

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: MAR35417
Country: Morocco
Date: 22 September 2009

Keywords: Morocco – Fez – Criminal gangs – Anizyin – Religious freedom – Corruption – State protection

This response was prepared by the Research & Information Services Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. This research response may not, under any circumstance, be cited in a decision or any other document. Anyone wishing to use this information may only cite the primary source material contained herein.

Questions

- 1. Is anything known on a religious based gang known as Anizyin or the Organisation (AO)?**
- 2. If yes, what are they about?**
- 3. Would they kill a Muslim who is a non believer?**
- 4. Would they have contacts in the Police and the Government? Is there corruption in Fes?**
- 5. How effective is state protection in Fes?**
- 6. Can it be verified that AO visits people's homes to kill them for breaches of Islam?**

RESPONSE

- 1. Is anything known on a religious based gang known as Anizyin or the Organisation (AO)?**
- 2. If yes, what are they about?**
- 3. Would they kill a Muslim who is a non believer?**

Searches were done for the group under the spelling 'Anizyin' and 'Anizin'. Searches were also done in Arabic. No information was found on the group.

Evidence was found of the existence of other Islamic extremist and/or terrorist groups in Morocco such as Ansar El Mehdi and Adl wa Ihsane, which are discussed in later questions.

- 4. Would they have contacts in the Police and the Government? Is there corruption in Fes?**

Influence of Islamists in Government

While no specific information was found on Anizyin having contacts in the police or Government, sources indicated Islamist viewpoints were accepted within the Government, which is under the control of the Monarchy. Zeghal argues in a 2008 book that the Monarchy and Islamist movements “present similarities...in some of their religious interpretations and a degree of proximity to Islamic state institutions” (Zeghal, M. 2008, *Islamism in Morocco: Religion, Authoritarianism and Electoral Politics*, Markus Weiner Publishers, Princeton, NJ, p xvi <http://books.google.com.au/books?hl=en&lr=&id=4rE-ZcjiNhgC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=islamist+fundamentalism+morocco+fes&ots=Bt4aVfBIHj&sig=Al9pO6bkpgPBWGqLiFPqTTOMgx0#v=onepage&q=&f=false> – Accessed 18 September 2009 – Attachment 1).

It is worth noting that despite this, Morocco’s Government is an ally of the United States and Europe and has taken a firm, sometimes harsh, approach to Islamic extremists under its antiterrorism laws. A 2009 Human Rights watch report stated:

Presenting its request that the United States grant Morocco a total of US\$29 million in aid in 2009, the State Department called Morocco “one of the United States’ oldest and closest allies in the region... [A] moderate, stable, democratizing Arab Muslim nation, an important actor in the war on terrorism and a constructive force in the pursuit of Middle East peace”.

... Morocco has sought privileged relations with the European Union, which is in turn eager for Morocco’s cooperation in combating terrorism and illegal migration. The kingdom is the biggest beneficiary of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, with €654 million in aid earmarked for 2007-2010 (Human Rights Watch 2009, *World Report – Morocco/Western Sahara*, January – Attachment 2).

The US Department of State itself noted Moroccan authorities’ heavy handed approach to Islamists in its report *2008 Human Rights Practices: Morocco*:

As in recent years, law enforcement efforts continued to focus arrests more narrowly than the previous broad dragnets used following the 2003 Casablanca attacks. Police disrupted six suspected terrorist cells during the year and arrested more than 100 individuals.

...In July 2007 the government opened the trial of 52 individuals arrested in 2006 as part of the so-called Ansar El Mehdi case on charges of conspiring to overthrow the monarchy through terrorism. Many of the defendants claimed to the media, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and in court that they had been tortured and mistreated. They were denied permission to call witnesses, and in February the defendants were sentenced to 25 years in prison.

...Under the antiterrorism law, after the first 96 hours two additional 96-hour extensions are allowed at the prosecutor’s discretion. Under the law a person may be detained without trial for up to one full year while an investigating magistrate completes his work.

...The antiterrorism law does not include a system of bail.

...Because of delays in notifying family, lawyers sometimes were not informed promptly of the date of arrest and were not able to monitor compliance with administrative detention limits, which authorities exceeded when individuals were suspected of links to terrorism.

...The Association El Nassir, an NGO that advocates on behalf of jailed Islamists, estimated that 200 individuals remained in custody without charge at the end of 2007 as a result of terror-related dragnets.

...In August the international NGO Reporters Without Borders (RSF) reported that since the beginning of King Mohammed VI's reign in 1999, at least 34 media institutions had been censored and at least 20 journalists had been prosecuted under press, penal, or anti-terror laws (US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2008: Morocco*, February, Sections 1c and 1d – Attachment 3).

The above mentioned Human Rights Watch report discussed specific cases of the Government's strong-arm approach to the handling those suspected of Islamic extremism:

Hundreds of suspected Islamist extremists arrested in the aftermath of the Casablanca bombings of May 2003 continue to serve prison terms, despite a series of royal pardons that freed a few hundred of them. Many of those rounded up in 2003 were held that year in secret detention for days or weeks, subjected to mistreatment and sometimes torture while under interrogation, then convicted in unfair trials. Some of those convicted were sentenced to death, a punishment that Morocco has not abolished even though it has not carried it out since 1993. Since August 2006 police arrested hundreds more suspected Islamist militants, bringing the total to more than a thousand (by some estimates) as of September 2008.

Intelligence agencies continued to interrogate terrorism suspects at an unacknowledged detention center at Temara, near Rabat, according to numerous reports from detainees. Suspects allege that police tortured them under interrogation, while holding them in pre-charge custody for longer than the 12-day maximum the law provides for terrorism cases. For example, schoolteacher Abdelkrim Hakkou went missing from near his home in Ain Taouijdat on May 16, 2008. His family did not learn his whereabouts until July, when he was brought before a judge and charged with attempting to recruit jihadists to fight in Iraq. Hakkou told his family that police had held him during most of the six-week period in secret detention in Temara, where they tortured him. At this writing, Hakkou remained in pretrial detention. The authorities claim Hakkou was arrested only on July 1 and presented to the prosecutor July 11.

Over the past decade, those like Hakkou who “disappeared” turned up after some weeks in police custody, unlike hundreds of persons who had “disappeared” during the reign of the late King Hassan II and were never found again alive (Human Rights Watch 2009, *World Report – Morocco/Western Sahara*, January – Attachment 2).

In a 2009 article reporting on Secretary General Irene Khan's call on Moroccan authorities to stop human rights violations, Amnesty International mentions the case of a suspected Islamic extremist:

Referring to Amnesty International's reports of human rights violations in the context of counter-terrorism since 2003 and the climate of impunity, she called for independent investigations into allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, in particular in the case of Binyam Mohamed. He was reported to have been held in secret detention and tortured in Morocco for 18 months prior to being transferred to Guantanamo Bay in September 2004 (Amnesty International 2009, *Morocco/Western Sahara: Irene Khan acknowledges positive steps and calls for more progress*, March – <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/moroccowestern-sahara-irene-khan-acknowledges-positive-steps-and-calls-m> – Accessed 21 September 2009 – Attachment 4).

The Government's response to Islamic extremism is centred on its tight control over the practice of Islam in the country (further detail on this is provided in response to Question 6). The US Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report 2008* discusses how organizations and groups deviating from the Government's views regarding Islam sometimes face repression:

The Government does not recognize Adl wa Ihsane, the Justice and Charity Organization (JCO), an organization that rejects the King's spiritual authority. The JCO advocates an Islamic State, continues to organize and participate in political demonstrations, and operates web sites although the Government does not allow the public distribution of its published materials. The Government continued to prohibit its public meetings throughout the reporting period, referring to the organization as one using religion for political purposes.

Ongoing struggles between the Government and the JCO continued during the reporting period. In March 2007 four JCO members were sentenced to 1 year in prison for participating in illegal gatherings. JCO sources reported that members were regularly harassed.

On February 23, 2008, the media reported the arrest of 53 members of the JCO in Essaouira for holding an unauthorized meeting at the house of a regional leader. The meeting was attended by the movement's regional leaders from Marrakech, Casablanca, Mohammedia, and Essaouira.

Government informers continue to monitor campus activities, primarily those conducted by Islamists (US Department of State 2008, *International Religious Freedom Report 2008 – Morocco*, September, Section 2 – Attachment 5).

Corruption

While no information was found on local corruption in Fes, reports indicate that corruption is prevalent throughout Morocco. The previously mentioned US *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2008: Morocco* detailed corruption in the police and security apparatus:

Corruption and impunity remained problems and impacted police effectiveness. The MOI increased investigations of police abuse and corruption, but the investigations rarely resulted in reported disciplinary action or judicial proceedings. Cases usually languished in the investigatory or trial phases without reaching resolution.

In February six prison guards were sentenced to between two months suspended and four years' imprisonment on charges of forgery, corruption, and aiding a prisoner in escaping from custody. On December 30, two gendarmes were arrested after they were caught receiving bribes. One was sentenced to five years in prison, and the other awaited trial at year's end. Authorities arrested 30 non-commissioned officers in the gendarmerie on corruption charges. Of those, 16 were sentenced to between two months and six years' imprisonment, and 14 remained in custody awaiting trial.

In August 2007 the police chief in Rabat was charged with participation in a drug smuggling and prostitution ring. His case was pending at year's end.

In December 2007 three gendarmes in Inezgane were convicted and sentenced to one year in prison and fired from the gendarmerie for accepting a bribe to help convince a woman to withdraw her charges of rape. The MOJ prosecuted six members of the gendarmerie for cases related to abuse of citizens. Another case resulted in a not guilty verdict and cases against four individuals are pending. The DGSN did not bring any abuse cases against its members.

In 2007 six security agents, three members of auxiliary forces, three civil servants from the MOI, and 11 others were sentenced to between three and five years in prison for acquiring forged documents to receive government benefits fraudulently.

... In May 2007 authorities blocked access to YouTube.com for six days after it aired videos considered insulting to the king and for four days due to concerns about a video implicating police in corruption (US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2008: Morocco*, February, Section 1d – Attachment 3).

In 2009, the Business Anti-Corruption Portal (an inter-governmental anti-corruption network) relying on 2006 data stated that there was “well organized” corruption in the police force:

Several observers highlight the traffic police as being particularly corrupt.

Business Corruption

An overwhelming majority of companies queried by Transparency Maroc report that the police force is very corrupt and that they have paid bribes to the police.

Political Corruption

Several members of the security forces have been indicted for being linked to drug lords.

Corruption in the police force is said to be a well -organised system enjoying the complicity of actors at all levels. According to Transparency Maroc, traffic police officers who accept/demand bribes are often pressured to deliver a share of the bribes by their superiors at the end of the work day. If a traffic police officer fails to provide a superior with sufficient cash, the officer will most likely be transferred to another less lucrative area.

Frequency

...- 99% of Moroccan entrepreneurs reported that the police force was particularly corrupt.
- 81% of the companies claim that they have paid bribes to the police.
- Approximately 82% of the households surveyed consider corruption within the traffic police to be frequent.
- 48% of the households surveyed claim that they have given bribes to the police ('Morocco Country Profile: Police', 2009, Business Anti-Corruption Portal website <http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/country-profiles/middle-east-north-africa/morocco/corruption-levels/police/> – Accessed 18 September 2009 – Attachment 6).

A Transparency International report in 2006 indicated that citizens ranked the police as the sector most affected by corruption in the country. On a scale where 1 = 'not at all corrupt' and 5 = 'extremely corrupt', Moroccans gave their police a score of 4.2. Other highly ranked sectors included the judiciary, medical services and political parties (Transparency International 2006, 'Report on the Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer 2006', December http://www.tikenya.org/documents/GCB_2006.pdf – Accessed 18 September 2009 – Attachment 7).

The above mentioned US *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2008: Morocco* asserted that corruption was also prevalent in the judiciary:

Politics as well as corruption and inefficiency, influenced the judiciary, which was not fully independent.

...The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but in practice the courts were not always independent. According to observers, corruption remained prevalent. Judges also did

not consistently base rulings on new laws and at times referred to outdated laws in their decisions, resulting in inefficiency as well as miscarriages of justice.

...At the government's discretion, serious state security charges, such as those relating to the monarchy, Islam, or territorial integrity (in practice, advocating independence for the Western Sahara) may be brought against civilians before a tribunal convened by the MOI.

...Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

The judiciary, often inefficient and believed to be swayed by corruption, was not fully independent and was subject to influence, particularly in sensitive cases such as those dealing with the monarchy, religion, and Western Sahara. There are administrative as well as judicial remedies for alleged wrongs.

A national ombudsman resolves civil matters when the judiciary is unable to do so and has gradually expanded the scope of its activities. The number of complaints it received rose from 4,500 in 2006 to 7,000 during the year. Additionally, the percentage of actionable complaints rose from 29 percent in 2004 to 91 percent during the year. Despite the significant increase in numbers of complaints the ombudsman received, most citizens still looked to the CCDH for redress of human rights complaints. The CCDH serves as a conduit through which citizens offer complaints about government malfeasance or human rights violations. It also supervised the international observation of the parliamentary elections in September 2007.

...The judiciary's lack of independence and susceptibility to influence were widely acknowledged, including by the king. In April 2007 parliament adopted a law requiring judges to disclose property and financial assets, and in March a similar law passed pertaining to members of parliament and ministers.

The report outlines corruption throughout the Government more generally:

Government Corruption and Transparency

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption; however, the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials often engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. Corruption was a serious problem in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. In May 2007 the minister of justice stated that corruption and economic crimes accounted for 10 percent of all cases in the court system. During the year the MOJ adjudicated more than 6,000 corruption cases, although the outcomes of most were undetermined at year's end.

...In response to his July 2007 Throne Day Speech, the king charged the government with forming the high-level Central Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, composed of ministerial representatives and members of civil society, to investigate corruption allegations and report them to the prime minister. Eighteen months later, on December 2, the prime minister announced the 42 members of the body, the president of which is a civil society anticorruption activist and former political prisoner. In addition to the commission, the MOJ and the Government Accountability Court (Cour de Comptes) also had jurisdiction over corruption issues.

During the year the accountability court conducted 245 audits of national governmental offices and services and 198 of local authorities. The court's report was generally critical of the level of accountability and corruption in government services. The report levied specific criticism against the Health Ministry, National Investment and Development Fund, and several local mayors for rampant corruption. There were no prosecutions by year's end.

There is no freedom of information law. In practice the government did not grant access to official information to citizens and noncitizens, including foreign media (US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2008: Morocco*, February, Section 1d – Attachment 3).

The previously cited Transparency International report provides the following table ranking countries according to the percentage of their citizens that report themselves or someone in their household having paid a bribe in the last 12 months. Morocco ranks in the highest grouping with 60% of its surveyed citizens reportedly having paid a bribe:

Table 1 – Countries most affected by bribery

More than 40% Albania, Cameroon, Gabon, Morocco
16-40% Bolivia, Congo, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Greece, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Moldova, Nigeria, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Senegal, Ukraine, Venezuela
6 – 15% Argentina, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Hong Kong, India, Kosovo, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Pakistan, Panama, Russia, Serbia, Thailand
5% or less Austria, Canada, Denmark, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, United Kingdom, USA

When asked how they would assess the Government’s “actions in the fight against corruption”, the largest proportion, 39%, answered that the Government’s actions were “not effective”. Respondents also gave Morocco a score of 3.1 when asked to score corruption’s impact on political life (Transparency International 2006, ‘Report on the Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer 2006’, December http://www.tkenya.org/documents/GCB_2006.pdf – Accessed 18 September 2009 – Attachment 7).

The Business Anti-Corruption Portal website discussed the lack of prosecution of high level corruption in its 2009 Snapshot:

The prosecutions have been accused of targeting only petty corruption. Also high profile cases and cases where the misdeeds were shown to result from the regime’s style of governance have been promptly halted in order to avoid political embarrassment (‘Snapshot of the Morocco Country Profile’, 2009, Business Anti-Corruption Portal website <http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/country-profiles/middle-east-north-africa/morocco/snapshot/> – Accessed 18 September 2009 – Attachment 8).

A June 2009 Amnesty International article details the case of Chekib El-Khiari whose arrest and detention is allegedly due to his statements about the prevalence of corruption:

Amnesty International considers Chekib El-Khiari to be a prisoner of conscience, solely detained for his anti-corruption statements and his human rights activities. The organization regrets this move by the Moroccan authorities, who instead of focusing on actively combating corruption and drug-trafficking, jailed the person who exposed the allegations of corruption (Amnesty International 2009, *Morocco/Western Sahara: Free activist convicted for speaking out against corruption*, June –

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE29/007/2009/en/823c188e-437e-4046-b4b8-02fa4ca31773/mde290072009eng.html> – Accessed 21 September 2009 – Attachment 9).

5. How effective is state protection in Fes?

Sources suggest that the effectiveness of state protection in Morocco may depend on factors such as an individual's political opinion or ethnic background. No information was found relating to state protection specific to Fes. The Overseas Security Advisory Council, part of the US Department of State, outlines police capabilities and procedures in its *Morocco 2009 Crime & Safety Report*:

The Moroccan police force is based on the French system, with the "Surete National" enforcing law in the urban areas and the Royal Gendarmerie in the rural areas. Moroccan law enforcement officials are well-trained, with many attending international training programs provided by a variety of countries. However, the police are under-staffed and in some cases under-equipped...This quick reaction and the familiarity of the police with the people and the area they patrol have often resulted in quick arrests of perpetrators (Overseas Security Advisory Council 2009, *Morocco 2009 Crime & Safety Report*, January – <https://www.osac.gov/Reports/report.cfm?contentID=96576&print> – Accessed 18 September 2009 – Attachment 10).

The above *2008 Human Rights Practices: Morocco* report discusses the application of state protection in its section on trial procedures:

The law provides for the right to a fair public trial for all citizens. However, according to NGOs, a fair public trial did not always occur in practice, especially for those protesting the incorporation of Western Sahara into Morocco. Juries are not used, following principles of the Napoleonic legal system.

Although accused persons generally are brought to trial within the initial period of two months, prosecutors may request up to five additional two-month extensions of pretrial detention. An accused person therefore may be kept in detention for up to one year prior to trial. Defendants are presumed innocent.

According to the law, all defendants have the right to be represented by attorneys. If a defendant cannot afford private counsel, a court appointed attorney is provided when the offense carries a maximum sentence of more than five years. However, attorneys were not appointed consistently, or if provided, were poorly paid, often resulting in inadequate representation. Judges sometimes denied defense requests to question witnesses and present mitigating witnesses or evidence. Defendants are given the right to be present at their trial and to timely consultation with an attorney, although these rights were not always applied in practice. Defendants generally have access to government evidence, but are sometimes prevented or hindered from calling mitigating witnesses.

Individuals are arraigned before a court of first instance. If the judge determines that a confession was obtained under duress, the law requires that it be excluded from evidence. Human rights NGOs, however, charged that judges decided cases often on the basis of forced confessions, especially in cases of Islamists accused of terrorism or in the cases of some Sahrawis. Police statements about detainees were sometimes used in place of defendants' confessions.

The Supreme Court may overturn an appellate court's ruling on procedural grounds only. As a result, appeals to the Supreme Court were infrequent. An investigation by an examining

magistrate was mandatory only when life imprisonment or the death penalty was a possible penalty (US Department of State 2009, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008: Morocco*, February, Section 1d – Attachment 3).

The aforementioned Human Rights Watch article supports this view of bias in politically sensitive cases:

In cases with political overtones, courts rarely provide fair trials, ignoring requests for medical examinations lodged by defendants who claim to have been tortured, refusing to summon exculpatory witnesses, and convicting defendants on the basis of apparently coerced confessions (Human Rights Watch 2009, *World Report – Morocco/Western Sahara*, January – Attachment 2).

Regarding atheism, the US State Department report mentions the following with regard to cases involving religion:

The judiciary, often inefficient and believed to be swayed by corruption, was not fully independent and was subject to influence, particularly in sensitive cases such as those dealing with the monarchy, religion, and Western Sahara (US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2008: Morocco*, February, Section 1d – Attachment 3).

6. Can it be verified that AO visits people's homes to kill them for breaches of Islam?

No information was found on the group Anizyin targeting people for 'breaches of Islam'. However, due to the Monarchy taking responsibility for the overseeing of Islamic practice, there is potential for the state itself to target anyone seen as having 'breached Islam'. In her book on Morocco, Zeghal contends that the Monarchy "adopted a subtle strategy that enabled it to exercise broad control over Islam". In Morocco, there is a "connection between Islam and the state" and a "delimitation of secular spaces for political activity" (Zeghal, M. 2008, *Islamism in Morocco: Religion, Authoritarianism and Electoral Politics*, Markus Weiner Publishers, Princeton, NJ, p 32 <http://books.google.com.au/books?hl=en&lr=&id=4rE-ZcjiNhgC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=islamist+fundamentalism+morocco+fes&ots=Bt4aVfBIHj&sig=Al9pO6bkpgPBWGqLiFPqTTOMgx0#v=onepage&q=&f=false> – Accessed 18 September 2009 – Attachment 1).

The aforementioned US Department of State *International Religious Freedom Report 2008* adds:

Islam is the official state religion, and the King is "Commander of the Faithful and the Supreme Representative of the Muslim Community".

... The Government monitors the activities of mosques and places other restrictions on Muslims and Islamic organizations whose activities are deemed to have exceeded the bounds of acceptable religious practice and become political in nature.

... The Government requires that mosques close to the public shortly after Friday services to prevent use of the premises for unauthorized political activity, and mosques comply.

The MIAE [Minister of Islamic Affairs and Endowments] controls and monitors the activities of mosques, places restrictions on activities deemed to have exceeded the bounds of religious practice or become political in nature, and provides religious training for imams. Authorities

stated that these measures have eliminated the exploitation of mosques for political propaganda, such as distributing pamphlets and raising funds for illicit organizations.

The report also discusses the level of tolerance afforded by the Government and state authorities to non-Islamic religious beliefs. Some laws exist to preserve freedom of religion while others place strong restrictions on other religions:

The Constitution provides for the freedom to practice one's religion.

...The Government places certain restrictions on non-Islamic religious materials and proselytizing. Several small religious minorities are tolerated with varying degrees of official restrictions. The Government monitors the activities of mosques and places some restrictions on Muslims and Islamic organizations whose activities are thought to have exceeded the bounds of acceptable religious practice and become political in nature.

There were reports of societal abuses or discrimination toward those with different religious beliefs, and converts from Islam to other religions.

The Government prohibits the distribution of non-Muslim religious materials, bans all proselytizing, and tolerates several small religious minorities with varying degrees of restrictions.

...According to Article 220 of the Penal Code, any attempt to stop one or more persons from the exercise of their religious beliefs or from attendance at religious services is unlawful and may be punished by 3 to 6 months' imprisonment and a fine of \$16 to \$79 (115 to 575 dirhams). The article applies the same penalty to "anyone who employs incitements to shake the faith of a Muslim or to convert him to another religion." Any attempt to induce a Muslim to convert is illegal. Foreign missionaries either limit their proselytizing to non-Muslims or attempt to conduct their work discreetly.

The Government cites the Penal Code's prohibition on proselytism in most cases in which courts ruled to expel foreign missionaries. Voluntary conversion is not a crime under the criminal or civil codes.

With regard to alleged 'breaches of Islam':

A 2002 law restricting media freedom states that expression deemed critical of "Islam, the institution of the monarchy, or territorial integrity" is not permitted and may be punishable by imprisonment (US Department of State 2009, *International Religious Freedom Report 2008 – Morocco*, September, Sections 1 and 2 – Attachment 5).

The previously mentioned 2009 Human Rights Watch report indicated a harsh approach by authorities towards those who may be seen as breaching Islam:

But authorities, aided by complacent courts, continue to use repressive legislation to punish peaceful opponents, especially those who violate the taboos against criticizing the king or the monarchy, questioning the "Moroccanness" of Western Sahara, or "denigrating" Islam (Human Rights Watch 2009, *World Report – Morocco/Western Sahara*, January – Attachment 2).

Beyond the Government and authorities, the US *International Religious Freedom Report 2008* discusses the views of Moroccan society at large toward those who hold non-Islamic beliefs:

There were reports of societal abuses or discrimination toward those with different religious beliefs, and converts from Islam to other religions. In January 2008 sources in the Christian community reported that several citizens were harassed by local police when they attempted to attend a funeral at a Christian church in Casablanca.

Free expression in religious matters is tolerated; however, society discourages public efforts to proselytize. Many Muslims view the Baha'i faith as a heretical offshoot of Islam and consequently consider Baha'is as apostates. Most members of the Baha'i community avoid disclosing their religious affiliation; however, concerns about their personal safety and property do not prevent their functioning in society, and some hold government jobs.

...There is widespread consensus among Muslims regarding religious practices and interpretation (US Department of State 2009, *International Religious Freedom Report 2008 – Morocco*, September, Section 3 – Attachment 5).

No information was found specifically relating to the view taken towards atheism by either the authorities or society in general.

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Government Information and Reports

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov>

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk>

United Nations (UN)

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/>

International News & Politics

BBC <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

The Economist <http://www.economist.com>

Time <http://www.time.com>

Search Engines

Google <http://www.google.com.au/>

Copernic <http://www.copernic.com/>

Topic Specific Links

Business Anti-Corruption Portal <http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/>

Transparency International <http://www.transparency.org/>

Overseas Security Advisory Council <https://www.osac.gov/>

Amnesty International <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Research & Information database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

MRT-RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. Zeghal, M. 2008, *Islamism in Morocco: Religion, Authoritarianism and Electoral Politics*, Markus Weiner Publishers, Princeton, NJ, pp xvi-32
<http://books.google.com.au/books?hl=en&lr=&id=4rE-ZcjiNhgC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=islamist+fundamentalism+morocco+fes&ots=Bt4aVfBIHj&sig=Al9pO6bkpgPBWGqLiFPqTTOMgx0#v=onepage&q=&f=false> – Accessed 18 September 2009.
2. Human Rights Watch 2009, *World Report – Morocco/Western Sahara*, January.
3. US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2008: Morocco*, February, Section 1.
4. Amnesty International 2009, *Morocco/Western Sahara: Irene Khan acknowledges positive steps and calls for more progress*, March – <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/moroccowestern-sahara-irene-khan-acknowledges-positive-steps-and-calls-m> – Accessed 21 September 2009.
5. US Department of State 2009, *International Religious Freedom Report 2008 – Morocco*, September, Sections 1-3.
6. ‘Morocco Country Profile: Police’, 2009, Business Anti-Corruption Portal website <http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/country-profiles/middle-east-north-africa/morocco/corruption-levels/police/> – Accessed 18 September 2009.
7. Transparency International 2006, ‘Report on the Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer 2006’, December
http://www.tkenya.org/documents/GCB_2006.pdf – Accessed 18 September 2009.
8. ‘Snapshot of the Morocco Country Profile’, 2009, Business Anti-Corruption Portal website <http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/country-profiles/middle-east-north-africa/morocco/snapshot/> – Accessed 18 September 2009.
9. Amnesty International 2009, *Morocco/Western Sahara: Free activist convicted for speaking out against corruption*, June –
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE29/007/2009/en/823c188e-437e-4046-b4b8-02fa4ca31773/mde290072009eng.html> – Accessed 21 September 2009.
10. Overseas Security Advisory Council 2009, *Morocco 2009 Crime & Safety Report*, January – <https://www.osac.gov/Reports/report.cfm?contentID=96576&print> – Accessed 18 September 2009.