

Democracy in Morocco

- Morocco has held Parliamentary elections since 1963. The 2002 elections were certified “fair and free” by the US Department of State, and King Mohammed VI’s cabinet was chosen from a variety of political parties. The next scheduled elections will take place September 7th 2007.¹
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>
<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/02/22/africa/AF-GEN-Morocco-Elections.php>
- Since beginning his reign in July 1999, King Mohammed VI has instigated steps to guarantee modernization of the government through dialogue initiatives, enhanced press freedoms, reduced regulations governing political parties, improved educational and training institutions, and enhanced legal protection of labor unions and workers’ rights. Governmental organizations have thus become increasingly transparent.
- The King’s commitment to democracy and an active civil society is illustrated in a 2003 speech to the nation, “Indeed, our strength lies in the democratic system we have opted for as an irreversible choice which, coupled with an aggressive, committed diplomacy, involving parliament, political parties, trade unions and civil society, will help us in the defense of our just cause.”
<http://www.mincom.gov.ma/english/generalities/speech/2003/GreenMarch.htm>
- In January 2004, Parliament enacted the new *Moudawana*, a reformed Family Code of law, ensuring increased rights for children and women. These enhanced rights demonstrate that this reformed Family Code and the process of modernization do not conflict with the basic tenets of Islam.
- The *Moudawana* is one of the most revolutionary laws on women’s and family rights in the Arab region. This reformed Family Code helped to assure women’s involvement in the political system. It has led to

¹ “Moroccan government sets Sept. 7 date for parliamentary elections,” *International Herald Tribune-Africa and Middle East* 22 February 2007.

increased avenues to combat sexual harassment and to eradicate and prosecute violence against women.²

<http://www.hrea.org/moudawana.html>

- In January 2004, King Mohammed VI formed Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The committee, led by 17-year political prisoner Driss Benzekri, was tasked with reviewing Morocco's current human rights status, opening previously locked government files, interviewing victims and their families and offering reparations. On the formation of the Commission, King Mohammed VI stated, "Our objective is that Moroccans reconcile with themselves and with their history."
http://www.ier.ma/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=40
- Organizations including the *Democratic Association of Moroccan Women* (ADFM) work in collaboration with the government to guarantee the proper implementation of the new Family Law.³
<http://allafrica.com/stories/200202180749.html>
- During the 1990s, supported by the democratic values of the post-Cold War era, Morocco initiated a "top down process" of social, economic, and political reform. These reforms have allowed for the development of a strong network of secular civil society organizations in Morocco. A number of issues surrounding corruption are now being debated and addressed in the public realm.
- During the final years of King Hassan II's 38-year reign, he introduced an elected chamber to the Parliament and endorsed multi-party politics. Today, the government is supported by a bicameral Parliament whose lower house consists of 325 members in the Majlis an-Nuwad (Chamber of Representatives), elected by popular vote for five-year terms; and the 270-seat Chamber of Advisors in the upper house, whose members are chosen for 9-year terms from professional associations, trade unions, and elected local councils. The Parliament is responsible for writing laws and earmarking funds for matters relating to society and the economy.

² The Moroccan Family Code (Moudawana), Human Rights Education Associates 5 Feb 2004.

³ "Interview with Nouzha Skalli-Bennis- Morocco: Moroccan American Women Press for Change," *AllAfrica* Feb 18, 2002.