangel (D-NY), Dennis Ross (R-FL), Loretta Sanchez (D-CA), and Heath Shuler (D-NC), — said the July 1 referendum was "a more democratic and humanitarian way to serve the citizens" of Morocco, and "a considerable step toward meeting the political desires and social freedoms of your citizens."

In her July 29<sup>th</sup> [Congressional Record remarks](#), [Rep. Jackson Lee](#) noted that Morocco has remained peaceful in the Arab Spring turmoil and urged continued US support for a strong ally as it continues on the reform path. "Today," she said, "with chaos and conflict spreading in North Africa and the Middle East, it is important that the United States recognize and encourage those countries that share our democratic values and support reforms so badly needed in the region. There is no better friend and ally for America in North Africa than the Kingdom of Morocco." Jackson Lee said Morocco should be applauded for "its continuing reform process and desire to improve the lives of all Moroccans, including the Western Sahara."

**For a copy of the letter to King Mohammed VI from the Members of Congress, go to:**

<http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/media/Letter%20from%20Congress%20Members%20on%20Morocco%20Constitutional%20Reforms%208-4-11.pdf>

**For FAQs on Morocco's new Constitutional reforms, go to:**

[http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/media/FS\\_Election%20Results%208July11wMap.pdf](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/media/FS_Election%20Results%208July11wMap.pdf)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Monday, March 12, 2012**

## **US, France Voice Strong Support for Morocco's Autonomy Plan to Resolve Western Sahara Dispute, Remove Obstacle to Peace in Region**

**Also praise Morocco's role in advancing human rights, democratic reforms**

**Washington, DC** (March 12)—Echoing a recent statement by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe called Morocco's autonomy initiative for Western Sahara "the only realistic proposal" for resolving the decades-old conflict over the territory. On a trip to the region last month, Clinton said Morocco's autonomy initiative is "serious, realistic, and credible" and reaffirmed that US policy "has remained constant."

The US [policy](#) supporting a solution based on autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty in Western Sahara has been backed by three US Administrations—Bill Clinton, George Bush, and Barack Obama—as well as bipartisan majorities in both Houses of Congress.

In Paris last week, [Foreign Minister Juppe](#) said, "We still think that the Moroccan autonomy plan, which today is the only realistic proposal on the table, forms the serious and credible basis of a solution." Juppe spoke to members of the [press](#) prior to an official [visit](#) to Morocco.

Speaking at a joint press briefing in Rabat on February 26 with Morocco's Foreign Minister Saad Dine El Otmani, [Clinton said](#) Morocco's autonomy initiative "could satisfy the aspirations of the people in the Western Sahara to run their own affairs in peace and dignity." She said the United States "continues to support efforts to find a peaceful, sustainable, mutually agreed upon solution."

Clinton and Juppe both praised Morocco's role in advancing human rights and democratic reforms in the region. Clinton [said](#), "Morocco stands as an example of what can be achieved," citing its new Constitution, advances in women's rights and representation, transparency and accountability, protections for freedom of thought and expression, and "the Arab world's very first truth commission on human rights." Juppe [commended](#) Morocco's "vigilance in respecting human rights" and "democratic principles," [calling](#) it a model for Arab Spring reforms.

The statements come on the eve of a ninth round of [informal talks](#) on Western Sahara, hosted by the United Nations Sunday to Tuesday in Manhasset, New York. The informal talks aim to resume formal negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario Front, with the participation of Algeria and Mauritania, to end the conflict.

Next month, the renewal of MINURSO's peacekeeping mission in Western Sahara comes before the UN Security Council, of which Morocco is a non-permanent member. The Security Council, which calls Morocco's autonomy proposal "serious and credible," is expected to urge the parties to reach "a just, lasting, and mutually acceptable political solution." The only realistic path according to many in the international community, including Peter Van [Walsum](#), former UN Personal Envoy for the territory, is negotiating on the basis of autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty.

**\* For more information and background on Western Sahara, go to:**

**<http://moroccoonthemove.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/wsaharainfopacket2012.pdf>**

**For more on Morocco, go to: [MoroccoOnTheMove.com](http://MoroccoOnTheMove.com)  
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*This material is distributed by the Moroccan American Center for Policy on behalf of the Government of Morocco.  
Additional information is available at the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.*



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Wednesday, June 29, 2011**

## **Moroccans to Cast Ballots in July 1 Referendum on Constitutional Reforms, Making Historic Choice for Change with Votes, not Violence**

**World Leaders, Members of Congress, Experts Praise Example for Arab Spring**

**Washington, DC** (June 29)—As the tumult of the Arab Spring turns to summer, Moroccans at home and abroad will cast their votes in a historic July 1 referendum on Constitutional reforms to strengthen Morocco's democratic institutions and establish it as a constitutional monarchy. The reforms—announced on June 17 by His Majesty King Mohammed VI after input from Moroccan citizens, civic organizations, trade unions, and political parties—have drawn international praise as a positive roadmap for the region.

Morocco's reforms are the "culmination" of decades of efforts to democratize and open its political system, said [Ahmed Herzenni](#), President of Morocco's Advisory Council on Human Rights and a member of the Constitutional Reform Commission. Moroccans will "vote for or against these changes this Friday," he said in a forum at the [Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars](#). Herzenni acknowledged the role of peaceful protesters in Morocco this spring, saying they "should be credited with focusing us on the need to move change forward."

Morocco is opening [520 polling stations worldwide](#) at embassies, consulates, and other centers to allow Moroccan voters living abroad to participate. [In the US, twelve polling stations](#) will be open July 1-3—in Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, Orlando, and the Washington, DC area.

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (FL), Chairwoman of the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs, is one of the [Members of Congress](#) who have voiced their support. "King Mohammed's proposed constitutional changes are a welcome start in what must be a long-term process to increase democracy and enhance stability in Morocco. I welcome proactive measures to strengthen parliament, safeguard judicial independence, promote freedom of thought, uphold human rights values, and encourage freedom of religious practice in Morocco. If adopted, expanded, and fully implemented, Morocco's reform agenda could serve as an example for the region."

Praise for the reforms has come from the [United States](#), [European Union](#), [France](#), [Britain](#), [Spain](#), [United Nations](#), [Arab League](#), and [Council of Europe](#), which recently made Morocco its first "partner for democracy." Editorials and commentaries have also been favorable, including those in the [Washington Post](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), and [The Hill](#), as have policy experts at [The Brookings Institution](#), [Woodrow Wilson Center](#), and elsewhere.

Morocco's reforms are "a shining star in the Arab Spring," wrote Joel D. Hirst, International Affairs Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, in a recent [Huffington Post](#) column. "Morocco has again emerged as the leader of the Arab world," he added. "This model of Arab governance could represent the future; and the example of increasingly liberal Morocco could go a long way to convince other Middle East and North African countries to listen to their own people and adopt the gradual, peaceful reforms which will provide well-being and freedom."

Dr. J. Peter Pham, Director at [The Atlantic Council's](#) Michael S. Ansari Africa Center, said Morocco is making an "audacious bet" with its reforms, which offer "a path to the future that balances the competing demands of stability and openness to change." He added, "the United States and its European partners would do well to invest their resources, political and economic, in supporting Morocco as it undertakes the necessary—but far from risk-free—transition to a more open and democratic political process."

**For the Full Text of His Majesty King Mohammed VI's June 17<sup>th</sup> speech, go to:**

[http://www.map.ma/eng/sections/main1/hm\\_the\\_king\\_adresse/view](http://www.map.ma/eng/sections/main1/hm_the_king_adresse/view)

**For Answers to FAQs on Reforms in Morocco, go to:**

[http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/media/SP\\_Constitutional%20Reforms%20FAQ%2027June11FINAL.pdf](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/media/SP_Constitutional%20Reforms%20FAQ%2027June11FINAL.pdf)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, June 6, 2012**

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## **Solar Plane's Historic Flight to Morocco Connects Continents with Power of Sun**

**Highlights World Bank-financed Morocco solar project to link Europe, N Africa to power from Sahara sun**

**Washington, DC** (June 6) — The Swiss solar-powered plane, [\*Solar Impulse\*](#), touched down to a warm welcome in Rabat, Morocco last night, flying from Madrid and [successfully completing](#) the second leg of its record-breaking [2,500-kilometer](#) intercontinental flight from Switzerland to Morocco.

[Mustapha Bakkoury](#), President, Moroccan Agency for Solar Energy, ([MASEN](#)), joined in welcoming [pilot Bertrand Piccard](#), who called the flight over the Strait of Gibraltar "a magical moment" and noted that *Solar Impulse* made the trip "without one drop of fossil fuel." In Morocco, the *Solar Impulse* team will join [events](#) highlighting the convergence and capacity of renewable energy technologies, particularly solar power, under the patronage of King Mohammed VI and at the [invitation](#) of MASEN, which oversees Morocco's solar energy development.

The solar-powered flight [coincides](#) with construction launch in southern Morocco of the [world's largest solar thermal plant](#), a [World Bank-financed](#) project [commencing](#) in Ouarzazate that will harness the Sahara sun to produce [2,000 megawatts](#) of renewable energy for [North Africa and Europe](#) and create jobs for many in the area. Ouarzazate is the solar plane's [next destination](#), after a five-day stopover in Rabat.

MASEN's Bakkoury [called](#) the *Solar Impulse* flight important for raising awareness about solar energy's potential to reduce global dependence on oil. "We share a common message with *Solar Impulse*," [he said](#). "Solar energy is no longer restricted to the scientific world but is becoming an integral part of our daily lives." He [said](#) Morocco will be producing solar-energy by 2014, when *Solar Impulse* [plans its round-the-world tour](#).

For pilots, Piccard and André Borschberg, it was all about the flying. [Borschberg](#) piloted the first leg from Switzerland to [Madrid](#) on May 25th, flying the 207-ft wing-span plane with its [12,000 solar cells](#). In Rabat [he said](#), "This flight marks a new stage in the history of the project." Landing with a full set of batteries was "extraordinary and represents an increase in confidence in new technologies."

Piccard [said](#), "*Solar Impulse* symbolizes the pioneering and explorer spirit necessary to find new solutions, outside of old habits and certainties, to respond to today's challenges."

**\*For Live solar-plane updates: [www.moroccoonthemove.com/solar](http://www.moroccoonthemove.com/solar)**

\*For more on Morocco's initiatives for renewable energy/energy efficiency, visit the Agence Nationale pour le Développement des Energies Renouvelables et de l'Efficacité Énergétique (ADEREE): <http://www.aderee.ma/>.

For more on Morocco: [MoroccoOnTheMove.com](http://MoroccoOnTheMove.com). Follow us on Twitter- [@MorocOnTheMove](#)

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**The Moroccan American Trade and Investment Center (MATIC)** was established under the Royal Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI as a vehicle to promote the Moroccan-US FTA. MATIC is an American based non-profit trade association that assists the country of Morocco in its quest to encourage economic growth and stability through the promotion of its private sector. For more information, please visit [www.moroccanamericantrade.com](http://www.moroccanamericantrade.com).



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, March 22, 2011**

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**\*\*MEDIA ADVISORY\*\***  
**(Please note revised time)**

## **Amid Turmoil in Middle East: Morocco Continues To Embrace Democratic Reforms—There's "No Turning Back"**

**Morocco's Foreign Minister to hold Press Conference after meeting with Sec. of State Clinton to discuss Morocco's continuing reforms and its participation in the International Coalition to promote stability, security, and democracy in the region**

Washington, DC (March 22, 2011) — This week, [His Excellency, Taieb Fassi-Fihri, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation for the Kingdom of Morocco](#), is in Washington, DC to meet with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and other senior US Administration officials to discuss the recent unrest in North Africa and the Middle East, and how Morocco's decision to accelerate its reforms can help promote stability, security, and democracy in the region. Morocco is a member of the 22-nation coalition that met in Paris on March 19 to support international action to protect civilians in Libya. Morocco's

**The Press Conference will be held**  
on  
**Wednesday, March 23, 2011 at 3:30 pm (time change)**  
at  
**The National Press Club**  
**529 14th St. NW, 13th Floor, Murrow Room**  
**Washington DC**

You must RSVP by **Noon, Wednesday, March 23**

**Proper credentials will be required for entry into press conference.**

For more information or additional press availability for Minister Fassi-Fihri, please contact Calvin Dark - [cdark@moroccanamericancenter.com](mailto:cdark@moroccanamericancenter.com) , (202) 309-0372

*On March 9, His Majesty King Mohammed VI [announced](#) a comprehensive set of constitutional reforms to advance and broaden the democratic reforms that have been underway in Morocco for more than two decades. The new proposals, [which received praise from the United States and many in the international community](#), will strengthen Morocco's elected government, ensure the independence of the judiciary, and further empower local communities and regions.*

For the latest updates and information, you can also follow the **Moroccan American Center for Policy on Twitter** - <http://twitter.com/MorAmCntrPol>  
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## Morocco under King Mohammed VI: 15 Years of Leadership in Promoting Reform

2014 marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of King Mohammed VI's reign. Since ascending the throne in 1999, King Mohammed VI has consolidated, accelerated, and broadened democratic reforms begun during the reign of his father, King Hassan II, to empower individual citizens and the institutions that represent them. He has also strengthened Morocco's longstanding alliance with the US. And he has deepened and enhanced Morocco's ties with Africa in an effort to promote security, economic development, stability, and religious tolerance in the region.

### Reform

- Some of the hallmark achievements over the past 15 years include:
  - **The 2004 Moroccan Truth & Reconciliation Commission (IER)**, which was the first truth and reconciliation commission established in the Arab world. The independent investigative body shed light on human rights violations that took place in Morocco from 1956 to 1999, examining Morocco's past and the circumstances that permitted the abuses. After many public hearings and testimonies, 23,676 Moroccans received compensation checks totaling \$193 million. The King accepted all of the IER recommendations and the government has worked to pass the necessary legislation to implement them.  
[http://www.cndh.ma/sites/default/files/documents/rapport\\_final\\_mar\\_eng-3.pdf](http://www.cndh.ma/sites/default/files/documents/rapport_final_mar_eng-3.pdf)  
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61702.htm>
  - **The 2004 reform of the family code, the *moudawana***, which is one of the most progressive laws on women's and family rights in the Arab world. It raised the minimum age of marriage for girls from 15 to 18 and gave wives joint responsibility of the family with their husbands, and equal rights to property upon divorce. This law ushered in profound changes in Moroccan society, and helped to promote women's participation in society and politics to reinforce their rights and eliminate gender discrimination in private and public affairs. This reform set the stage for rapid advancement of women in Moroccan business and politics.  
<http://www.hrea.org/moudawana.html>
    - By 2011, the number of women in Morocco's Parliament more than doubled. Mbarka Bouaida, Morocco's Minister Delegate for Foreign Affairs & Cooperation, is a former Parliamentarian and a rising star in Moroccan politics. She represented her country in the Atlantic Dialogues and during King Mohammed VI's recent visit to the US, and described the family code reform as "revolutionary."  
<http://www.blog.learningpartnership.org/2010/10/morocco-mbarka-bouaida/>; <https://www.ndi.org/morocco>
    - *Jeune Afrique's* article, "The 25 Most Influential Businesswomen in Africa" featured 8 Moroccans – more than any other country.  
<http://economie.jeuneafrique.com/regions/international-panafricain/16878-les-25-femmes-les-plus-influentes-du-business-en-afrique.html>
  - **A series of free and fair parliamentary and local elections**, in which large numbers of Moroccans voted, validating the key elements of the nation's ongoing reforms and political transformation, elevating women and youth candidates to positions of leadership, and empowering local communities to take more control of their future.  
[http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/media/Press\\_Release\\_Elections\\_7July09FINAL%20.pdf](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/upload/media/Press_Release_Elections_7July09FINAL%20.pdf)  
<http://moroccoonthemove.wordpress.com/faq-moroccos-2011-parliamentary-elections/>

- **The 2011 reform of the Constitution**, which was an effort to consolidate democracy in Morocco, devolve power to the regions, broaden individual freedoms, solidify the rule of law, and strengthen human rights. The Constitution, adopted by a national referendum, enshrined several key changes to Morocco's political system, advancing democratization by strengthening the principle of separation of powers and bringing all stakeholders into the political process. The Constitution:
  - Establishes that the Head of Government will be appointed from the party that wins the most seats in Parliamentary elections.
  - Expands the powers of the Head of Government and the Parliament, giving them broad legislative powers.
  - Empowers Moroccans with more control and leadership at the local government level—making local and regional officials directly accountable to voters.
  - Establishes independent agencies to guarantee civil and human rights protections.
  - Establishes an independent judiciary with a newly mandated Constitutional Court.

<http://moroccoonthemove.wordpress.com/faq-moroccos-2011-parliamentary-elections/>
- **The 2011 reform of Morocco's national human rights oversight body, the National Human Rights Council (CNDH)**, establishing its autonomy, enlarging its investigative and monitoring powers, and reinforcing its pluralistic composition. The Council has the power to investigate allegations of human rights violations; act as an early warning mechanism to prevent human rights violations; and examine and make recommendations on how to bring legislation in line with the Constitution, international human rights treaties, and international law.
 

<http://www.cndh.ma/?lang=en>
- CNDH, Morocco's active civil society, and liberalizing government work together to address ongoing human rights challenges through both judicial and legislative mechanisms. In the past year alone, 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 policy providing protections for migrants and asylum seekers. This policy change was the result of an investigation and subsequent recommendation by CNDH to reform Morocco's immigration policy.
  - In January 2014, the Moroccan parliament voted unanimously to amend existing statutes 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, which will exclude civilians from being tried in military courts. The policy change was the result of CNDH recommendations to bring the law in line with the principles of the Constitution.
 

[http://magharebia.com/en\\_GB/articles/awi/features/2013/11/14/feature-02](http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/features/2013/11/14/feature-02)

<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2014/feb/07/ngo-change-morocco-rape-law>

<http://news.yahoo.com/morocco-adopts-law-end-military-trial-civilians-173458696.html>

- In a statement made at a Congressional hearing on US-Morocco relations, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs at the US 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.  
<http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/hearing/subcommittee-hearing-us-policy-towards-morocco>
- At the conclusion of a May 2013 visit to Morocco, the 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.”  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14652&LangID=E>

## Development

Human, social, and economic development in Morocco is a very high priority for King Mohammed VI. Under his rule, Morocco has undertaken a multi-year strategy for promoting human development and greater economic growth to improve the lives of its citizens.

- Some of the most important development initiatives of the past 15 years include:
  - The commitment in 2000 to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals – reaching a set of human development indicators set by the international community and doing so in an inclusive manner. Morocco is on the path toward achieving all of the MDGs - improving the lives of its citizens, promoting equality, and ensuring that the benefits of development impact even the most marginalized populations. Morocco looks set to achieve all eight principal MDGs, including reducing extreme poverty, providing potable water to all parts of the country, promoting maternal and child health, and achieving universal primary education and gender equality, by the target date of 2015.  
<http://www.undp.org/content/rbas/en/home/library/MDGs/morocco-mdg-report/>
  - Morocco won recognition from the UN for outstanding progress in fighting hunger, by reaching international targets ahead of an end-of-2015 deadline. The MDG-1 hunger target requires countries to halve the proportion of hungry people in the population before the end of 2015 compared to the level in 1990.  
[www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/235416/icode/](http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/235416/icode/)

- The 2006 launch of the multibillion dollar National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) to reduce poverty in rural areas, increase social and health services, including education, electricity, healthcare, and potable water, to marginalized communities, and create sustainable economic development projects. The plan was renewed in 2012 for another five years.

<http://www.indh.ma/fr/index.asp>

## **Diplomacy**

King Mohammed VI's commitment to promoting peace, security, stability, reform, interfaith dialogue, and sustainable development goes beyond Morocco borders.

- Under his leadership, Morocco has become increasingly engaged in the Maghreb and Africa and has contributed positively to the stability of the region and the promotion of values and interests that are shared by the US across the continent.
  - Morocco is a key ally of the new Malian government and in late 2013 launched a program to train 500 imams from Mali to promote religious moderation. Morocco has since signed agreements to train imams from Libya, Tunisia, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, the Maldives, and Nigeria.
- Under the King's leadership, Morocco has deepened its partnership with the US and other regional partners in Europe, Africa, and the MENA region. In addition to being designated as a non-NATO ally, a Millennium Challenge Corporation compact recipient, and a Strategic Dialogue partner of the US, Morocco has advanced status with the European Union, as well as multiple free trade agreements with the US, the EU, and several MENA countries.
- On the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the reign of King Mohammed VI, Morocco stands as a leading partner for the US in the region due to its long history of shared values, common interests in human, social, and economic development, and commitment to regional security and stability.

For more information, visit <http://www.moroccoonthemove.com> - Follow on Twitter

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Sunday, January 19, 2014**

## **al-Quds Committee Welcomes US Initiative to Renew Middle East Peace Talks, Prioritizes Humanitarian Aid**

**Committee Chair King Mohammed VI calls for Jerusalem to remain a "haven of coexistence"**

**Washington, DC** (January 19, 2014) — The official [communiqué](#) released following the two-day meeting in Marrakesh of the al-Quds Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference welcomed the role of the United States as "sponsors" of the recently-renewed negotiations between Palestinian and Israeli officials, and underscored the group's commitment to establishing "a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East."

The Communiqué also revealed plans to bolster the Committee's humanitarian efforts in the Holy City, by organizing grassroots fundraising campaigns with the possibility of instituting mandatory monetary commitments from member countries.

Established in 1975 by the Organization of the Islamic Conference under the chairmanship of Morocco's King Hassan II, the Committee seeks a political solution to the issue of Jerusalem's status in order to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Committee's latest statement called the resumed negotiation process "a decisive step towards peace," and invited the international community to "contribute effectively to... creating the conditions for its implementation and facilitating the task of peacemakers," particularly with respect to humanitarian aid.

The Communiqué recognized Morocco's longstanding commitment to Jerusalem and the well-being of its residents, acknowledging that the country funds up to 80% of OIC's philanthropic projects in the Holy City, including building schools and hospitals and maintaining holy sites.

Morocco's King Mohammed VI, who has served as Committee Chair since his ascension to the throne in 1999, said in a closing speech that "the road to peace is as long as it is arduous. It requires tremendous sacrifices on all sides. It also calls for consensus, realism and courage to make crucial, painful decisions, allowing reason, wisdom, hope and the quest for life to prevail over hatred, extremism, despair and aggression, for the benefit of the peoples in the region."

The King concluded his address by stating that "we are a nation committed to peace and to the alliance of civilizations and cultures;" and to this end, "We want Al-Quds to remain what it has always been: a rallying symbol of the monotheistic religions and a haven of coexistence between its inhabitants, in an environment of peace and concord."

Morocco has played an active role in advancing the Middle East peace process for decades, often alongside American diplomatic efforts. From 1994-1999, the late King Hassan II worked with Israel's then-Foreign Minister David Levy (who is of Moroccan origin) to bring the parties together; and following the signing of the Oslo Peace Accords, King Hassan was publicly honored by Israeli Minister of Defense Yitzhak Rabin for Morocco's efforts to further the negotiations.

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For more on Morocco and the region, visit <http://www.moroccoonthemove.com/>. Follow us on Twitter - [@MorocOnTheMove](#). Like us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/MoroccoOnTheMove>

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, March 14, 2014**

## **Morocco's King urges 'comprehensive perception of security' at 31<sup>st</sup> meeting of Arab Interior Ministers Council**

### **Council adopts 'Marrakesh Declaration of Struggle Against Terrorism'**

**Washington, DC** (March 14, 2014) — Interior Ministers from 22 Arab nations met in Marrakesh, Morocco March 12-13 for the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the Arab Interior Ministers Council, adopting the "Marrakesh Declaration of Struggle Against Terrorism" that calls for greater cooperation to meet the region's security and counterterrorism challenges. In a speech delivered on his behalf to the Council, Moroccan King Mohammed VI emphasized the need for a "[comprehensive perception of security](#)" that considers "the crucial role played by the citizens" in achieving security and stability "amid significant changes and far-reaching reforms under way in the Arab world."

"The concept of real security is much broader than the narrow meaning it is usually given," said the Moroccan King's message. "Security primarily means putting the citizen at the heart of public policy, capitalizing on an effective social partnership in which the State and the citizens mutually supplement and reinforce one another—a partnership in which security imperatives, development requisites and respect for human rights go hand in hand." He added that the foundations for authority should be "built around preserving and expanding liberties, safeguarding peoples' dignity and rights in a state based on the rule of law, and promoting a democratic system close to the citizens as well as a participatory approach in the management of public affairs."

The King shared examples of Morocco's own holistic approach to peace and security, citing the country's [2005 National Initiative for Human Development](#), "which makes the citizen the central element of the development process;" the launching of Morocco's [regionalization project](#) to advance a "democratic management system of local affairs;" the 2011 [Moroccan Constitution](#), which "includes a comprehensive charter of social, economic, cultural and environment rights;" and the country's newly-adopted "multidimensional [migration and asylum policy](#)."

"Today, the adoption of an Arab security charter will only be possible through a unified, common Arab perception of the concept of security, with its constantly evolving economic, social and human rights dimensions," said the King.

In addition to calling for greater coordination, the Marrakesh Declaration condemned the sectarian discourse that feeds terrorism; condemned the recent terrorist acts against security forces in Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Iraq; and reaffirmed the Council's policy not to pay terrorist ransoms.

\* For the full text of the King's remarks, go to: <http://www.map.ma/en/activites-royales/full-text-message-addressed-hm-king-mohammed-vi-31th-session-council-arab-interior>

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Tuesday, October 29, 2013**

## **From Tindouf to Timbuktu: Report Documents Threat in Africa's Sahara/Sahel from Polisario-Run Camps in Algeria**

**Cites expert reports, documented incidents of ties to al-Qaeda-linked groups, traffickers**

**Washington, DC** (Oct. 29, 2013) — As [concern grows](#) about the spread of jihadist violence and insecurity in countries [across Africa's Sahara/Sahel](#) after the international intervention and elections in Mali, a [new report](#) provides a detailed chronology of documented incidents and reports on terrorist and trafficking connections to the Polisario-run camps near Tindouf, Algeria. The report confirms that those camps "have become not only a [recruiting ground](#) for terrorists and traffickers operating in the region, but also a potential place of [refuge for jihadists](#) forced out of N. Mali by the actions of French and African forces."

"Evidence has become overwhelming," says the report — citing prominent think tank, government, and media sources — "that members from the Polisario-run camps near Tindouf, Algeria fought alongside al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for United and Jihad (MUJAO) in northern Mali, and continue to engage in drug and arms smuggling in the Sahara/Sahel."

"[Security in the Sahara and Sahel: The growing threat posed by the Polisario-run camps near Tindouf](#)," compiled by the Moroccan American Center for Policy, provides a chronology of documented incidents and expert reports of Polisario-member involvement in illicit activities in the region from 2005-2013, including:

- [Fighting alongside AQIM/MUJAO forces](#) in northern Mali;
- [Recruitment](#) into the ranks of [terrorists/traffickers](#) in the Sahara/Sahel;
- [Drug/arms trafficking](#), including links to AQIM & South American cartels in [cocaine-for-arms trade](#);
- [Kidnappings/collaboration](#) with AQIM/MUJAO, including Western aid-workers abducted in [Polisario-run camps](#).

According to experts at [Carnegie Endowment](#), [Atlantic Council](#), [Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies](#), and [CNA Strategic Studies](#), the Polisario-run camps are becoming a recruiting ground for AQIM, a hub for opportunistic Polisario-member traffickers, and a threat to reforms and security in the region, which continues to see high levels of terrorist activity even after the French-led intervention and elections in Mali. A recent book released by [Carnegie Endowment](#) said the Polisario-run camps represent "a tinderbox waiting to explode."

These echo warnings from the UN. On April 9, 2013 [Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon](#) reported to the Security Council that, "All governments consulted raised serious concerns over the risk that the fighting in Mali could spill over into neighboring countries and contribute to radicalizing the Western Saharan refugee camps," which one leader in the region called "a ticking time bomb." A week earlier, the [Security Council](#) said an "[Arc of Instability](#)" stretched across the region, which, if left unchecked, "could transform the continent into a breeding ground for extremists and a launch pad for larger-scale terrorist attacks around the world."

**\* For copy of report/chronology documenting Polisario-member ties to illicit activity in the region:**  
[http://moroccoonthemove.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/SR\\_IntroChronology-TruthAboutPolisario-Oct2013.pdf](http://moroccoonthemove.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/SR_IntroChronology-TruthAboutPolisario-Oct2013.pdf)

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\* For more on the Truth about the Polisario, go to:  
<http://moroccoonthemove.com/policy/the-truth-about-the-polisario/#sthash.uWuLODaa.dpbs>

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Tuesday, October 1, 2013**

## **Morocco Announces African Alliance for Migration & Development at UN Sets Stage for 2nd UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development**

**New York, NY** (October 1, 2013) — At the United Nations today, the government of Morocco proposed creation of an "African Alliance for Migration and Development." The announcement comes two days before the UN's second High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (October 3-4)—which aims to define migration in terms of development goals and opportunities—and just two weeks after [King Mohammed VI](#) welcomed and approved recommendations by Morocco's National Human Rights Council (CNDH) for groundbreaking change in migration policy for the North African country.

"Morocco has a far-reaching tradition of welcoming migrants—we are now a country of origin, transition and destination when it comes to migration," said Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Saad Dine El Othmani in his opening remarks. As such, "Morocco has always made migration a priority in its development policy," he added. "This initiative taken by His Majesty [the King] focuses on the protection of human rights of immigrants in accordance with the rule of law and Morocco's international commitments."

Representatives from countries including France, Spain, Portugal, Senegal, Ivory Coast and the European Union, as well as from Morocco's CNDH, spoke at the event and echoed the sentiment.

"We are living in a world of unprecedented human mobility, yet much of the world has decided to favor anti-migrant policies which we think go against the interest of migrants and national interests of many countries," said Mr. William Swing, International Organization for Migration. "I would like to compliment Morocco on this initiative of the King to try to improve the standing, access, and rights of migrants in the kingdom of Morocco."

Among the chief aims proposed for the Alliance at the UN forum are to promote better coordination and cooperation between African countries on migratory matters, share national expertise and best practices on migratory governance, and integrate migration into national and sectoral development plans of member nations.

"Increasing violent conflicts on our continent and aspirations of our peoples for a dignified life make immigration important," said Morocco's CNDH President Driss El Yazami. "We must strengthen our joint action for renewed management of this policy on an international level in order to support the migrants in accordance with international standards, and also to fight more strongly against xenophobia and rejection. Human migration has always been an enriching factor. It represents an opportunity for all of our societies and we should all seize it."

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Wednesday, May 29, 2013**

## **Congressional Morocco Caucus Launches on Capitol Hill**

**Washington, DC** (May 29, 2013) — A bipartisan group of US lawmakers gathered at the House Visitors Center in Washington last week to celebrate the [launch](#) of the "Congressional Morocco Caucus" for the 113th Congress, with the aim of deepening economic and strategic ties between Rabat and Washington.

Co-chaired by Representative Loretta Sanchez (D-CA), Representative Michael Grimm (R-NY), Representative Bennie Thompson (D-MS) and Representative Joe Wilson (R-SC), the Caucus "will be a bipartisan group of Members committed to deepening the economic and strategic relationship between the United States and Morocco," according to a letter sent to Members of Congress.

"I know the tremendous work you are doing in this country and the tremendous work you are doing for the friendship between Morocco and the United States—the longest ally and friend of the United States," said Morocco's Ambassador to the United States, Rachad Bouhlal, to an audience of dozens of Members of Congress and Congressional staff.

"You will be proud of what we will be doing for the friendship between the United States and Morocco."

In his opening remarks at the event, Congressman Grimm explained that the relationship between the two countries "sets a marker for the rest of the world to follow."

Morocco is America's oldest friend and ally, having been the first nation to recognize the independence of the American colonies in 1777. The two countries signed the [Morocco-US Treaty of Friendship and Peace](#) in 1786, which was ratified by the US Senate in 1787 and remains the longest-standing treaty of its kind in US history.

Morocco is also one of the few non-NATO US allies in the Middle East and North Africa region, and last year, Morocco entered into a formal [Strategic Dialogue](#) with the US to address the changes shaping the region.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, April 5, 2013**

## **French President Hollande calls Morocco leader for peace and reform in region, backs autonomy initiative for Western Sahara**

**Hollande statement reflects long history of support by US and France on Sahara issue**

**Washington, DC** (April 5, 2013) – [Addressing Morocco's Parliament](#) Thursday on his first official state visit to the North African nation, French President Francois Hollande praised Morocco as a leader and partner for peace and reform in the region, and hailed Morocco's autonomy initiative to resolve the Western Sahara conflict as "serious and credible."

"The plan presented by Morocco in 2007 is a serious and credible basis for a negotiated solution" of the long-running Western Sahara dispute, [said President Hollande](#). "The current stand-off is detrimental to everyone," [he said](#), adding that the revolt by al-Qaeda-linked extremists in northern Mali "makes it more urgent to put an end to this situation."

Hollande also [praised](#) the new Constitution introduced in Morocco by King Mohammed VI in 2011. "Every day, your country takes decisive steps towards democracy," he said. Hollande congratulated the King on the agenda of reforms he began more than a decade ago, and thanked him for Morocco's support of France's military intervention in Mali.

The French President's position on the decades-old Western Sahara dispute reinforces that of previous French administrations, and the US's own long-standing policy on the issue. Last year, French Foreign Minister Alain [Juppe](#) called Morocco's autonomy initiative for Western Sahara "the only realistic proposal" for resolving the 36-year-old stalemate over the territory.

On a trip to North Africa last year, then-Secretary of State [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) said Morocco's autonomy initiative was "serious, realistic, and credible" and reaffirmed that US policy "has remained constant." The past three US Administrations have backed the [US policy](#) supporting a solution based on autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty in Western Sahara—as well as bipartisan majorities in both [Houses of Congress](#).

At a press briefing in Rabat last year, [Secretary Clinton](#) added that Morocco's autonomy initiative "could satisfy the aspirations of the people in the Western Sahara to run their own affairs in peace and dignity," and the US "continues to support efforts to find a peaceful, sustainable, mutually agreed upon solution."

"I am heartened that President Hollande has reiterated the strong support of France for Morocco's autonomy initiative for the Western Sahara," said Edward M. Gabriel, former US Ambassador to Morocco. "This is an issue that affects prospects for stability and security in the region and beyond."

Later this month, the renewal of the UN's peacekeeping mission in Western Sahara (MINURSO) comes before the UN Security Council, of which Morocco is a non-permanent member. The Security Council, which has also called Morocco's autonomy proposal "serious and credible," is expected to urge the parties to reach "a just, lasting, and mutually acceptable political solution," as called for in previous resolutions. The only realistic path according to many in the international community, including [Peter Van Walsum](#), former UN Personal Envoy for the territory, is negotiating on the basis of autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Thursday, January 16, 2014**

## **King Mohammed VI Convenes al-Quds Committee Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace Process**

### **Historic Meeting Comes Days after Secretary Kerry Visit with Israeli and Palestinian Leadership**

**Washington, DC** (January 16, 2014) — On Friday and Saturday, January 17-18, in Marrakesh, Morocco's King Mohammed VI will chair the twentieth session of the al-Quds (Jerusalem) Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)—the first time in more than ten years the committee has met—in an effort to contribute to the renewed negotiations and build on US Secretary of State John Kerry's efforts to revive the Middle East peace process.

Established in 1975 by the OIC and originally chaired by King Mohammed VI's father, King Hassan II, the Committee seeks a political solution to the issue of Jerusalem's status, in order to further the peace process to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This year, international, non-Islamic observers, including representatives from the Vatican, the European Union, United Nations Security Council member states, and President Obama's special envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference will join the 16 Islamic member nations.

"Morocco's long history of leadership on this issue, its strong record of religious tolerance, and King Mohammed VI's unwavering commitment to peace in the region positions it to make a meaningful contribution to the peace process Secretary Kerry has been working so diligently on," said Edward M. Gabriel, former US Ambassador to Morocco.

Morocco has long shown an interest in Jerusalem and the well-being of its residents, funding up to 80% of the OIC's philanthropic projects in the Holy City, including the building of schools and hospitals and the maintenance of holy sites. Moreover, the country has played an active role in advancing the Middle East peace process for decades. From 1994-1999, the late King Hassan II worked with Israel's then-Foreign Minister David Levy (who is of Moroccan origin) to bring the parties together; and following the signing of the Oslo Peace Accords, King Hassan was publicly honored by Israeli Minister of Defense Yitzhak Rabin for Morocco's efforts to further the negotiations. Since then, Morocco has served as an arbiter between the parties, regularly hosting both Palestinian and Israel officials.

Most recently, in a [Joint Statement](#) released following the meeting between King Mohammed VI and President Obama at the White House on November 22, "His Majesty commended the continuous commitment of the President and the efforts of the Secretary of State to advance Middle East peace. The President acknowledged the contribution of His Majesty, Chairman of the Al Quds committee, to the efforts aiming to achieve a two state solution."

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Wednesday, March 6, 2013**

## **Demonstrating his commitment to speedy reform, King welcomes Judicial recommendations from Morocco's Human Rights Council**

**Washington, DC** (March 6, 2013) — Highlighting Morocco's commitment to systematic reform, human rights, and speedy implementation of its new Constitution, King Mohammed [welcomed recommendations](#) on judicial reform presented by the National Human Rights Council (CNDH), Morocco's human rights watchdog. These were detailed in four reports submitted by the Council to: advance changes to Morocco's judicial system as set forth in the 2011 Constitutional reforms; respond to the expectations of Moroccan society; and meet pertinent international norms of human rights, justice and the separation of powers.

[King Mohammed VI](#) stressed the importance of fast-paced reform and called on all government institutions to fully assume their responsibilities to achieve it. He described the recommendation as a significant contribution to advancing Morocco's dialogue on democracy, consolidating the rule of law, and protecting human rights and the independence of the judiciary.

- The first report outlines the organization and procedures of the Constitutional Court, which will oversee free and fair elections and uphold principles and rights guaranteed by the Constitution.
- The second report addresses proper procedures for carrying out a major innovation in the 2011 Constitution—allowing parties to a lawsuit to challenge the constitutionality of a law.
- The third report recommends narrowing the jurisdiction of military courts, in keeping with the new Constitution and international law. CNDH president [Driss El Yazami](#) said the Council recommends that civilians no longer be tried before military courts, and tribunals should be limited to disciplinary measures against military personnel and trial of military personnel for "undermining state security or terrorism."
- The fourth report provides recommendations on the speedy establishment of the Higher Judiciary Council created by the Constitution, which will promote separation of powers and increase judicial independence.

The Council's recommendations, which come after six months of intense work, will now go to Morocco's Parliament. Under the Constitution, these recommendations will have to be debated, turned into legislation, and passed by the Parliament to become law.

"I feel encouraged by the announcement of the king's intention to dramatically reduce the role of military courts in Morocco," wrote Middle East specialist Joseph Braude in The Huffington Post. "It would be in keeping with a tradition of reforms that won acknowledgment from human rights groups in the past, notably an [Equity and Reconciliation Commission](#) which acknowledged the suffering of victims of security service brutality under the reign of King Hassan II and compensated the families for their losses."

On Monday, El Yazami presented the reports at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in the presence of Juan Mendez, Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Mendez has just returned from Morocco and issued a report that "highlights on the one side, the existence in Morocco of an important judicial and institutional arsenal which has allowed the emergence of a true culture of human rights; and identifies, on the other side, the challenges to be surmounted to put in place the international dispositions and practices." As it continues to promote human rights and finalizes a national mechanism for the prevention of torture, Morocco is also seeking membership on the Human Rights Council.

CNDH was established by HM the King in 2011, with El Yazami as its head, to protect human rights in Morocco. For more on CNDH, go to Morocco's National Council on Human Rights, at: <http://www.ccdh.org.ma/?lang=en>.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, March 22, 2013**

## **King Mohammed VI Deepens Morocco's Economic, Security Ties with African Countries, Gains Support for W. Sahara Initiative**

**Senegal, Cote D'Ivoire praise Morocco's reforms under King Mohammed's leadership; Back Morocco autonomy plan for W. Sahara, cite Mali, stability threat in Sahel**

**Washington, DC** (March 22, 2013) — On an [official visit](#) to Senegal, Cote D'Ivoire, and Gabon, King Mohammed VI [underscored](#) Morocco's commitment to [African solidarity](#) to meet security and economic challenges facing the region, in particular [concerns about al-Qaeda-linked extremists](#) who seized control of northern Mali last year and threaten to spread across Africa's Sahel. On his first two stops, King Mohammed VI received strong support from [Senegal](#) and [Cote D'Ivoire](#) for Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara, as well as reached [agreement](#) on a [host of](#) economic and development initiatives.

At a dinner hosted by President Macky Sall in Dakar on March 15, [King Mohammed VI praised Senegal](#) as "a model on a continent still in the grip of turbulence and upheavals of a supposedly bygone era." He noted the "vibrant, rich and unique" relationship between Morocco and Senegal and said, "we see eye-to-eye on all major international and African issues, especially with respect to the growing challenges and risks facing our common strategic space, which borders the Atlantic and the Sahel region."

The King [noted](#) the growth in bilateral economic and trade relations between the two countries, and the increasing flow of Moroccan private investment and assistance in a range of Senegal's economic sectors. The two heads of state presided over the signing of [two bilateral agreements](#), increasing cooperation on international land transport of goods and persons, and on mining, hydrocarbons, electricity, and renewable energies. They also dedicated the [Mohammed VI ophthalmologic clinic](#) and a [medicine production plant](#) "West Afric Pharma," a branch of the Moroccan lab SOTHEMA Maroc. The projects confirmed Morocco's commitment to sustainable African development and a solidarity-based South-South cooperation.

At the conclusion of the visit, President Sall [praised Morocco's advances](#) on a number of key initiatives and King Mohammed VI for his leadership promoting democracy, economic, and social development, as well as human rights. He [described Morocco's initiative for autonomy](#) under Moroccan sovereignty in the Western Sahara as the ideal solution to that conflict. The two heads of state reaffirmed their desire to reinforce and deepen their strategic partnership and make it an example of South-South cooperation and African integration.

In Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on March 20, President Alassane Ouattara [congratulated](#) the Moroccan people, whose "maturity and wisdom have allowed your country to cross the Arab Spring that has shaken some Maghreb countries." He [praised](#) King Mohammed VI for the political reforms taking place under his leadership, which have resulted in continued progress on democracy in Morocco. Ouattara called on Morocco and its businessmen to invest in Cote d'Ivoire to support his country's efforts of reconstruction and sustainable development.

The two heads of state presided over the signing of [six bilateral cooperation agreements](#), to strengthen cooperation between the foreign ministries, on promoting and protecting investments, on fisheries and aquaculture, on air transport, on vocational training in tourism, and on Moroccan-Ivorian disaster management.

On Western Sahara, [Ouattara expressed support for Morocco's autonomy initiative](#), calling it "an appropriate solution to definitively settle the conflict." The Moroccan and Ivorian leaders stressed that the persistent conflict threatens regional stability and poses an obstacle to regional cooperation and development essential to meeting the aspirations of the African people for security and prosperity. During his visits, King Mohammed VI presided over the signing of a range of trade, investment, and security agreements with both countries, and joint ventures with the public and private sectors. His next stop is in Gabon, to meet with President Ali Bongo Ondimba.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Thursday, March 28, 2013**

## **Morocco's King Mohammed VI Strengthens Relationship with Gabon, Gains More Support on Western Sahara Initiative**

### **Visit to 3 African Countries Cements Economic, Security Ties**

**Washington, DC** (March 28, 2013) — HM King Mohammed VI, on the last leg of his African tour, expanded Morocco's relationship with Gabon. He presided over the signing of [six cooperation agreements](#) with Gabonese President Ali Bongo Ondimba, who [reaffirmed Gabon's support](#) for Morocco's compromise initiative for autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty for Western Sahara.

Building on the King's successful efforts to expand and deepen ties in Africa, the Gabon accords follow similar agreements with [Senegal](#) and [Cote d'Ivoire](#) during the tour. At the presidential palace in Libreville, the two heads of state [chaired the signing of agreements](#) for cooperation in a number of different areas, including security, healthcare, the environment and information technology.

"There is no doubt in my mind that my visit to Gabon, coupled with the decisions we shall make and the actions we shall agree on, will be another milestone in the broad, meaningful, promising relationship between our two nations," [said King Mohammed VI](#). He added that the visit will "continue to deepen and expand the scope of our solidarity-based and mutually beneficial partnership. By continuing to rely on our own assets, we will fulfill the legitimate aspirations of our peoples, who share a deep commitment to inter-African cooperation."

"Today, Morocco can rightfully boast to be giving to the world the image of an innovating and modern Kingdom where the will of the people is respected," [said President Bongo](#). He emphasized Morocco's and Gabon's "historic and exemplary" strategic partnership. And he [reiterated](#) "Gabon's unwavering support to the Moroccan initiative to give the Sahara region a large autonomy within the Kingdom of Morocco's territorial integrity and national union."

Earlier in his African tour, on official visits to Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire, King Mohammed VI [underscored](#) Morocco's commitment to [African solidarity](#) to meet security and economic challenges facing the region, in particular [concerns about al-Qaeda-linked extremists](#). He received strong support in both countries for Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara and presided over the signing of accords on a [host of](#) economic and development initiatives.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Monday, November 18, 2013**

## **Morocco's King Mohammed VI to Meet with President Obama, Discuss Strategic Partnership during Washington Visit**

**Leaders to Focus on Common Interests, Shared Values, and Vision for MENA Region**

**Washington, DC** (November 18, 2013) — On Friday, November 22, 2013, King Mohammed VI of Morocco [will meet with](#) President Obama at the White House for discussions to deepen the two countries' long friendship and strategic partnership. The two leaders will address how Morocco and the US can work together, based on shared values and common interests, to meet key economic and security challenges confronting the Middle East and North Africa. They will also discuss political transitions in the region, for which Morocco's democratic and economic reforms offer a peaceful model for change.

The visit is a result of President Obama's personal invitation to the North African monarch, who will be meeting the President for the first time. "This visit will highlight the long-standing friendship between the United States and Morocco and strengthen our strategic partnership," said the [White House](#) in a statement. "The President looks forward to discussing a range of issues of mutual interest with King Mohammed VI, including support for Morocco's democratic and economic reforms. This visit is also an opportunity to increase our cooperation on addressing regional challenges, including countering violent extremism, supporting democratic transitions, and promoting economic development in the Middle East and Africa."

King Mohammed VI, who ascended Morocco's throne in 1999, [has met](#) previously with former US Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush in Washington, and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Morocco. In [September 2012](#), the US and Morocco launched a Strategic Dialogue—the first such US dialogue with a Maghreb nation—to advance common interests on political, economic, security, and educational and cultural affairs. Traveling with the King are senior members of Morocco's new government, with portfolios addressing all of these areas, visiting Washington for the first time since the new coalition was announced in October.

The meeting marks a poignant date for both leaders, the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. In March 1963, eight months prior, Kennedy [welcomed](#) King Mohammed VI's father, King Hassan II, to the US, remarking that, "Though a wide ocean separates our two countries, they have been bound together throughout our history." Kennedy [said](#), "Your country was the first to recognize the United States in the most difficult days of our revolution" and "occupies a position of strategic importance in the world." King Hassan [said](#) Moroccans hoped their meeting "may usher in a new era of stronger ties, in the field of true and honest and unselfish cooperation in their mutual interests, as well as in the interest of the cause of freedom, peace, and human dignity throughout the world."

"For [more than two centuries](#), Morocco and the US have enjoyed a special relationship, founded on core values and shared interests of two nations on opposite sides of the Atlantic," said Edward M. Gabriel, Chair, Moroccan American Center for Policy. "This remarkable partnership has been sustained over the centuries by leaders with a vision for how our nations can work together to achieve common goals. King Mohammed's meeting with President Obama comes at a time of trial and transition in the region. That vision is needed now more than ever."

\* For recent think tank briefing papers on Morocco & US-Morocco relations: <http://moroccoonthemove.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Briefing-Papers-Towards-a-New-Morocco-US-Strategic-Partnership-.pdf>

\* For the history of US-Morocco relations, see "The US and Morocco Share a Long History of Friendship," at: [http://moroccoonthemove.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/FS\\_US-MoroccanAlliance18January2013.pdf](http://moroccoonthemove.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/FS_US-MoroccanAlliance18January2013.pdf)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Monday, February 25, 2013**

## **King Mohammed VI Welcomes Bill Clinton to Morocco; Former US President Praises North African Nation's Tolerance, Democratization**

**Washington, DC** (Monday, Feb. 25, 2013) — Former US president Bill Clinton, who was on a private visit to Morocco, was received [on Sunday](#) in the Rabat royal palace by HM King Mohammed VI. The audience underscored the ties of friendship uniting the royal family and the Clinton family, and the good will and deep historical relations between Morocco and the USA.

"My family and I – my wife, her late mother, my daughter – we love this country," [said Clinton](#) at a speech on Sunday morning in Casablanca, at a conference attended by many figures.

"It was a great honor for me to work with both the late king, Hassan, and his son, King Mohammed VI," Clinton added, at the International University of Casablanca's conference on *Challenges of Emerging Markets in the Global Economy*. "I was excited to meet with representatives of the new government, because I like the idea that the country is becoming more democratic, more empowering."

[Clinton noted](#) the recent initiative taken by Morocco to restore the synagogue [Slat al Fassayine](#) in the medina of Fez, saying the project reflected the openness and religious tolerance of the Kingdom. The 42<sup>nd</sup> US President (1993-2001) said Morocco has forged a model for responsible development that is meeting the aspirations of its citizens in a peaceful manner, and providing a source of inspiration for other countries in the region.

King Mohammed VI and Clinton met for the first time on July 26, 1999 when then-President Clinton was the first US President since Dwight Eisenhower to visit Morocco. They met again on June 20, 2000 when His Majesty King Mohammed VI made his first State visit to the US, the largest State visit held during the Clinton Administration.

Morocco is America's oldest friend and ally, having been the first nation to recognize the independence of the American colonies 240 years ago, and signing the Morocco-US [Treaty of Friendship and Peace](#) in 1786, which was ratified by the US Senate in 1787 and remains the longest-standing treaty of its kind in US history. Morocco is one of the few non-NATO US allies in the Middle East and North Africa region, and last year, Morocco entered into a formal [Strategic Dialogue](#) with the US to address the changes shaping the region.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Thursday, September 19, 2013**

## **Morocco's King Mohammed VI, at Malian President's inauguration, pledges to "spare no effort" to support "new chapter" for Mali**

**Washington, DC** (Sept. 19, 2013) — At the inauguration of Malian President Ibrahim Boubakar Keïta, King Mohammed VI [cited](#) Morocco's and Mali's shared values of "tolerance and openness" and deep cultural and spiritual bonds, pledging Morocco's support for "this new chapter of Malian history." That support includes offering to train 500 Malian Imams using Morocco's moderate and tolerant form of Islam to help fight the spread of extremism within their communities. Mali held successful presidential elections this past July after a year-long takeover of the northern part of the country by extremist groups.

"The dream of a peaceful Mali has now come true," said King Mohammed VI, the only North African or Arab Head of State to join the ceremony. "In this new chapter of Malian history which is being written today, Morocco will remain a faithful, committed partner." The King said, "Both countries embrace the same values of tolerance and openness to others, and this represents the bedrock of the spiritual bond between our two countries."

"Morocco will spare no effort to support Mali," said the King, in helping to rebuild Mali's war-torn economy and democratic institutions with human development programs, leadership training, basic infrastructure, assistance to reestablish business and commerce, and health services. The King noted Morocco "recently set up a multi-disciplinary military field hospital in Bamako," supported by medical and humanitarian emergency aid.

\* For the full text of the King's remarks, go to: <http://www.map.ma/en/activites-royales/full-text-speech-delivered-thursday-hm-king-mohammed-vi-inauguration-ceremony-mali>

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Center for Policy

**Thursday, August 1, 2013**

## **King Mohammed VI commits to Morocco's 'march towards democracy & development,' looks to 'new Maghreb order' based on integration, openness**

**Seeks to preserve Morocco's cultural heritage and Islamic identity of temperance and moderation; US: "Supports Morocco's ongoing efforts to strengthen the rule of law, human rights, good governance"**

**Washington, DC** (Aug. 1, 2013) — In an [address](#) to the nation on the 14th anniversary of his accession to the throne, King Mohammed VI highlighted Morocco's progress across a broad range of reforms and initiatives aimed at achieving steady economic growth, sustainable development, and social solidarity, while promoting good governance under the rule of law. The King emphasized the importance of safeguarding the spirit of Morocco's practice of Islam, which he explained is based on the Maliki rite and the temperance and moderation of its Islamic identity. The King committed to continuing to lead Moroccans on "your march towards democracy and development, in order to make Morocco stronger, unified, advanced and prosperous."

King Mohammed VI cited Morocco's efforts to strengthen relations with traditional partners and open up opportunities with new ones. The King said he looked forward to "the emergence of a new Maghreb order" to enable North African nations "to build a common future" based on integration and free movement of people, goods, and capital to meet "ongoing regional changes."

In a congratulatory message on behalf of President Obama and the American people, [Secretary of State John Kerry](#), praised "the strong and enduring friendship" Morocco and the US have enjoyed for more than 225 years. He said that "during this time of profound change in the region, the US supports Morocco's ongoing efforts to strengthen the rule of law, human rights, and good governance. We look forward to building on our long history of relations as we work together to advance common goals."

On foreign policy, King Mohammed VI also [highlighted](#) Morocco's efforts to build "a strategic partnership" with the Gulf states; work for Palestinian-Israeli peace; strengthen ties with other African nations; pursue a "strategy of openness" with European partners, welcoming heads-of-state from France and Spain; and provide a voice for Africa and the Arab world on the UN Security Council. He confirmed Morocco's "solidarity with the Syrian people" and support for Mali to "protect the unity of its territory and its national identity against radicalism and terrorism."

On the domestic front, King Mohammed VI cited a host of national achievements, including:

- Implementing Constitutional reforms and promoting good governance under the rule of law;
- Developing infrastructure, including drinking water and electricity for towns and villages, ports, airports, road networks, and rail and urban transport;
- Becoming a producer of renewable energy through solar and wind power programs that are environmentally friendly and reduce Morocco's dependence on energy imports.
- Attracting investment to expand Morocco's industrial base, job opportunities, & public-private partnerships;
- Expanding tourism, which has continued to grow despite the global financial crisis;
- Modernizing the agricultural sector and promoting the fisheries sector;
- Promoting the National Initiative for Human Development projects to reduce social disparities, as well as national literacy programs, which this year will empower one and a half million people;
- Safeguarding Morocco's temperate, moderate practice of Islam;
- Reforming the judicial system, which now has a blueprint to press ahead;
- Advancing human rights through the National Human Rights Council (CNDH); and
- Optimizing opportunities for advanced regionalization through the dynamic regional development model being prepared by Economic, Social & Environmental Council (CESE).

\*For full text: <http://www.map.ma/en/activites-royales/full-text-royal-speech-delivered-tuesday-occasion-throne-day>

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Thursday, November 7, 2013**

## **King Mohammed VI Emphasizes Morocco's Commitments and Achievements on Human Rights**

### **Reiterates Commitment to Africa, Immigrants, Political Solution for Western Sahara**

**Washington, DC** (November 7, 2013) — In a speech on the 38<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Morocco's Green March, King Mohammed VI stressed Morocco's commitments and achievements on human rights, noting the openness and freedom enjoyed by Moroccans in the Southern Provinces as well as in the north.

"Our aim is to see the Moroccan citizen properly honored, endowed with the attributes of full-fledged citizenship," he said. "It is in this spirit that we have undertaken a series of profound reforms and major projects," including the establishment of national institutions and regional bodies for the protection and promotion of human rights that are "known for their independence and credibility." He also said that no country accepts being "subjected to behavior that is harmful to their security and stability, especially as violence, subversion and intimidation of citizens are incompatible with human rights, and the exercise of freedom can only be done in compliance with the law."

King Mohammed VI rejected attempts by adversaries "to undermine Morocco's reputation" and ignore its progress on freedom and human rights. He pledged to continue to work with human rights organizations and to reach an equitable political solution for Western Sahara with the UN and its Special Envoy, and international partners who recognize Morocco's achievements.

The King vowed to build on those achievements and on Morocco's investment in the Southern Provinces by adopting the new regional development model proposed by CESE for increased economic and political autonomy. This is "an integrated developmental vision, based on an objective analysis of the current situation in our Southern Provinces... to make them a space for integrated development, instrumental in providing a dignified life for the people of the region."

King Mohammed VI reiterated Morocco's commitment to helping other African countries achieve the same dignity and human rights progress through continued cooperation "and active solidarity with these countries and to contribute to the achievement of the expectations of their peoples who aspire to development and stability." He also noted that Morocco's commitment to human rights extends to African immigrants, through Morocco's "new comprehensive policy on immigration and asylum issues, based on a humanitarian approach in line with our country's international commitments and respectful of the rights of immigrants."

The King stressed Morocco's "sincere commitment" to promoting peace and the rule of law in Africa, most recently through its "support for our sister country Mali in its fight against extremist and terrorist groups."

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Thursday, June 20, 2013**

## **On World Refugee Day, Leaders from Moroccan Sahara in Washington to urge UNHCR, US end humanitarian tragedy of Sahrawi human rights activist**

### **Sahrawi activist Mustapha Salma Ould Sidi Mouloud in hospital after 30 days of hunger strike**

**Washington, DC** (June 20, 2013) — A delegation of Sahrawi elected and civil-society leaders traveled to Washington this week from Moroccan Sahara to speak with US lawmakers, human rights activists, and others about the challenges and opportunities facing the region, and what Americans can do to help. The Sahara/Sahel region has been the focus of increased international attention with the French-led intervention in nearby Mali, which has given new urgency to resolving the decades-long Western Sahara dispute.

The Sahrawi leaders delegation specifically called attention to human rights violations in the Polisario-run refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria and appealed for help to end the suffering of those held by the Polisario for several decades. The visit, which coincides with **World Refugee Day**, was an opportunity for delegation member Mohamed Cheikh Ismaili to share the humanitarian tragedy of his brother Mustapha Salma who began a hunger strike on May 20 to protest the Polisario's denial of his right to rejoin his family in the camps.

"It is time to end the suffering and exile of Mustapha Salma Ould Sidi Mouloud," said **Mohamed Cheikh Ismaili**, brother of the Sahrawi human rights activist and former police chief of the Polisario-run refugee camps. In 2010, [Mustapha Salma was imprisoned](#) for 72 days by the Polisario for expressing his support for Morocco's compromise autonomy initiative to end the 36-year Western Sahara conflict. After an international human rights outcry, he was released to the UN High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) in Mauritania. But for more than two years now he has been denied the papers necessary to leave and rejoin his wife and five children, who remain trapped in the Polisario-run camps. On May 20, he began a [hunger strike and yesterday was taken to a hospital](#) in Nouakchott, Mauritania. He expressed his thanks to his interlocutors in Washington for calling US public attention to this human tragedy.

For her part, **Rakiya Eddarhem**, a Sahrawi Member of Morocco's Parliament, representing Laayoune and the Socialist Union of Popular Forces Party (USFP) called on UNHCR "to help Mustapha Salma so he can reunite with his family and obtain his travel documents. Mustapha Salma's plight is truly tragic. Sadly, there are thousands more like him. Most of us have relatives in the Polisario-run camps who want to leave but have no freedom to do so. Their rights are denied and futures held hostage by the same Polisario leaders who claim to be their 'sole legitimate representatives.' But they haven't been elected by the Sahrawi people, and they certainly aren't serving their interests. It is a stark contrast with the situation in Moroccan Sahara."

"Our lives aren't perfect, but we have rights, we are Moroccans, and we are moving forward," said **Hajbouha Zoubir**, founding member of AmFED (Moroccan Association of Women's Development) in Laayoune and currently working on the CESE (Economic, Social & Environmental Council), a consultative project with the people in Moroccan Sahara to address social, economic and other development issues to improve quality of life.

A Moroccan businesswoman and advocate for Sahrawi women's rights, Zoubir agreed that women still face challenges, "but we have a higher standard of living, and higher rates of voter participation, than the rest of Morocco. What we need is more training and access to services to take on our new responsibilities with Morocco's regionalization initiative. The US and international community can be a big help."

"We have been very encouraged by the reception we have received in Washington," said **Hamdi Cherifi**, a well-known human rights activist from Laayoune and doctoral candidate on the multidimensional aspects of conflict management, including policy, politics, and human rights. "Morocco and the US have a long history of friendship. Americans want to help," he said. "And we are all concerned about the growing instability in the Sahara/Sahel region. We are all interested in helping to make Morocco and its Sahara provinces a positive example for development and change in the region."

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Monday, February 18, 2013**

## **Morocco Court Returns Verdicts in Gdeim Izik Case – International Observers Say Trial ‘Fair and Transparent’**

**Rabat, Morocco** (Feb. 18, 2013) — On Saturday night, a Moroccan court handed down verdicts in the highly charged Gdeim Izik case, concluding an open and transparent judicial process. In the presence of more than 60 international observers from 11 countries and in accordance with Moroccan law, 24 defendants were found guilty and sentenced for murder, looting, and violence in a riot in Laayoune, Morocco in 2010 that led to the deaths of 11 policemen peacefully attempting to disperse a protest.

The trial lasted for just over one week with international and Moroccan observers in the courtroom describing it as fair and transparent. Mme Rouaida Marwi, Executive Director of the International Center for Development, Training and Conflict Resolution agreed that the verdicts were consistent with the evidence established by the General Prosecutor. According to her, this trial met the requirements of integrity, transparency, and respect for human rights, as evidenced by the presence of international observers as well as national and international media. She noted that the rights of the accused were respected, and they received a great deal of freedom of expression and the time needed to respond to the charges.

Charles Saint-Prot, Director of the Observatory of Geopolitical Studies (OEG), reiterated that the trial was conducted under transparent and fair conditions, describing it as “exemplary.” He added that the sentences were rendered based on the actions of the defendants, noting that the trial was conducted to deliver justice for heinous, barbaric and quasi-terrorist criminal acts.

The trial lasted 8 days and was conducted openly under Moroccan law. As in the United States, defendants in Morocco are innocent until proven guilty, with the burden of proof falling on the prosecution. And as in the United States and France, the jury at this court played a leading role in a trial that was open to the public. The sentencing guidelines for the crimes committed included the possibility of the death penalty, though the court chose not exercise this option.

The trial took place “under normal conditions and was marked by due process,” said Morocco’s National Council of Human Rights (CNDH). After the verdicts were announced, relatives of the dead security officers expressed satisfaction with the court’s decision and felt that justice had been done

Among the more than 60 observers from 11 countries were members of the Council of Human Rights (USA), members of Amnesty International (France), lawyers and legal scholars from Spain, Italy, France, Luxemburg, and representatives from numerous NGOs, in addition to international journalists.

This case has dominated news in Morocco since 11 members of the Moroccan security services were killed while peacefully dismantling a protest site outside of Laayoune in November 2010. In the interest of maintaining public order, government officials had ensured that the protest camp was safe, that there was free movement within it, and that it was stocked with water, medicine, and emergency personnel. A dialogue had also been initiated with representatives from the protest group, meeting on a near daily basis to address their job demands and other concerns. Unfortunately, it soon became clear that violent, pro-Polisario elements were attempting to hijack the protest and take advantage of the situation, and security forces were called in to peacefully dismantle the protest site before the circumstances deteriorated further.

They entered the camp carrying only non-lethal weapons and were met by armed men equipped with machetes and Molotov cocktails, among other weapons. Violent clashes ensued, and quickly spread to the city center, where militants took to the streets, throwing improvised explosive devices and stones at Morocco forces, urinating on dead bodies, setting fire to buildings, and causing significant property damage. In the end, 11 members of the security forces were killed, over 70 were wounded, 1 civilian was killed, and 4 others wounded.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Wednesday, February 12, 2014**

## **Morocco Extends Religious Cooperation and Training at Request of Tunisia, Guinea, Libya**

**Building on success of program with Mali, effort will share Moroccan model of moderation, help counter extremism in Africa**

**Washington DC** (February 12, 2014) — The Moroccan Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs announced today that King Mohammed VI has agreed to requests from Tunisia, Guinea, and Libya for cooperation on religious matters, including providing training in Morocco for imams from the three African nations.

Morocco and Mali began a similar effort in September, when King Mohammed VI and Malian President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita presided over the signing of an agreement to send 500 Malian imams to Morocco over the next two years for training in using Morocco's moderate and tolerant form of Islam to help fight the spread of extremism. The first 100 imams from Mali have already travelled to Morocco for the program.

"Morocco has long been a leader in advancing stability, cooperation, and economic development in Africa, and its steady path to democratic reform stands as a model for the region specifically, and Africa as a whole," said Ambassador Edward M. Gabriel, who served as US Ambassador to Morocco from 1997 to 2001. "Helping Mali, Tunisia, Guinea, and Libya promote moderate and tolerant Islam is yet another important part of Morocco's vital contribution to peace, security, and development in this part of the world."

According to a [recent report](#) by the Atlantic Council, Morocco has become a "significant force for development in Africa." In addition to providing religious training, Morocco's other initiatives in Africa include trade agreements and investment in a number of countries in sectors as varied as mining, energy, agriculture, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, and manufacturing. Morocco's assistance to Tunisia, Guinea, and Libya will also include sharing its expertise in building mosques and management of religious issues.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Tuesday, July 2, 2013**

## **Moroccan American Center Mourns Passing of Former Congressman William Gray III**

**Washington, DC** (July 2, 2013) — Ambassador Edward M. Gabriel, former US Ambassador to Morocco and Chairman of the Moroccan American Center, issued the following statement today on the unexpected passing of former Congressman William H. Gray III:

We were deeply saddened by the passing of a close friend and colleague, Bill Gray, yesterday. We are especially grieved for his family and their loss of a dear loved one. Bill Gray was an American leader of great stature, who made historic contributions to his country — serving as a groundbreaking Majority Whip in the leadership in the US Congress, as chairman of the powerful House Budget Committee, as a remarkably successful head of the resurgent United Negro College Fund, and as pastor of his church in Philadelphia. He always had a strong grasp and belief in progressive policies, an uncanny sense of what was politically possible, and an abiding understanding of what was needed to improve people's lot in life. He spent his life breaking down barriers and bringing people together. We were all extremely fortunate to have been in the presence of such a fine public servant. He brought hope, opportunity, grace, and good humor to his community, constituents, countrymen, and to those lucky enough to have called him friend. That personal friendship, as well as his friendship with Morocco, will be missed.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Tuesday, March 5, 2013**

## **Polisario Fighter with al-Qaeda in Northern Mali Reported Taken Prisoner after Battle that Killed AQIM Commander Abou Zeid**

**Mali Foreign Minister, new study report recruits from Polisario-run camps joining AQIM**

**Washington, DC** (March 5, 2013) — [Le Figaro](#) and [France24](#) report that a fighter from the Polisario Front—a separatist group based in desert camps near Tindouf, Algeria—was among seven militants taken prisoner after a fierce battle between French/Chadian forces and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the mountains of northern Mali, which reportedly killed key al-Qaeda leader Abou Zeid and 42 other jihadists.

[Last month](#), Malian foreign minister Tiéman Coulibaly confirmed the presence of "Polisario" fighters among terrorist groups fighting in northern Mali. "In the beginning, they were only 500 insurgents," said Coulibaly. "Now there are between 5,500 to 7,000 terrorists in northern Mali who were joined by lost youths, including young Sahrawis from the (Tindouf) camps," the Malian Foreign Minister said in an interview with French electronic news website "[AtlasInfo](#)."

[And last week](#), a new study, "[Terrorism in North Africa & the Sahel in 2012: Global Reach and Implications](#)," authored by Yonah Alexander, Director of the Inter-University Center on Terrorism Studies (IUCTS), said intelligence reports have confirmed that al-Qaeda "[has established links with Latin cartels](#) for 'drugs-for-arms' smuggling through [terrorist-trafficking networks](#) that include members of the Polisario Front" in Algeria.

The [study](#) says that al-Qaeda linked groups "have expanded their reach and recruiting to other militants and groups across the Maghreb and Sahel," emboldened by the "increased flow" of Libyan arms in the region, and contributing to an "[Arc of Instability](#)" and new regional hub for al-Qaeda in Africa's Sahel. Among the study's [recommendations](#): improving control of national borders to reduce the flow of arms and jihadists in the region, and finding long-term solutions to reduce the potential for criminal and terrorist recruiting in the [Polisario-run refugee camps](#) in Algeria.

\* For the full IUCTS report, go to Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies, "Terrorism: An Electronic Journal and Knowledge Base" at: <http://www.terrorismelectronicjournal.org/knowledge-base/selected-special-reports/>.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Friday, March 1, 2013**

## **Report warns of new al-Qaeda launching pad closer to US, European shores in North African 'Arc of Instability'**

**Points to links, recruiting with other militants in region, including from Polisario-run camps**

**Washington, DC** (March 1, 2013) — A new report on terrorism in North Africa warns of a new al-Qaeda hub for jihadi recruits and a potential launching pad for terrorist attacks much closer to US and European shores, along an "Arc of Instability" stretching across Africa's Sahara/Sahel region.

The study, "[Terrorism in North Africa & the Sahel in 2012: Global Reach and Implications](#)," authored by Yonah Alexander, Director of the Inter-University Center on Terrorism Studies (IUCTS), was announced Wednesday at the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Terrorism Review by the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, and made available online today.

The report says al-Qaeda-led extremists' attempted seizure of Mali's capital and their deadly attack in Algeria that killed 37 foreign hostages resulted from a regional terrorism threat that has been rising since September 11, 2001. In just a matter of weeks, the report says, "what many considered only a regional problem, metastasized into a crisis of global implications."

According to the study, "an 'Arc of Instability' is emerging across Africa's Sahel which has opened a path for al-Qaeda to shift its center of gravity from Afghanistan and Pakistan to a new sanctuary and has created a potential launching pad much closer to US and European shores."

The report says "al-Qaeda's new regional hub in northern Mali" poses "tactical and strategic challenges," including risk of kidnapping, piracy, drug trafficking, and terrorist attacks in the region and beyond. It notes intelligence reports have confirmed that al-Qaeda "[has established links with Latin cartels](#) for 'drugs-for-arms' smuggling through [terrorist-trafficking networks](#) that include members of the Polisario Front" in Algeria.

The study expresses alarm about growing ties among key regional al-Qaeda-linked groups—al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al-Shabaab in Somalia, and Boko Haram in Nigeria. It warns they "have expanded their reach and recruiting to other militants and groups across the Maghreb and Sahel," and are emboldened by an "increased flow" of "weapons through the vast [unguarded porous and national borders](#)."

To address the threat, the report makes a number of recommendations, including:

- International support for France's military intervention in Mali and negotiations with non-jihadist forces, particularly Tuareg leaders, to achieve an agreement on autonomy for the region.
- Application of "soft power" by accelerating national and regional economic development through reduced barriers to foreign and domestic trade and investment, and increased aid programs.
- Increased intelligence-sharing and resolution of old conflicts impeding regional economic and security cooperation, such as the Western Sahara dispute.
- Improved control of national borders to reduce the flow of recruits and arms to criminal and terrorist groups.
- Long-term solutions to reduce the potential for criminal and terrorist recruiting in the refugee camps run by the [Polisario Front](#) in Algeria.

\* For the full report, go to Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies/IUCTS' "Terrorism: An Electronic Journal and Knowledge Base" at: <http://www.terrorismelectronicjournal.org/knowledge-base/selected-special-reports/>.

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**For Immediate Release**

## **Morocco Tops North Africa in U.S. News & World Report's "Best Countries for Immigrants" Ranking**

**Washington, DC, July 11, 2017,** Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP) – Morocco ranked No. 1 in North Africa and second on the continent in U.S. News & World Report's ranking this week of "[Best Countries for Immigrants](#)" – part of its Best Countries survey series.

According to the outlet, more than 21,000 people from across the globe assessed 80 countries, and in the immigration aspect of the survey ranked them based on four elements: "economically stable," "good job market," "income equality," and "is a place I would live."

"Countries also were scored in relation to others on the share of migrants in their population; the amount of remittances the migrants they host sent home; and graded on a United Nations assessment of integration measures provided for immigrants, such as language training and transfers of job certifications, and the rationale behind current integration policies," according to U.S. News.

In 2013, Morocco became the first country in the Arab world to adopt a liberalized immigration policy that provides protections for migrants and asylum seekers. In 2014, the country successfully regularized the status of about 25,000 migrants, providing them with residency papers; and in December 2016, launched a second phase of the program.

Earlier this month in a [speech](#) delivered to the African Union Heads of State and Government Summit, Morocco's King Mohammed VI lamented the struggle of migrants on the continent. "Africa is losing its youths to legal and illegal migration. There is no way such a loss can be justified... Thousands of young Africans try clandestinely to reach the northern shore of the Mediterranean in search of a better life, with all the risks involved. They are precious men and women and are part of our continent's human resources."

He urged attendees, "What we need to do, above all, is to change our perception of migration and see it not as a constraint or threat, but as a positive element. Since time immemorial, has migration not been a factor of rapprochement between peoples and civilizations?"

"We must work together to develop an African Agenda on this question that includes a common vision of the ways and means of dealing with the question of migration, both within our continent and in international forums," he said.

"Morocco has been a leader on the issue of migration for many years," said former U.S. Ambassador to Morocco Edward M. Gabriel. "King Mohammed VI long ago recognized that a welcoming, humanitarian approach offers the best solution. Challenges remain, of course, but Morocco has made great progress in integrating immigrants into its society."

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**For Immediate Release**

## **On President's Day, the Long History of Morocco's Kings and America's Presidents**

**Washington, DC**, February 20, 2017, Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP) — George Washington, whose birthday is celebrated the third Monday in February as President's Day—holds a special place in Morocco's diplomatic history. During his presidency, Morocco became the first country to recognize the newly independent United States, when Sultan Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdullah announced in 1777 that "all vessels sailing under the American flag could freely enter Moroccan ports." The Sultan sought to formalize this friendship and corresponded with President Washington and American diplomats over the next decade, eventually negotiating and signing the Moroccan-American Treaty of Friendship in 1786 (of which future presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were signatories).

Since then, Morocco and the United States have maintained strong relations, with many exchanges recorded between top leadership, including letters, remarks, and more. To mark President's Day and to honor the long and fruitful relationship between the United States and Morocco, we review just a few:

- In a [December 1789 letter](#) to Sultan Sidi Mohammed, President Washington wrote, "Within our Territories there are no Mines, either of Gold, or Silver, and this young Nation, just recovering from the Waste and Desolation of a long War, have not, as yet, had Time to acquire Riches by Agriculture and Commerce. But our Soil is bountiful, and our People industrious; and we have Reason to flatter ourselves, that we shall gradually become useful to our Friends.... It gives me Pleasure to have this Opportunity of assuring your Majesty that, while I remain at the Head of this Nation, I shall not cease to promote every Measure that may conduce to the Friendship and Harmony, which so happily subsist between your Empire and them..."
- In a letter to President Washington following the death of Sultan Sidi Mohammed, his son and successor Sultan Moulay Slimane, [wrote](#), "... we are at peace, tranquility and friendship with you in the same manner as you were with our father who is in glory. Peace." (He said to US Consul in Morocco James Simpson, "... the Americans, I find, are the Christian nation my father most esteemed ... I am the same with them as my father was and I trust they will be so with me.")
- In 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt [sent](#) Sultan Mohammed V a message stating "I have been highly pleased to learn of the admirable spirit of cooperation that is animating you and your people in their relationships ... with the forces of my country." The next year, President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill convened in Morocco for the famed Casablanca Conference, during which the Allies planned their strategy for the remainder of the war.
- In November 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower welcomed Sultan Mohammed V to Washington, [announcing](#) at Washington National Airport, "Your Majesty, it is my great pleasure to speak for the American people in welcoming you to this land. It is a particular distinction that I have, because the records show that your nation was one of the very first, in the early days of our

existence, to give us the encouragement and moral support of your recognition of us as a nation.” In his remarks, the Sultan said, “My desire has been realized today at the moment when my country has recovered its independence and is in a position to strengthen, by this visit, those ties of friendship which have bound our two peoples ever since the United States attained its freedom and became an independent nation.”

- In March 1963, on the occasion of an official visit from Morocco’s King Hassan II to Washington, President John F. Kennedy [said](#), “This is the first spring that North Africa has found peace, and a good deal of the stability which we hope to and will find, I think, in North Africa will be due to His Majesty's efforts. So I think we are fortunate to have him here. I think he knows he is very welcome. We value our old friends and we value, particularly, those that are seeking, under great difficulty, under great pressure, to find a position for their country which advances the welfare of their people, the stability of their area, and the peace of the world.”
- In May 1982, President Ronald Reagan [remarked](#) following meetings with King Hassan II in Washington, “King Hassan is the leader of a great nation at the crossroads of two continents, lying on NATO's southern flank at the entrance to the Mediterranean. It has deep ties to Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the whole Islamic world... I deeply value the depth of experience and breadth of vision that His Majesty brings to the issues of profound mutual concern... And I expressed to His Majesty the great value the United States places on cooperation with him and on friendship with Morocco, a country that stood with us at Our independence, fought at our side during the Second World War, and joins with us today in the quest for world peace and security.”
- In July 1999, on the death of King Hassan II, President Bill Clinton [said](#), “Over his 38-year reign, King Hassan II demonstrated time and again his leadership, his courage, and his willingness to embrace change. He worked tirelessly to promote the welfare of his people, and in recent years he took important steps to deepen freedom in his country. He offered wise counsel to every U.S. President since John F. Kennedy. He worked to break down barriers among the peoples of the Middle East, bravely opening a dialog with Israel, helping to arrange President Sadat's historic journey to Jerusalem, seeking greater tolerance and stability across the region.”
- In April 2002, President George W. Bush said in [remarks](#) following a meeting with King Mohammed VI, “No question that Morocco is a great friend of the United States of America, and for that, Your Majesty, we are very grateful. I appreciate your steadfast support when it comes to the war on terror. I appreciate your leadership in the region.” The President announced plans to broker a free trade agreement between the two countries—the first for the US with an African nation—that went into effect in 2006.

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## Moroccan American Center for Policy

June 2013

### Security in the Sahara and Sahel: The growing threat posed by the Polisario-run camps near Tindouf

Evidence has become overwhelming that members from the Polisario-run camps near Tindouf, Algeria are fighting alongside al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for United and Jihad (MUJAO) in northern Mali, and continue to engage in drug and arms smuggling in the Sahara/Sahel. Recent reports confirm that the Polisario-run camps near Tindouf have become not only a recruiting ground for terrorists and traffickers operating in the region, but also a potential place of refuge for jihadists forced out of northern Mali by the actions of French and African forces.

Indeed, on May 22, the **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace** released a new book, "Perilous Desert: Insecurity in the Sahara," which reported that AQIM "has found an attractive base of supporters and recruits" in the Sahara/ Sahel region. It cited increasing inroads by the group in Libya, Mali, Mauritania, and the Polisario -run refugee camps near Tindouf, which the book said represent "a tinderbox waiting to explode."<sup>1</sup>

A week earlier, the **UN Security Council** warned that an "Arc of Instability" was stretching across the region, which, if left unchecked, "could transform the continent into a breeding ground for extremists and a launch pad for larger-scale terrorist attacks around the world."<sup>2</sup>

These warnings followed earlier reports about the extent of Polisario-member involvement in terrorism and trafficking in the region. On April 16, **Agence France Press** cited reports from an African soldier that jihadists in northern Mali were attempting to reorganize in neighboring countries, including in the Algerian camps of the Polisario Front.<sup>3</sup> According to the soldier quoted by AFP, members of MUJAO had fled to the Algerian camps of the Polisario Front.



On March 15, the **Foreign Minister of Mali, Tieman Coulibaly**, confirmed that, "Polisario elements from the Tindouf camps have been identified with MUJAO fighters operating in northern Mali," adding that Polisario militia members were recruited and paid monthly "salaries ranging from 200 to 600 Euros" to fight for the AQIM-linked MUJAO. A member of the Polisario Front was likewise among seven militants taken prisoner in the battle that killed AQIM leader Abou Zeid on March 1.<sup>4</sup>

These developments and the region's descent into instability and terrorist violence have only increased the urgency to negotiate a solution to resolve the dispute over the Western Sahara – a long-standing conflict that has significantly inhibited regional cooperation to fight terrorism. This urgency has recently been acknowledged by **UN leader Ban-Ki Moon**, who on April 9 called for urgent international efforts to end the Western Sahara conflict because of fears the Mali war will spill over into the territory.

In a report to the 15-member Security Council, Ban argued, "The rise of instability and insecurity in and around the Sahel requires an urgent settlement of this long-standing dispute."<sup>5</sup>

This information has been produced by the Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP). [www.moroccoonthemove.com](http://www.moroccoonthemove.com)

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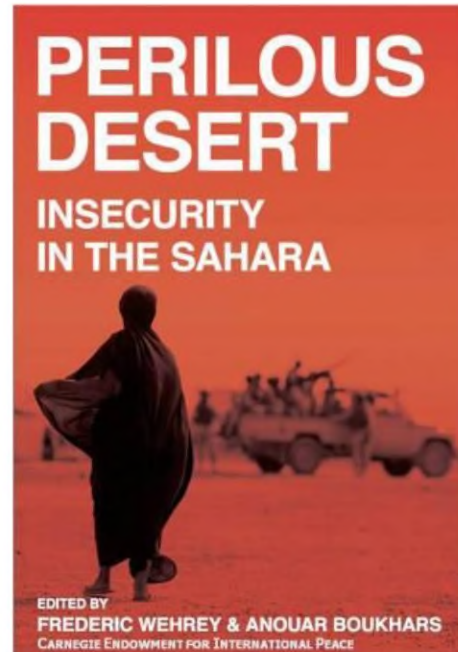
Additional information is available at the Justice Department in Washington, D.C.

The UN report added, "All governments consulted raised serious concerns over the risk that the fighting in Mali could spill over into neighboring countries and contribute to radicalizing the Western Saharan refugee camps," which one government leader in the region called "a ticking time bomb."

A review of documented incidents and expert reports confirms that the Polisario-run camps are becoming a recruiting ground for AQIM, a hub for opportunistic Polisario members trafficking arms across the Sahel and drugs into Europe, and a threat to the security of the region and reforms of the Arab Spring. The most significant of these recent developments includes:

- **Members of the Polisario are fighting alongside AQIM and MUJAO in northern Mali and are engaged in terrorist incidents throughout the region** – On February 4, 2013, Malian foreign minister Tiéman Coulibaly confirmed the presence of Polisario fighters among terrorist groups in Mali. He noted that Polisario militia members had been recruited to fight as mercenaries for MUJAO. His statement reaffirmed previous reports that as many as 300 members of the Polisario were fighting in northern Mali.<sup>6</sup>
- **Members of the Polisario have developed high-level links with al-Qaeda leaders operating in Mali** - On March 1, 2013, *Le Figaro* and *France 24* reported that a fighter from the Polisario Front was among seven militants take prisoner after the battle which killed key al-Qaeda leaders Abou Zeid.<sup>7</sup>
- **The Polisario-run camps near Tindouf, Algeria have become a recruiting ground for traffickers and terrorists** – In December 2012, *CNA Strategic Studies* warned "there is evidence that AQIM has infiltrated the Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf, as well as indications that Sahrawi from these camps have jointed terrorist groups based in Mali."<sup>8</sup>

The CNA study cited the threat as posing "immediate concerns for the security of Western Sahara, Mauritania, Morocco, and Algeria," not to mention US interests in the region.



According to the May 2013 book, "Perilous Desert," from the **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace**, growing numbers of disenchanted Polisario youth and fighters are being recruited by AQIM and a vast network of regional drug traffickers, adding that "there is growing evidence to suggest dangerous connections between criminal organizations, AQIM, and the Sahrawi refugees in Tindouf."<sup>9</sup>

- **Polisario-linked drug and arms smuggling rings are operating in the Sahel** – In the last two years, Algeria, Mauritania, and Mali have arrested dozens of Polisario members caught leading or operating major drug and arms trafficking rings in the region. These rings have been linked to AQIM and South American cartels engaged in trans-Atlantic drugs-for-arms trade with end markets in Europe and the Americas.

Recent estimates of the value of this trafficking amount to nearly \$1 billion US dollars annually.<sup>10</sup>

In September 2012, a **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace** report detailed the extent of Polisario involvement, implicating Sahrawi networks with close ties to the Polisario in the drug and aid trafficking that accounts for much of the organized crime in the region. The report notes, “In the triangle between Mauritania, Mali, and Algeria, Sahrawi networks—often with the direct involvement of officials in the Polisario movement, which seeks independence for Western Sahara—trade subsidized Algerian goods and humanitarian aid southward and cigarettes northward to Algeria and Morocco.”<sup>11</sup>

Further, a February 2013 study by the **IUCTS** cites intelligence reports that confirm al-Qaeda “has established links with Latin cartels for ‘drugs-for-arms’ smuggling through terrorist-trafficking networks that include members of the Polisario Front” in Algeria.<sup>12</sup>



- **Polisario recruits have carried out and assisted in AQIM kidnappings** – On October 23, 2011, Polisario insiders reportedly helped an offshoot of AQIM kidnap three Western aid workers from the Polisario-run refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria.<sup>13</sup> The Spanish aid workers were held for 9 months and released for an alleged ransom of \$18.4 million. As a result of the insecurity in the camps, in July 2012 Spain evacuated all of its aid workers, citing “well-founded evidence of a serious increase in insecurity in the region” and “the serious risk of new kidnappings.”<sup>14</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> Wehrey, Frederic and Anouar Boukhars, eds. *Perilous Desert: Insecurity in the Sahara* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2013).
- <sup>2</sup> "'Arc of Instability' across Africa, If Left Unchecked, Could Turn Continent into Launch Pad for Larger-Scale Terrorist Attacks, Security Council Told." *UN News Centre*, May 13, 2013, <<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sc11004.doc.htm>>.
- <sup>3</sup> Daniel, Serge. "Defeated in Mali, Islamists begin to reorganize." *Agence France Presse*, April 16, 2013, <<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/130416/defeated-mali-islamists-begin-reorganise>>.
- <sup>4</sup> "Ministre malien : Le Polisario livre des mercenaires au MUJAO contre des mensualités de 600 euros." *LeMag*, March 16, 2013, <[http://www.lemag.ma/Ministre-malien-Le-Polisario-livre-des-mercenaires-au-MUJAO-contre-des-mensualites-de-600-euros\\_a68461.html](http://www.lemag.ma/Ministre-malien-Le-Polisario-livre-des-mercenaires-au-MUJAO-contre-des-mensualites-de-600-euros_a68461.html)>.
- "Le ministre malien des Affaires étrangères: 'Le soutien et l'aide du Maroc au Mali sont déterminants pour nous'." *AtlasInfo*, February 4, 2013, <[http://www.atlasinfo.fr/Le-ministre-malien-des-Affaires-etrangeres-Le-soutien-et-l-aide-du-Maroc-au-Mali-sont-determinants-pour-nous\\_a38888.html](http://www.atlasinfo.fr/Le-ministre-malien-des-Affaires-etrangeres-Le-soutien-et-l-aide-du-Maroc-au-Mali-sont-determinants-pour-nous_a38888.html)>.
- "Mali : combattant d'Aqmi, il rapporte la mort d'Abou Zeid." *Le Figaro*, March 1, 2013, <<http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2013/03/01/01003-20130301ARTFIG00354-mali-combattant-d-aqmi-il-rapporte-la-mort-d-abou-zeid.php>>.
- <sup>5</sup> Witcher, Tim. "Ban says W. Sahara risks being drawn into Mali war." *Agence France Presse*, April 9, 2013, <[http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iOnupKvBuc8I\\_WTR3J5BnNCFnmEw?docId=CNG.566cbe22180951c72bc8d9c6ad6fd9d1.d1](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iOnupKvBuc8I_WTR3J5BnNCFnmEw?docId=CNG.566cbe22180951c72bc8d9c6ad6fd9d1.d1)>.
- <sup>6</sup> "Le ministre malien des Affaires étrangères: 'Le soutien et l'aide du Maroc au Mali sont déterminants pour nous'." *AtlasInfo*, February 4, 2013, <[http://www.atlasinfo.fr/Le-ministre-malien-des-Affaires-etrangeres-Le-soutien-et-l-aide-du-Maroc-au-Mali-sont-determinants-pour-nous\\_a38888.html](http://www.atlasinfo.fr/Le-ministre-malien-des-Affaires-etrangeres-Le-soutien-et-l-aide-du-Maroc-au-Mali-sont-determinants-pour-nous_a38888.html)>.
- <sup>7</sup> "Mali : combattant d'Aqmi, il rapporte la mort d'Abou Zeid." *Le Figaro*, March 1, 2013, <<http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2013/03/01/01003-20130301ARTFIG00354-mali-combattant-d-aqmi-il-rapporte-la-mort-d-abou-zeid.php>>.
- <sup>8</sup> Volger, Sarah. "Security Challenges in Libya and the Sahel." *CNA Strategic Studies*, December 2012, <[http://www.cna.org/sites/default/files/research/Libya\\_Sahel\\_Security\\_Workshop.pdf](http://www.cna.org/sites/default/files/research/Libya_Sahel_Security_Workshop.pdf)>.
- <sup>9</sup> Wehrey, Frederic and Anouar Boukhars, eds. *Perilous Desert: Insecurity in the Sahara* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2013). April 2013. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- <sup>10</sup> "Ban calls for boost in efforts to fight organized crime in West Africa and Sahel." UN Press Centre, February 21, 2012, <<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41314&Cr=organized+crime&Cr1=>>>.
- <sup>11</sup> Lacher, Wolfram. "Organized Crime in the Sahel-Sahara Region." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, September 2012, <[http://carnegieendowment.org/files/sahel\\_sahara.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/sahel_sahara.pdf)>.
- <sup>12</sup> Alexander, Yonah. "Terrorism in North Africa and the Sahel in 2012: Global Reach and Implications." *Potomac Institute for Policy Studies/International Law Institute*, February 2013, <<http://www.terrorisemelectronicjournal.org/knowledge-base/selected-special-reports/>>.
- <sup>13</sup> "Three Qaeda hostages seized last week alive: mediator." *Agence France Presse*, October 30, 2011, <[http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gfsKPTIgBS\\_IQzBQK\\_R-Fdj\\_z0A?docId=CNG.fb5674e8c48dbb7ef3f59c256d4c3f07.531](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gfsKPTIgBS_IQzBQK_R-Fdj_z0A?docId=CNG.fb5674e8c48dbb7ef3f59c256d4c3f07.531)>.
- <sup>14</sup> "Spain evacuates aid workers." *BBC*, July 28, 2012, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-19034164>>.

Updated November 17, 2016 12:16 PM EDT

## At COP22, King Mohammed VI Urges Tangible Initiatives, Practical Steps, Respect and Support for Developing Countries

### UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon Praises Morocco's Leadership

**Washington, DC, November 16, 2016 (MACP)** —Calling the Marrakesh Conference “a decisive turning point in the implementation” of the Paris Agreement, this week King Mohammed VI urged participants at the COP22 meeting to move beyond promises to “tangible initiatives and practical steps” – initiatives that, most importantly, respect and support the priorities and resources of developing countries.

The King noted that Morocco's commitment began in 1992 — when, as Crown Prince, he headed his country's delegation to the Rio Earth Summit — and continues today: “Morocco, which was among the first countries to announce their intended Nationally Determined Contributions, has pledged recently to reduce the rate of emissions. In addition, it has taken concrete steps to ensure that 52% of the national energy supply comes from clean sources by the year 2030. By the same token, we have proposed a set of initiatives as part of implementing the Paris Agreement, especially with respect to adaptation and financing. These include the initiative for the Adaptation of African Agriculture.”

“Holding this conference in Africa,” he said, “is an incentive for us to give priority to tackling the adverse repercussions of climate change, which are growing worse and worse in the countries of the South and in insular states whose very existence is in jeopardy.” “The environmental issue is a critical problem which must be tackled in the most serious and responsible way,” he told the assembled world leaders. He continued, “What is at stake is the very existence of man. It is therefore our joint duty to work hand in hand to protect him. Accordingly, countries must not be pressed from the start into accepting decisions they will be unable to comply with. This is not to say that they reject them. It only means that they do not have the necessary means to implement them.”

The King urged “all parties to work on translating our commitment to the values of justice and solidarity into actions, by:

- Providing the countries of the South, especially the least developed, as well as insular states, with such urgent financial and technical support as will enhance their capacities and enable them to adapt to climate change;
- Advanced countries honoring their commitments and mobilizing 100 billion dollars at least, by 2020, which was the key to the Paris Agreement;
- All the parties being involved in facilitating the transfer of technology, and working for the development of research and innovation in the field of climate;
- Non-Governmental players, including companies, local communities, NGOs from civil society, giving strong impetus to the Global Climate Action Agenda.”

“The time has come to redress the situation,” the King concluded. “We have no alternative but to work to make up for lost time, through continued, comprehensive mobilization and positive harmonization, so that the coming generations may lead an enjoyable and dignified life together.”

At a press conference earlier this week, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon expressed his gratitude to King Mohammed VI for convening the Marrakesh conference — and for Morocco's ongoing leadership. “I am grateful for His Majesty convening this very important COP meeting, immediately after the Paris Agreement,” he said. “. . . Morocco is a very important country, Member State of the United Nations, not only on the African continent or in the Middle East but as a whole, providing many young men and women to keep peace and security around the world. And Morocco has been showing a great example based on democratic institutions, making sustainable development and championing climate change actions. Now I sincerely hope that here in Marrakech, we will set

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Morocco On The Move - At COP22, King Mohammed VI Urges Tangible Initiatives, Practical Steps, Respect and Support for Developing Countries -Morocco On The Move

another very important commitment, a passionate commitment, to make this world better for all – and I count on His Majesty’s continuing leadership and guidance on this matter.”

###

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**The Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP)** is a non-profit organization whose principal mission is to inform opinion makers, government officials, and interested publics in the United States about political and social developments in Morocco and the role being played by the Kingdom of Morocco in broader strategic developments in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East.

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Updated November 7, 2016 05:48 PM EDT

## Five Ways Morocco is a Climate Change Champion

### Morocco's Ochre City Hosts 22<sup>nd</sup> Conference of Parties on Climate Change November 7-18

**Washington, DC**, November 7, 2016 (MACP) — Today, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 22) opened in Marrakesh, Morocco—a “perfect place for the world’s biggest climate change conference,” **according to** Quartz.

Indeed Morocco’s decades-long commitment to clean and sustainable energy is widely recognized, most recently by the **2016 Climate Change Performance Index**, which ranked Morocco alongside Denmark, Sweden, and Belgium in the top ten most climatically conscious countries and number one in the developing world, based on criteria including CO2 emissions, renewable energy development, efficiency, and climate policy.

To mark the start of this historic conference, which Morocco has dubbed “**the COP of action**” and which King Mohammed VI has **vowed** to make “a conference for Africa,” here are the five ways Morocco is a climate change champion:

- 1. Morocco has enshrined environmentalism in its governing documents.** Article 31 of the country’s 2011 Constitution guarantees citizens’ right to “the access of water and to a healthy environment”; while Articles 71 and 152 address the government’s responsibility for environmental protection and oversight.
- 2. Morocco has set ambitious energy goals.** Morocco has committed to generating 42% of the country’s energy needs from renewable sources by 2020, and 52% by 2030.
- 3. And is meeting them with even more ambitious renewable energy projects.** The country’s NOOR 1 solar power project, **inaugurated this year**, is the largest in the world – so large it is visible from space; and Morocco plans to develop five more by 2020, capable of producing 2,000 megawatts of energy. In addition, Morocco currently maintains 13 wind farms and plans to build at least six more before 2020, capable of producing a total of 2,000 megawatts of energy.
- 4. Morocco is serious about waste reduction.** The Moroccan Parliament signed a bill into law on July 1, 2016 banning the use, production, or import of plastic bags; and Rabat hosts an active recycling and waste-management center that employs disadvantaged people to sort through waste for reusable, recyclable and saleable material.
- 5. Morocco understands the importance of raising public awareness on climate change issues.** That’s why Morocco’s Association of Teachers of Life and Earth Sciences works with the Ministry of Education to promote environmental awareness at centers in 18 different towns and cities throughout Morocco.

“Morocco has made clear – not just in words but in deeds – for decades that it takes the issue of sustainable energy seriously,” said former US Ambassador Edward Gabriel. “As the COP 21 signatories look to implement the policies put into place last year in Paris, they have much to learn from this year’s host country.”

*For more on Morocco’s environmental initiatives, take a look at our **fact sheet**.*

###

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Updated September 21, 2017 02:41 PM EDT

## In Speech to United Nations, Morocco Prioritizes Africa, Calls for Realistic Resolution of the Sahara

**Washington, DC**, September 21, 2017 (MACP) – Speaking at the 72<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations, Morocco’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Nasser Bourita hailed Morocco’s return to the African Union as a crowning achievement of King Mohammed VI’s vision and underscored Morocco’s commitment to Africa’s future.

“Morocco will continue to shoulder its responsibilities within the African Union, as a founding member of the Organization of African Unity, and as a committed, dynamic and active partner who has always defended its causes and concerns in international and regional organizations,” said Minister Bourita.

Minister Bourita emphasized the importance of viewing Africa as a partner and not a burden, echoing **the words** of King Mohammed VI that “Morocco does not view Africa as a market for the sale and promotion of Moroccan products, or as a continent for making quick profit. We see Africa as a forum for joint action, for promoting development in the region, and for serving African citizens.”

He confirmed South-South cooperation as a major pillar of Morocco’s foreign policy vision, which includes partnerships on development, economic integration, wealth creation, and employment as part of a dynamic to ensure food security and strengthen human development. Morocco continues to engage in discussions on reform within the African Union to find solutions to these challenges in the spirit of realism and compromise.

Such cooperation will be imperative to consensus on a political settlement to the Sahara issue based on a formula of autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty, said the Minister.

Under the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations, and with broad bipartisan support in the US Congress, US policy has continued to support resolving the conflict based on such a formula. Both Congress and the Bush and Obama administrations have also repeatedly called Morocco’s Autonomy Initiative “serious, realistic, and credible.” The most recent UN Secretary General **report** and Security Council **resolution** also called for its examination as a framework for discussion.

Reiterating Morocco’s willingness to work with the United Nations to that effect, Minister Bourita called on the “other parties to this regional conflict to assume their responsibilities” and “seriously and constructively become engaged in the political process under the aegis of the United Nations.”

He recalled ongoing efforts to revitalize the economic and social development of Morocco’s southern provinces. The program to implement regionalization, to enable inhabitants of the Sahara to manage their own affairs in a democratic and stable framework, is also underway.

These efforts contrast sharply with the situation faced by the refugees sequestered by the Polisario in the Tindouf camps. Minister Bourita called on the international community to pressure Algeria, the host country to meet its international commitments and to allow UNHCR to register the camp populations in accordance with Security Council **resolutions**.

“The Foreign Minister’s remarks at UNGA remind us that for more than 10 years the UN has called on Morocco and the Polisario Front to reach a negotiated settlement. Morocco responded to that call with its 2007 compromise solution recognized by the international community as serious, credible, and realistic,” said former US Ambassador Edward M. Gabriel. “It’s time to move on that compromise.”

###

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Updated October 18, 2017 10:00 AM EDT

## King Mohammed VI Calls for New Development Model

### *Urges rapid implementation of Regionalization to support “bold” initiatives*

**Washington, DC**, October 17, 2017 (MACP) – In his speech at the opening session of Parliament this week, King Mohammed VI called for reconsideration of Morocco’s development model “in order to keep abreast of changes in the country.”

The King noted that, “Although Morocco has made tangible progress, which is recognized throughout the world, we have to admit that our national development model no longer responds to citizens’ growing demands and pressing needs; it has not been able to reduce disparities between segments of the population, correct inter-regional imbalances or achieve social justice.”

He said, “What I want is for the situation to be addressed, mistakes corrected and shortcomings remedied.” To that end, he called for “the full implementation of advanced regionalization to be speeded up because that system provides solutions and fulfils social and development expectations in all of our regions.”

The King announced several new ministerial departments to monitor development progress and called for a “new integrated youth policy – similar to the National Initiative for Human Development – that would be based primarily on training and employment.”

“Moroccans today need balanced, equitable development,” he said, “which ensures dignity for all, guarantees income, provides jobs – especially for our young people – and contributes to building confidence, promoting stability and ensuring integration into professional, social and family life, a goal to which all citizens aspire.” The King urged “objectivity and calling a spade a spade, without flattery or embellishment. I call for innovative, bold solutions, even if that means going into uncharted territory or causing a political earthquake.”

“Since ascending the throne, King Mohammed VI has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to reform,” said former US Ambassador to Morocco Edward M. Gabriel. “He consistently acknowledges problems and seeks the most effective solutions – for the benefit of all Moroccans.”

###

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Updated December 1, 2017 03:16 PM EDT

## King Mohammed VI Calls for Shift in EU-Africa Cooperation, New Vision for Migration

**Washington, DC**, December 1, 2017 (MACP) – In a **speech** to the 5<sup>th</sup> African Union-European Union Summit, King Mohammed VI called for a shift in the EU-Africa partnership toward a “new bicontinental pact” to develop a “constructive agenda” based on action to shape a better future. “Both Africa and Europe must rise, together, to inevitable challenges through shared competitiveness, co-localization of productive businesses, regulated human mobility and fruitful cultural exchanges,” the King said.

King Mohammed VI welcomed Morocco’s “role as a natural link between the two continents,” and thanked the Summit for bringing together “the continent to which my country belongs– Africa – and the continent which is Morocco’s neighbor and partner – Europe.”

Morocco has played a key role in EU-Africa relations on the issue migration, and, King Mohammed VI, in his capacity as Leader of the African Union on Migration, called for a new vision and approach to the issue. “Having been a migrant-emitting, transit and destination country, Morocco has developed an introspective approach to the migration issue, which it perceives in an inclusive, positive light,” he noted, adding, “We realize the challenges posed by migration, but we are also aware of its positive aspects...we ought to turn immigration into a subject of peaceful debate and constructive exchange.”

Toward that end, King Mohammed VI outlined and corrected four myths about migration that have obstructed development of appropriate policy responses:

- African migration is not mostly intercontinental. It is primarily intra-African: out of every 5 African migrants, 4 remain in Africa;
- Irregular migration does not predominate; it accounts for a mere 20% of international migration;
- Migration does not impoverish host countries: 85% of migrants’ earnings remain in host countries; and
- There is no longer any distinction between migrant-emitting, transit and destination countries.

King Mohammed VI urged action on migration, calling on African countries to “shoulder their responsibilities in terms of guaranteeing the rights and dignity of African migrants on their soil,” and for a change in European policy to overcome mistrust of migration in order to develop effective solutions.

In closing, the King expressed his hope for the outcomes from the Summit, noting, “I deeply believe that the Abidjan Summit will be a watershed moment in the African-European partnership, and that it will mark a qualitative leap towards greater stability, security and prosperity on both continents.”

“King Mohammed VI’s speech to the AU-EU Summit was yet another example of his bold leadership on the continent,” said former US Ambassador to Morocco Edward M. Gabriel. “Just under a year after Morocco rejoined the AU, it has taken the lead in confronting migration, one of the most challenging issues of our time. The King’s frank and honest discourse is an important call to action for African and European leaders alike.”

*For more on Morocco’s leadership in Africa, take a look at our **fact sheet**.*

###

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Updated August 22, 2017 10:50 AM EDT

## King Mohammed VI: Africa is a Top Priority for Morocco

**Washington, DC**, August 21, 2017 (MACP) – In a **speech** to the nation on Sunday, King Mohammed VI reaffirmed Morocco’s commitment to Africa as a top priority. The speech marked the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the King and People’s Revolution Day, which commemorates the exile of Morocco’s Sultan Sidi Mohammed ben Yusef by French colonial powers – a move that proved to be a turning point in Moroccan’s mobilization for independence.

“Thanks to its spontaneous popular character, and the values of sacrifice and loyalty underpinning it, it inspired liberation movements in the Maghreb and across Africa,” said the King. “It also increased awareness of the destiny Morocco shares with the rest of the African continent, as reflected by the common struggle for freedom and independence.”

King Mohammed VI outlined his country’s long history of participation in African initiatives and organizations, most recently Morocco’s **return** to the African Union this year, and the **agreement in principle** to Morocco’s request to join the Economic Commission of West African States (**ECOWAS**).

“Morocco’s commitment to – and interest in – Africa are by no means a coincidence; nor are they the result of transient considerations,” said the King, who has made more than 50 visits to over 29 African countries, 14 of them since October 2016. “They reflect a sense of loyalty to a shared history and illustrate our firm belief that ours is a common destiny.”

The King noted that Morocco’s Africa policy has directly and positively impacted consideration of the Western Sahara at the African Union and therefore revived the United Nations process to examine the issue with a focus on realism and use Morocco’s autonomy proposal as a framework for discussion, as confirmed by the most recent UN Secretary General **report** and the Security Council **resolution** adopted last April.

“Whereas 2016 was the year of resolve and intransigence,” said the King, “2017 has been the year of clarity and of a return to the standards and principles for the settlement of the artificial dispute over the Moroccan-ness of the Sahara. This firm, unambiguous policy has helped put the process back on the right track... be it in terms of commitment to the frame of reference for a settlement, the appreciation of the autonomy proposal as a negotiating framework, or the determination of the legal and political responsibilities of the real party concerned in this regional dispute.”

Under the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Administrations, and with broad bipartisan support in the US Congress, US policy has continued to support resolving the conflict based on a formula of autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty. Both Congress and the Bush and Obama Administrations have also repeatedly called Morocco’s Autonomy Initiative “serious, realistic, and credible.”

“King Mohammed VI clearly understands the power of Africa and is wisely preparing his African country to help make the next great era an African century,” said former US Ambassador to Morocco Edward M. Gabriel. “His decision is based on the long term strategic interests of Morocco and its commitment to the African continent, and not for short term gain.”

###

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Updated December 12, 2016 03:29 PM EDT

## Morocco Expands African Footprint with Royal Visits to Ethiopia, Madagascar, and Nigeria

### Visits Follow Calls to Rejoin African Union, Recent Trips to Rwanda, Tanzania and Senegal

**Washington, DC**, December 12, 2016 (MACP) — Morocco's King Mohammed VI has concluded the second leg of a nearly two-month, six-country Africa tour with visits to Ethiopia, Madagascar, and Nigeria, resulting in some 50 bilateral agreements. The visits come on the heels of trips to Rwanda, Tanzania, and Senegal in October, when more than 40 bilateral agreements were signed.

In Addis Ababa on November 19, the King and Ethiopian Prime Minister Haile Mariam Dessalegn chaired the launch ceremony for a project to build a “world-class integrated platform for fertilizer production” in Ethiopia, estimated to reach a total annual capacity of 3.8 million tons by 2025, which would render Ethiopia self-sufficient in fertilizer. The two leaders also chaired the signing of several bilateral agreements relating to water resources, banking and finance, and establishing a bilateral business council.

In the Malagasy capital on November 21, King Mohammed VI and President of Madagascar Hery Rajaonarimampianina chaired the signing ceremony of 22 bilateral cooperation agreements in a host of areas, including agriculture, banking, renewable energy, and education and vocational training, as well as an agreement to upgrade and preserve Madagascar's Canal of Pangalanes. The Canal is four times longer than the Suez Canal and eight times longer than the Panama Canal.

Two days later, the King arrived in Antsirabe—the Malagasy city to which his late grandfather, King Mohammed V, was exiled in 1954—to explore a special photography exhibit on his grandfather's stay there, view the hotel in which he lived, and rededicate the local mosque as “King Mohammed V Mosque.” In an interview with Malagasy press following the visit, the King called the visit “very moving,” noting that “Contrary to exile experiences in general, my family has maintained a good memory of this forced stay and has maintained a strong relation with Madagascar, especially Antsirabe.” As an expression of gratitude, the King has committed to setting up a vocational training center and building a mother-child hospital for the city.

On December 1, King Mohammed VI arrived in Abuja, Nigeria, where he and Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari chaired the signing of several bilateral agreements on renewable energy, fishing, and agriculture—including an agreement to develop Nigerian's fertilizer industry. According to an official release from the visit, “This collaboration seeks to secure fertilizer supply for the Nigerian market at competitive prices, share a real know-how in terms of developing local blending facilities, promote innovation, research and development, reinforce local distribution channels, and extend the existing agricultural systems” with the ultimate goal of developing “a sustainable agriculture in Nigeria while helping with the amelioration of farmers' daily life in a spirit of south-south partnership.”

Representing one of Morocco's most ambitious infrastructure development goals, the two countries also announced plans to build a natural gas pipeline that, at completion, would bring Nigeria's energy resources through West Africa to Morocco, and eventually to European markets with Morocco serving as a gateway. Ithmar Capital, Morocco's sovereign wealth fund and co-partner in the venture with the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority, said in a release, “The new collaboration between Morocco and Nigeria is intended to set a model for South-South cooperation and act as a catalyst for African economic opportunities. It aligns with His Majesty, King Mohammed VI's regional strategy, in which he has declared that Africa is the top priority in Morocco's foreign policy and that the Kingdom will contribute to economic, social services and human development projects that directly improve the lives of people in the region. This includes on projects related to the energy sector, and notably sustainable and green projects.”

The King had initiated his East Africa tour with visits to Rwanda, Tanzania, and Senegal before attending the 22<sup>nd</sup> Conference of the Parties to the UN United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP22) in Marrakesh. Though the King has traveled to Senegal many times before, his visits to Rwanda, Tanzania, and most recently Ethiopia and Nigeria were a first and reinforce his commitment to South-South cooperation just a few months after announcing his intention for Morocco to rejoin the African Union (AU). Some thirty countries have already voiced their support for Morocco's bid, including Benin, Gabon, Liberia, Senegal, Egypt, and Ghana, to name just a few.

Since ascending the throne in 1999, the King has made Africa a foreign policy priority. Beyond his many trips, in late 2013 the King established a program to train imams from across the continent. In March 2015 in Rabat, he formally opened the Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams, Morchidines, and Morchidates. In April 2015, Morocco signed a memorandum of understanding with the Millennium Challenge Corporation "with the goal of reducing poverty in Africa, including a focus on promoting adoption of new technologies and innovative business models to promote entrepreneurship." The King also strongly represented Africa's interests on climate change policy at the COP22 summit.

"The significance of King Mohammed VI's recent visits in East Africa cannot be overstated," said former US Ambassador to Morocco Edward M. Gabriel. "They signal a real appreciation for cooperation and a commitment to sustainable economic development that underscores the importance of Morocco and the continent of Africa. We need more of this kind of leadership and dedicated focus in the region."

###

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Updated September 18, 2017 01:24 PM EDT

## Morocco is Still a Climate Change Champion

### *Kingdom Hosts 2nd Annual Climate Chance Summit*

**Washington, DC**, September 15, 2017 (MACP) — From September 11-13 the city of Agadir hosted the second annual **Climate Chance Summit**. It was the largest gathering yet of non-state actors engaged in the fight against climate change. Over 2,000 participants from nearly 80 countries gathered to discuss the importance of engaging non-state actors as key stakeholders in climate negotiations. They also emphasized their capacity to support and implement action toward individual countries' nationally determined contributions (NDC) agreed upon at COP21 and COP22.

The three-day Summit resulted in the **Declaration of Agadir**, which outlined nine conclusions:

1. Non-state actors are stakeholders in negotiations;
2. The 2018 Facilitation Dialogue is a key step in ensuring that current contributions are commensurate with the objectives of the Paris Accord;
3. The Paris Accord was adopted by consensus and it must be supported;
4. Non-state actors pay particular attention to the stakes of adaptation for the most vulnerable territories, especially on the African continent;
5. Current financing pledges are not sufficient to meet the challenge;
6. The role and participation of non-state actors is essential to action;
7. Non-state actors highlight the importance of sectoral considerations (transportation, energy, buildings, agriculture) and long-term roadmaps;
8. Climate science can benefit from the knowledge of non-state actors;
9. The community of climate actors has come together in proposing a vision of the transition to be implemented with regard to the diversity of needs, means, and challenges.

The Climate Chance Summit was the second time that Morocco has hosted a major climate conference. The Summit built upon the discussions that took place during the 22<sup>nd</sup> Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (**COP 22**), which took place in Marrakech in November 2016.

Morocco's decades-long commitment to clean and sustainable energy is widely recognized. The **2017 Climate Change Performance Index** ranked Morocco alongside France, Sweden, and the UK in the top ten most climatically conscious countries, and number one in the developing world, based on criteria including CO2 emissions, renewable energy development, efficiency, and climate policy.

"In addition to its unwavering commitment to sustainability, Morocco has a vibrant civil society and substantial experience – and a successful record – of utilizing public-private partnerships to further policy goals," said former US Ambassador Edward Gabriel. "Non-state actors looking to strengthen their role in combating climate change have a great example in Morocco."

*For more on Morocco's environmental initiatives, take a look at our [fact sheet](#).*

###

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Morocco On The Move - Morocco is Still a Climate Change Champion -Morocco On The Move

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Updated June 26, 2017 03:26 PM EDT

## Morocco Most Democratic Country in Arab World According to Latest Arab Democracy Index

**Washington, DC**, June 26, 2017 (MACP) — Morocco ranks as the most democratic country in the Arab world according to the [Arab Democracy Index](#), released earlier this month by the Arab Reform Initiative and The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. This fifth iteration of the report examines survey data to measure the democratic transition process in Jordan, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt and Morocco.

While the report showed an overall decline in democratization in the Arab world, Morocco posted gains to remain in the lead for the fourth time since the Index first launched in 2008. The North African country showed improvements in a number of indicators, particularly in the data “related to surveillance of the press, the hindering of political party activity, personal safety, and school dropout rates,” according to the report’s Executive Summary.

Tunisia and Jordan followed Morocco as second and third most democratic countries in the Index. Among its many recommendations, the report “highlights the urgent need to strengthen the monitoring functions of [Arab] political systems, enhance the ability of parliaments to ensure accountability, promote judicial independence, and strengthen oversight of the security services. It also recommends supporting the role of women in the [labor] force, reforming education, and giving more freedom to the media to contribute effectively to public debate and raising awareness.”

“Morocco’s rank in the Arab Democracy Index is a testament to King Mohammed VI’s vision for a stable, prosperous, and democratic Morocco—a vision which he laid out nearly two decades ago,” said former US Ambassador to Morocco Edward M. Gabriel. “Morocco should be proud of and encouraged by these results.”

###

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Updated June 30, 2017 10:00 AM EDT

## Morocco, a Majority-Muslim Nation, the First to Recognize Newly Independent United States over Two Centuries Ago

**Washington, DC**, June 30, 2017 (MACP) — America’s Founding Fathers may have ratified the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776; but the document signaled just the beginning of the United States’ long and bloody battle for freedom from British rule. With years of war ahead of them, the colonists needed allies. While the French are perhaps most well-known for taking arms alongside Americans, it was the majority-Muslim nation of Morocco, in northern Africa, that first signaled its recognition of the newly independent U.S.

On December 20, 1777, Morocco’s Sultan Sidi Muhammad Ben Abdullah declared that all ships sailing under the American flag could freely enter Moroccan ports. “This action, under the diplomatic practice of Morocco at the end of the 18th century, put the United States on an equal footing with all other nations with which the Sultan had treaties,” explains the **U.S. State Department’s Office of the Historian**. “By issuing this declaration, Morocco became one of the first states to acknowledge publicly the independence of the American Republic.”

The following year, Moroccan and American diplomats began correspondence that would eventually lead to the negotiation of a formal treaty between the two countries. On July 18, 1787, **Congress ratified** the U.S.-Morocco “**Treaty of Peace and Friendship**,” which set forth the framework for diplomatic relations, assurances of non-hostility, access to markets on “most favored nation” basis, and protection of U.S. ships from attack by foreign vessels in Moroccan waters.

As U.S. President in 1789, George Washington **wrote** to the Sultan, “This young nation, just recovering from the waste and desolation of a long war, has not, as yet, had time to acquire riches by agriculture or commerce. But our soil is beautiful, and our people industrious, and we have reason to flatter ourselves that we shall gradually become useful to our friends... I shall not cease to promote every measure that may conduce to the friendship and harmony which so happily subsist between your empire and [the US].”

Today, the U.S.-Morocco Treaty of Peace and Friendship remains the longest standing U.S. treaty of its kind still in force. July 18 will mark its 230<sup>th</sup> year.

###

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10/15/2019

Morocco On The Move - Morocco, a Majority-Muslim Nation, the First to Recognize Newly Independent United States over Two Centuries Ago -Morocco On The Move

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Updated March 17, 2017 03:56 PM EDT

## Morocco, US Conclude Tenth Annual Flintlock Military Exercise

**Washington, DC**, March 17, 2017, Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP) — United States forces yesterday concluded Exercise Flintlock 2017, a three-week military training exercise in Morocco and six other African host nations sponsored by US Africa Command. More than 2,000 military personnel from 24 African and Western nations participated in the tenth iteration of the exercise, which was established in 2005 to “[strengthen] security institutions, [promote] multilateral sharing of information and [develop] interoperability between counterterrorism partners from across Africa’s Sahara region.”

In Morocco, Marines from Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) trained with their Moroccan counterparts “on small unit special operations forces tactics, weapons training and fire support, lifesaving first aid and trauma care, command and control and force protection.” An opening ceremony was held February 27 at the Tifnit training base in Morocco’s Southern Zone area of operations.

“These types of activities, as well as other joint combined Moroccan-American exercises, are a golden opportunity to further enhance the ties of military cooperation between our two countries,” said Brig. Gen. Mohammed Benlouali, operations commander for Morocco’s Southern Zone, in remarks delivered at the ceremony on behalf of the Moroccan Royal Armed Forces.

“Morocco plays a key leadership role in Africa and we are honored by the continued partnership and friendship between our two countries,” said MARSOC’s exercise instructor.

A **press release** announcing the exercise stated, “In all of American history, no other country has maintained its treaty relationship with America for as long as Morocco. Flintlock 2017 is the most recent in a long line of actions and expressions of solidarity between the two nations.”

Since the 1990s, Morocco has also served as host of African Lion, the largest annual US joint military exercise in Africa, “designed to improve interoperability and mutual understanding of each nation’s tactics, techniques and procedures.” Military exercises like Flintlock and African Lion are just one of the many ways the US and Morocco coordinate on security measures. Designated as a “major non-NATO ally,” Morocco was the first Maghreb country to be a member of the US-led anti-ISIS coalition. And this year, Morocco served as co-chair with the Netherlands of the US-established Global Counterterrorism Forum.

###

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Updated November 8, 2017 09:23 AM EDT

## On 42nd Anniversary of the Green March, King Mohammed VI Steadfast on Autonomy for the Western Sahara

**Washington, DC**, November 7, 2017 (MACP) — In a speech delivered yesterday commemorating the 42nd Anniversary of the Green March, King Mohammed VI stressed Morocco's commitment to implementing the Autonomy Initiative in the Western Sahara, a compromise political solution advocated by the US and other UN Security Council members.

The King reiterated Morocco's continued engagement with the United Nations process, but emphasized that that the Kingdom will adhere to its "firmly established principles" in doing so. These include "'no' to any solution to the Sahara question other than within the framework of Morocco's full sovereignty over its Sahara and the Autonomy Initiative, which has been declared serious and credible by the international community," and "outright rejection of any transgression or attempt to infringe on Morocco's legitimate rights or its best interests; rejection of any obsolete proposals designed to divert the settlement process from the set terms of reference, or to introduce or impose other issues which are dealt with by other relevant bodies."

Addressing Morocco's commitment to the economic and political development of the territory, King Mohammed stated that the Kingdom "will not sit by and wait for the desired solution to be found. Instead, we will press ahead with our endeavors to promote development in our southern regions and offer our populations there freedom and dignity. In this regard, we shall continue to apply the development model specifically designed for these regions and seek, in parallel, to implement the advanced regionalization plan, which will enable the inhabitants of the region to run their own affairs democratically and to contribute to its development."

US policy has long supported a solution to the Western Sahara based on a formula of autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty. Speaking at the adoption of the 2017 MINURSO resolution, Ambassador Michele Sison reaffirmed that the Trump Administration "continue[s] to view Morocco's autonomy plan as serious, credible, and realistic" – continuing the policy of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Administrations. The policy—and support for Morocco's autonomy plan—has also been reiterated by bipartisan majorities of both the US House and Senate.

"Forty-two years ago, the Moroccan people took a courageous leap and were overjoyed at the liberation of their southern provinces from Spain. And Morocco took just as courageous a step some 30 years later in offering autonomy to the region. The US has endorsed the Moroccan initiative of autonomy within their sovereignty and now needs to do everything it can to make this initiative a reality," said former US Ambassador to Morocco Edward M. Gabriel.

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**The Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP)** is a US-based independent non-profit organization whose principal mission is to inform and educate opinion makers, government officials, and interested publics in the United States about the US-Morocco bilateral relationship.

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Updated August 17, 2016 03:35 PM EDT

## US Exports to Morocco More than Triple in Ten Years since US-Morocco Free Trade Agreement

### Texas Claims Spot as Top State Exporter; Nevada, Idaho, Montana Experience Biggest Exports Boost

Washington, DC, August 17, 2016 (MACP) – Export data pulled from the International Trade Administration (ITA) shows that average US exports to Morocco have more than tripled since the US-Morocco Free Trade Agreement (FTA) went into effect just over a decade ago. President George W. Bush signed the FTA, the first US free trade agreement with an African country, exactly twelve years ago today; and the agreement went into effect on January 1, 2006.

In the three years before the FTA (2003-2005), US exports to Morocco averaged \$482 million; in the past three years (2013-2015), they increased 328 percent to \$2.1 billion.

At the state level, Texas claims the spot as the top exporter to Morocco, both in 2015 and on average over the past three years, exporting \$510 and \$710 million worth of goods, respectively. Other top state exporters when looking at three-year averages include Louisiana, West Virginia, Washington, and California in descending order; considering only 2015, Washington, Louisiana, Virginia and California rounded out the top five following Texas.

When looking at sheer growth in exports since before the FTA, other states emerge as winners. Nevada experienced the biggest boost in exports at a nearly 13,000% increase; Idaho's exports increased by nearly 11,000%; Montana's by just over 10,000%; New Mexico by nearly 4,500%; and West Virginia by just under 4,000%.

The US's biggest exports to Morocco include petroleum, aerospace and automotive parts, and food products; and the US imports primarily fertilizer, electric machinery, and certain agricultural products from the country. In 2013, the United States Trade Representative ranked Morocco as America's 69<sup>th</sup> largest trade partner worldwide.

In recent years, Morocco has successfully positioned itself as a gateway for US companies to African and European markets, and through aggressive economic reforms has become a top destination for foreign direct investment in Africa. Earlier this year, Morocco was named by the **2016 Bloomberg Innovation Index** among the 50 most innovative economies in the world and one of just two such in Africa. The results echoed the findings of many industry reports of recent years. In 2014, the Wall Street Journal's Frontiers/FSG Frontier Markets Sentiment Index **reported** that Morocco is among the top ten frontier markets—and the only one in the Maghreb—most favored by foreign corporations. KPMG International and Oxford Economics' **2015 Change Readiness Index** (CRI) ranked Morocco as the most “change-ready” country in the Maghreb, with particularly positive results in the category of “enterprise capability.” The World Bank's **Doing Business 2016** report ranked Morocco first out of 20 MENA countries in terms of “ease of starting a business” and placed it sixth overall in the region for “ease of doing business.”

“Morocco has been doing everything right to strengthen and diversify its economy,” said former US Ambassador to Morocco Edward M. Gabriel. “Choosing Morocco as the US's first FTA beneficiary in Africa was a smart move, and I believe the US will continue benefiting from this strong relationship for years to come.”

###

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**For Immediate Release**

## **New Report Shows US-Morocco Free Trade Agreement Far Exceeded ITA Expectations**

**Washington, DC, May 22, 2017,** Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP) – In the twelve years since its implementation, the US-Morocco Free Trade Agreement (FTA) has dramatically exceeded the predictions initially set by the United States International Trade Commission (ITA), according to a new report published today by the Moroccan American Center for Policy chronicling the origins and impact of the deal.

“In broad terms, the ITA... predicted that US exports were ‘likely to increase by \$740.0 million, and US imports from Morocco [were] likely to increase by \$198.6 million,’” stated the report, titled “[Exceeding Expectations: The US-Morocco FTA](#).” “US exports were able to hit this target by 2007, in just its second year of implementation. Through mostly sustained improvement up to 2016, US exports to Morocco have actually increased by about \$1.4 billion, amounting to a 286 percent boost.” Meanwhile, “Moroccan exports to the US reached their target in 2008,” and since 2010 “have seen consistent improvement,” growing by about \$560 million overall.

The report notes that of the six US free trade agreements implemented between 2004 and 2010 (Chile and Singapore in 2004, Bahrain and Morocco in 2006, and Oman and Peru in 2009), “Morocco’s success stands out among this group. In the first two years following implementation, US exports to Morocco shot up by 118 percent, nearly double the percentage of the next most successful over a similar time period . Moroccan exports to the US grew by 18 percent as total bilateral trade grew by 68 percent—the highest among this group of FTA partners. In terms of jobs, the Morocco FTA was again the top performer, with an estimated 101 percent increase in US jobs supported by exports to Morocco over the same period.”

In addition to generating economic benefits for both countries, the FTA kicked off a series of initiatives further strengthening the US-Morocco bilateral relationship and Morocco’s reform trajectory, “one of the US’s primary goals” for the deal. Indeed the report offers an overview of the largely political impetus behind the FTA—the US’s first in Africa -- noting that it was seen by President George W. Bush’s Administration as a reward for Morocco’s support in the war on terror and as recognition of the two countries’ centuries-old friendship. Congressional support for this view and for the possibility of opening new markets for US exports was overwhelming. In July 2004, the US Senate voted 85-13 in favor of the United States-Morocco Free Trade Implementation Act; and the House of Representatives followed suit with a 323-99 vote in favor. The momentum continued, and in 2007 and again in 2013, Morocco signed two consecutive Millennium Challenge Corporation Compacts; and in 2012, the US and Morocco launched a bilateral Strategic Dialogue—one of about two dozen such agreements in existence.

“From both a political and economic standpoint, the US-Morocco Free Trade Agreement is a prime example of trade policy done right, where both sides benefit, and where the United States strengthens a

relationship with a critical friend and ally,” said report author and MACP Director of Research & Policy Analysis David S. Bloom.

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**For Immediate Release**

## **On President's Day, the Long History of Morocco's Kings and America's Presidents**

**Washington, DC**, February 20, 2017, Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP) — George Washington, whose birthday is celebrated the third Monday in February as President's Day—holds a special place in Morocco's diplomatic history. During his presidency, Morocco became the first country to recognize the newly independent United States, when Sultan Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdullah announced in 1777 that "all vessels sailing under the American flag could freely enter Moroccan ports." The Sultan sought to formalize this friendship and corresponded with President Washington and American diplomats over the next decade, eventually negotiating and signing the Moroccan-American Treaty of Friendship in 1786 (of which future presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were signatories).

Since then, Morocco and the United States have maintained strong relations, with many exchanges recorded between top leadership, including letters, remarks, and more. To mark President's Day and to honor the long and fruitful relationship between the United States and Morocco, we review just a few:

- In a [December 1789 letter](#) to Sultan Sidi Mohammed, President Washington wrote, "Within our Territories there are no Mines, either of Gold, or Silver, and this young Nation, just recovering from the Waste and Desolation of a long War, have not, as yet, had Time to acquire Riches by Agriculture and Commerce. But our Soil is bountiful, and our People industrious; and we have Reason to flatter ourselves, that we shall gradually become useful to our Friends.... It gives me Pleasure to have this Opportunity of assuring your Majesty that, while I remain at the Head of this Nation, I shall not cease to promote every Measure that may conduce to the Friendship and Harmony, which so happily subsist between your Empire and them..."
- In a letter to President Washington following the death of Sultan Sidi Mohammed, his son and successor Sultan Moulay Slimane, [wrote](#), "... we are at peace, tranquility and friendship with you in the same manner as you were with our father who is in glory. Peace." (He said to US Consul in Morocco James Simpson, "... the Americans, I find, are the Christian nation my father most esteemed ... I am the same with them as my father was and I trust they will be so with me.")
- In 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt [sent](#) Sultan Mohammed V a message stating "I have been highly pleased to learn of the admirable spirit of cooperation that is animating you and your people in their relationships ... with the forces of my country." The next year, President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill convened in Morocco for the famed Casablanca Conference, during which the Allies planned their strategy for the remainder of the war.
- In November 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower welcomed Sultan Mohammed V to Washington, [announcing](#) at Washington National Airport, "Your Majesty, it is my great pleasure to speak for the American people in welcoming you to this land. It is a particular distinction that I have, because the records show that your nation was one of the very first, in the early days of our

existence, to give us the encouragement and moral support of your recognition of us as a nation.” In his remarks, the Sultan said, “My desire has been realized today at the moment when my country has recovered its independence and is in a position to strengthen, by this visit, those ties of friendship which have bound our two peoples ever since the United States attained its freedom and became an independent nation.”

- In March 1963, on the occasion of an official visit from Morocco’s King Hassan II to Washington, President John F. Kennedy [said](#), “This is the first spring that North Africa has found peace, and a good deal of the stability which we hope to and will find, I think, in North Africa will be due to His Majesty's efforts. So I think we are fortunate to have him here. I think he knows he is very welcome. We value our old friends and we value, particularly, those that are seeking, under great difficulty, under great pressure, to find a position for their country which advances the welfare of their people, the stability of their area, and the peace of the world.”
- In May 1982, President Ronald Reagan [remarked](#) following meetings with King Hassan II in Washington, “King Hassan is the leader of a great nation at the crossroads of two continents, lying on NATO's southern flank at the entrance to the Mediterranean. It has deep ties to Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the whole Islamic world... I deeply value the depth of experience and breadth of vision that His Majesty brings to the issues of profound mutual concern... And I expressed to His Majesty the great value the United States places on cooperation with him and on friendship with Morocco, a country that stood with us at Our independence, fought at our side during the Second World War, and joins with us today in the quest for world peace and security.”
- In July 1999, on the death of King Hassan II, President Bill Clinton [said](#), “Over his 38-year reign, King Hassan II demonstrated time and again his leadership, his courage, and his willingness to embrace change. He worked tirelessly to promote the welfare of his people, and in recent years he took important steps to deepen freedom in his country. He offered wise counsel to every U.S. President since John F. Kennedy. He worked to break down barriers among the peoples of the Middle East, bravely opening a dialog with Israel, helping to arrange President Sadat's historic journey to Jerusalem, seeking greater tolerance and stability across the region.”
- In April 2002, President George W. Bush said in [remarks](#) following a meeting with King Mohammed VI, “No question that Morocco is a great friend of the United States of America, and for that, Your Majesty, we are very grateful. I appreciate your steadfast support when it comes to the war on terror. I appreciate your leadership in the region.” The President announced plans to broker a free trade agreement between the two countries—the first for the US with an African nation—that went into effect in 2006.

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