



SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Enabling Environment Snapshot Morocco

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This document has been produced by Réseau Amazigh pour la Citoyenneté

Context

Following the [mass protests](#) that took place across Morocco during the Arab Spring of 2011, a new [Constitution](#), which expanded the scope of civil rights and freedoms, was adopted by referendum. However, this increase in rights on paper has not been translated into an enabling environment for civil society actors. Morocco continues to be characterised by [repression](#) of protests and criticisms. Civic space has been [obstructed](#), as civil rights that allow civil society to work, such as freedom of expression, assembly and association, are frequently [violated or restricted](#). The authorities have [unleashed](#) violent campaigns to crush protesters, using means such as arrests and show trials of journalists, activists and civil society leaders, particularly those from the Amazigh movement. Notable examples of protests include the marches and sit-ins by the Moroccan Front in Support of Palestine and Against the Normalisation of Relations with Israel, and the [student strikes](#) in the faculties of medicine and pharmacy against the reform of medical studies.

1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms

Civil society organisations are recognised in articles 12, 13 and 139 of the [Moroccan Constitution](#). Despite the gradual opening up of civic space in the 2011 constitution, the Moroccan authorities, at both local and central level, have [targeted](#) civil society actors and human rights defenders by subjecting them to state repression. Freedom of expression remains [very limited](#).

There is a growing number of cases of arrest, harassment and victimisation of civil society and human rights defenders, such as the arrests [of Abdul Rahman Zanka](#), a human rights defender, [Fouad Abdelmoumni](#), and [Said Ait Mahdi](#), head of the Al-Houz Earthquake Victims' Coordination, or the sentencing of the activist [Ismail Laghzaoui](#). In 2024, the Instance nationale de soutien aux prisonniers d'opinion et aux victimes de violations de la liberté d'expression (Instance) has documented [43 cases](#) of violations of freedom of expression linked to an increase in the number of trials related to freedom of opinion, expression, demonstrations and peaceful protests in Morocco.

The Moroccan authorities have also enacted laws that limit the dynamism of civil society and restrict civic space, as well as the access to justice of civil society organisations to denounce crimes of corruption and misappropriation of public funds. This is a right guaranteed by the Moroccan Constitution and international conventions. For example, [draft law](#) no. 03.23 amending and supplementing law no. 22.01 on the Code of Criminal Procedure, aims to radically change criminal procedure. The associations believe that [articles 3 and 7](#) are in contradiction of Morocco's international commitments. The associations have denounced the restriction of their access to justice to report crimes of corruption and embezzlement of public funds and have called for [demonstrations](#).

2. Supportive legal framework for the work of civil society actors

In Morocco, the organisation and operation of associations and non-governmental organisations must comply with the terms and conditions laid down by law, governed by the [dahir of 15 November 1958](#), as revised in 1973 and amended in 2002 and in [2024 regulating the right of association](#). In the opinion of those involved in associations and those interested in associative issues, this regulatory law today contradicts and runs counter to the content of the provisions of the 2011 Constitution, [articles](#) 12, 13 and 139, which enshrines associations as contributors to the development of the country with rights to participate in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of decisions and projects of elected institutions and public authorities within the framework of a participatory democracy. Article 12 of the Constitution specifically [states](#) that civil society associations and non-governmental organisations can be established and operate freely, subject to the Constitution and the law, and can only be dissolved or suspended through a judicial decision.

The registration of CSOs is subject to a cumbersome regulatory procedure. After fulfilling all the conditions for creating or renewing the structures of a national or international association in accordance with article 5 of [the Dahir](#) of 1958, amended in 2024, and submitting an application to the relevant authorities, the applicants have to wait 60 days to obtain the legal receipt, whether temporary or permanent. Worse still, the authorities do not issue a receipt proving that the association has filed its application with them, and in the event that the authorities do not respond positively to the application, the association cannot take legal action in the absence of a document proving the application. As a result of these practices, many associations, NGOs and important civic actors have fallen victim to this abusive administrative practice.

To ensure that the Moroccan authorities avoid a contradiction between central and local powers and limit the organisational expansion of national associations, in December 2024 the Minister of the Interior sent [an order](#) to [walis](#) (representatives of the central authority) and governors requesting them to issue legal receipts only to sections of associations if the parent association has first declared this initiative to the competent authorities in its geographical area.

3. Accessible and sustainable resources

Funding for civil society actors in Morocco is relatively accessible, with support from international donors, private foundations and local contributions. However, they are required to [declare](#) the receipt of funds, including foreign grants, in accordance with Chapter 32 of the Dahir no. 1-58-376 of 15 November 1958, as [amended in 2024](#). Although this law does not directly stipulate accounting obligations, it does require registered associations to respect financial transparency, including the correct keeping of accounts. Chapter 32 specifically requires that associations declare foreign aid to the General Secretariat of the Government within thirty days, specifying amounts and sources, with violations leading to potential dissolution under Chapter 7. This has enabled government to easily monitor associations and

their donors. As a result, associations are often subject to strict accounting obligations, particularly when it comes to managing donations and grants. The Accounting Plan for Associations and Foundations (PCAF), adopted in 2018, was developed to meet the specific needs of not-for-profit entities. It aims to standardise the accounting practices of associations and foundations while ensuring transparent management of financial resources.

4. State Openness and Responsiveness

Interactions between the government and civil society players are unstable, although there are [spaces for communication](#) and consultation, such as the preparation of the [national action plans](#) 2024-2027 of Open Government Morocco and the [Nassij strategy](#) for the promotion of civil society associations 2022-2026. In addition to concluding partnerships with civil society, on the 8th and 9th November 2024, the Ministry attached to the Head of Government responsible for relations with Parliament organised the third [National Civil Society Forum](#) in the Rabat-Salé-Kénitra region. The Amazigh movement, for example, was also consulted as part of the social debate on the [amendment of the Family Code](#), which took place in November 2023. Pending the promulgation of the Law on the Family Code, consideration of the Amazigh movement's proposals will be confirmed.

5. Political Culture and Public Discourses on Civil Society

The national debate on civil society has led to more confrontational government practices aimed at controlling and disregarding the law on associations, through the repeated refusal to issue legal receipts for creation or renewal.

When the Moroccan government wants to reform, adopt or pass a law or project, it consults civil society, including opposition and non-legally recognised associations, to ensure that the law or project has societal legitimacy. However, consultation does not mean non-marginalisation. Examples of the marginalisation of the Amazigh Network for Citizenship include: depriving it of legal status since 2014 and depriving it of public funding due to the absence of a legal receipt.

Challenges and Opportunities

The confrontation of civil society with the implementation of the provisions of [dahir n° 1-58-376](#) governing the right of association, will continue to constitute a major challenge for associations wishing to carry out their activities in complete freedom. In addition, the [restrictions](#) experienced when wishing to create or renew an association with the aim of defending human rights, women's rights, Amazighs, LGBTs, religious minorities and others, their right to an acknowledgement of receipt of their applications to create or renew an association - which deprives them of their right to appeal to the courts - will probably continue to characterise the environment for associations.

The following laws will continue to represent a challenge for civil society if they are not amended or completely abolished: Bill 03-23 on the Code of Criminal Procedure, Articles 3 and 7 introduce considerable restrictions on the prerogatives of civil society associations. Article 3 stipulates that only the judicial authorities, on the basis of reports from official bodies, may institute proceedings for crimes involving public funds. In addition, article 7 imposes a further condition, requiring associations to obtain authorisation from the Minister of Justice before they can bring civil action, based on criteria to be laid down in a forthcoming regulatory text.

These articles aim to limit the access to justice by civil society organisations to denounce crimes of corruption and misappropriation of public funds. This right is guaranteed by the Moroccan Constitution and international conventions. There seems to be no opportunity to amend or repeal these articles at this stage, as the aim is to provide legal protection for civil servants as to not hold them to account or subject them to prosecution. Similarly, the possibilities of amending or annulling these articles appear to be limited, as the aim of these chapters is to provide legal protection for decision-makers and state officials at both local and central level so that they are not subject to legal proceedings. This makes it difficult for associations to fight against these articles.

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