

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Questions

- 1. What is the view of the Moroccan authorities to Catholicism and Christianity (generally)? Have there been incidents of mistreatment because of non-Muslim religious belief?**
- 2. In what way has the attitude of the authorities to Jehovah’s Witnesses and Christians changed (if it has) from 1990 to 2007?**
- 3. Is there any evidence of discrimination against non-French speakers?**

RESPONSE

- 1. What is the view of the Moroccan authorities to Catholicism and Christianity (generally)? Have there been incidents of mistreatment because of non-Muslim religious belief?**

Sources report that foreigners openly practice Christianity in Morocco while Moroccan Christian converts practice their faith in secret. Moroccan Christian converts face social ostracism and short periods of questioning or detention by the authorities. Proselytism is illegal in Morocco; however, voluntary conversion is legal.

The information provided in response to these questions has been organised into the following two sections:

- [Foreign Christian Communities in Morocco](#); and
- [Moroccan Christians](#).

Foreign Christian Communities in Morocco

According to the US Department of State, “Jewish and foreign Christian communities openly practiced their faiths”; however, the Moroccan government “prohibits the distribution of

Christian religious materials, bans all proselytizing”. The US Department of State provides the following information on the situation of foreign Christian communities in Morocco:

The expatriate Christian community, Catholic and Protestant, consisted of approximately five thousand practicing members, although some estimates were as high as twenty-five thousand. Most Christians resided in the Casablanca and Rabat urban areas.

...The Government provides tax benefits, land and building grants, subsidies, and customs exemptions for imports necessary for the religious activities of the major religious groups, namely Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

...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 three to six months’ imprisonment and a fine of \$10 to \$50 (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.

...A small foreign Christian community operated churches, orphanages, hospitals, and schools without any government restrictions. Missionaries who refrain from proselytizing and conduct themselves in accordance with societal expectations largely are left unhindered; however, those whose activities become public face expulsion. In March 2005 authorities expelled a South African pastor of a Protestant church in Marrakesh for not having lucrative employment, although authorities had renewed his temporary residence permit annually for five years until January 2005. The deportation followed a series of news and opinion articles in the local press concerning the presence of foreign Christian missionaries in the country, the Government’s invitation to U.S. Christian leaders to visit and meet with political and religious officials, a discussion on comparative religion that took place in March in a Marrakesh classroom, and the job performance of the minister of Islamic Affairs and Endowments.

In May 2004 authorities detained for several hours and subsequently expelled seven foreign missionaries for distributing Christian materials in Marrakesh’s main square.

In the past, some missionaries have been questioned by authorities or have not been granted a “temporary residence permit” enabling them to remain in the country on a long-term basis. No similar incidents occurred during this reporting period.

...From January 2005 until the May 2005 concert of contemporary Christian music, there was a societal debate on the influence of evangelical Christianity in the country. In spite of considerable criticism, the Government allowed the May 2005 concert to take place, and no negative incidents occurred. In May 2006 the concert was held for the second time without incident.

Foreigners attended religious services without any restrictions or fear of reprisals (US Department of State 2007, *International Religious Freedom Report 2006 – Morocco*, 15 September, Section I, Section II Legal/Policy Framework & Restrictions on Religious Freedom & Section III – Attachment 1).

Moroccan Christians

According to the US Department of State, the Moroccan Constitution “provides for the freedom to practice one’s religion.” The US Department of State notes that voluntary conversion to Christianity is legal in Morocco, however, converts may face social ostracism and short periods of questioning or detention:

Citizens who convert to Christianity and other religions may face social ostracism, and a small number of converts have faced short periods of questioning or detention by authorities for proselytizing and have been denied issuance of passports. There were no reports of such occurrences during the reporting period.

On January 6, 2005, according to the foreign nongovernmental organization (NGO) Middle East Concern, police arrested on charges of proselytism a Muslim citizen who had converted to Christianity, and whose passport was found on a foreign Christian arrested for distributing Christian materials in Tetouan. On October 27, 2005, the authorities dropped the charges against the person. Middle East Concern also reported that as of mid-July 2004 authorities had either confiscated or refused to renew the passports of five citizens who had converted from Islam to Christianity. Three of the converts received their passports by August 2004, but foreign Christian leaders in the country alleged that two of them experienced police harassment and long interrogations. The remaining two received their passports by the end of the 2005 reporting period. The reports on these individuals could not be confirmed by other sources.

Voluntary conversion is not a crime under the criminal or civil codes.

... While there is generally an amicable relationship among religious groups in society, Muslim converts to Christianity may face social ostracism (US Department of State 2007, *International Religious Freedom Report 2006 – Morocco*, 15 September, Section II Restrictions on Religious Freedom & Section III – Attachment 1).

The Pew Global Attitudes Project surveyed more than 17,000 people in 17 countries on a number of issues including how people in predominantly Muslim countries view people of the Christian and Jewish faiths. 61% of Moroccans surveyed view Christians unfavourably and 33% view Christians favourably (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2004, 'Summary of Findings', *Islamic Extremism: Common Concern for Muslim and Western Publics*, 14 July <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=248> – Accessed 9 August 2007 – Attachment 2).

An article dated 28 January 2007 by *Assabah* reports that “the number of Moroccan and foreign preachers recently increased significantly throughout the country.” *Assabah* reports that “the Christian preaching wave has engulfed the towns of Casablanca, Marrakech, Fes, Assila, Rabat, Agadir and Tangiers where, now and again, foreigners arrive to directly supervise these preaching cells” (‘Christian preachers “swamping” towns – Moroccan paper’ 2007, *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, source: *Assabah*, 28 January – Attachment 3).

Evangelical Christian organisation, Open Doors International, received information “which confirmed a certain improvement of the situation of Christians in 2006.” Open Doors International continues:

There were fewer interrogations of Christians in Morocco, and according to our local contacts, the government’s attitude is more open towards believers than in the past. However, it is still illegal under Moroccan law to evangelize. There are Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches in the country which are recognized by the government, but only foreigners can worship in these churches. Moroccan Christians are not allowed to join these services (Open Doors International 2007, ‘Morocco’, January http://sb.od.org/index.php?supp_page=ma – Accessed 10 August 2007 – Attachment 4).

According to Voice of the Martyrs, an evangelical Christian organisation, “Morocco is a hostile environment for Christians.” Voice of the Martyrs continues:

Any citizen who comes to Christ can face charges of treachery. Contact with foreign missions and missionary work are also illegal. A Moroccan church consisting of former Muslims will not be officially recognized. ...Many have endured ostracism from their families, loss of employment, and imprisonment for their faith. A Moroccan church is emerging, but at great cost. About 20 small groups are believed to exist throughout Morocco. In theory, Bibles may be imported legally, but Arabic Bibles have been confiscated (Voice of the Martyrs 2007, 'Morocco', *Country Summaries*, p.19 http://www.persecution.com.au/ftp/country_summary.pdf – Accessed 10 August 2007 – Attachment 5).

An article dated 13 December by *The German Press Agency* reports that Moroccan Christian converts practise their religion secretly in Morocco. The article reports that those who reveal their conversion “risk being banished from their families and marginalized in their communities.” The article reports that while the number of Moroccan Christians is impossible to determine, they are mainly Protestants. The article notes that the “Moroccan authorities are aware of the Christians’ activities, and appear to have become more tolerant of them.” According to Lina, a convert from Casablanca, “police used to call us for questioning and watch us closely, almost harassing us...Now it feels as if they wanted to protest us from aggressions by (Muslim) fanatics” (El-Hassouni, Mouhsine 2006, ‘Moroccan Christians celebrate Christmas in secret’, *German Press Agency*, 13 December, The Raw Story website http://rawstory.com/news/2006/Moroccan_Christians_celebrate_Christmas_12132006.html – Accessed 10 August 2007 – Attachment 6).

An article dated 13 December 2006 by *Agence France Presse* reports that “Moroccan converts to Christianity go discreetly to “church” – to the ire of Islamic militants and under the suspicious eye of police.” According to Abdelhalim (pseudonym), “There are about a thousand of us in around 50 independent churches across the big cities of the kingdom.” According to Abdelhalim who coordinates these evangelical Protestant groups in Morocco, “As we are tolerated, but not recognized (by the state) we must, for security reasons, conduct ourselves as a clandestine organisation...As soon as a church has 20 worshippers it splits in two”. The article reports that most of the converts are from the middle class and work in the private sector or as engineers although there are also craftsmen, housewives, students and young unemployed people. The article reports that seven of these “free churches” are in Marrakesh, six in Casablanca, five in Rabat and one in El Ayoun, Western Sahara. The article reports that Christian converts remain Muslims in the eye of the state. Their Christian marriages are not recognised nor can they be buried in Christian cemeteries. According to Lahcen Daoudi, Deputy for the Islamist Justice and Development Party, Islamic militants insist these conversions “are not accepted by the population...As long as it remains at the individual level we can turn a blind eye. The problem is on the social level. If there is proselytism or if children or teachers come to school with the Crucifix, we cannot tolerate that” (Ketz, Sammy 2006, ‘Morocco’s Christians converts irk the world of Islam’, *Agence France Presse*, 13 December WorldWide Religious News website <http://www.wwrn.org/article.php?idd=23686&sec=56&con=57> – Accessed 10 August 2007 – Attachment 7).

On 7 March 2006, Mark Willacy for *Foreign Correspondent* reported on Moroccan Christian converts. Extracts of the report follow:

WILLACY: Moroccans are not only born into Islam, they are branded criminals and can be gaoled for up to three years by the State if they abandon their faith. If that’s not enough, an

even worse fate awaits them according to one of Casablanca's leading Imams, Sheik Lahsen Asanhour.

IMAM SHEIK LAHSEN ASANHOUR: Whoever changes their religion should be killed. We should talk to them first and make them understand how serious it is to convert from Islam to another religion and try to convince them to change their minds. If they persist they should be killed.

...WILLACY: In Casablanca Amal Alami is very much in the minority. She's a Moroccan Christian convert who's stepped from the shadows to publicly proclaim her faith but she's banned from entering a church.

AMAL ALAMI: I would be risking everything. I could risk prison... being kidnapped. I could be hit by people who don't even know what it means to be Christian – who take it as an insult to themselves, to their own faith. It is a real risk.

... WILLACY: While John Gerber is one Christian soldier prepared to run the risk of incurring the wrath of authorities, most Moroccan Christians are far too afraid to go public with their religious beliefs. Converts like Younes genuinely fear being ostracised and alienated.

YOUNES: In Morocco we have a, our culture is based on the family, on relationships you know? On small tribes you know? Small communities so when it comes to someone that says well you guys, if he, if like he says I don't believe in what you believe, it's like he is insulting them. It's like he's bringing, I don't know what I call it... bringing dishonour to the family.

...YOUNES: Some guys with the beard they came to me, they tried to convince me and tell me you need to go back to Islam. Fanatics they, you know they kill you if you say no to Islam.

AMAL ALAMI: I became a Christian about ten years ago and when that happened my family wanted to stone me. Later they calmed down, but that was their first reaction.

IMAM SHEIK LAHSEN ASANHOUR: According to the Koran, Muslims who change their religion and die with their new religion, will go to hell. Islam is everything for Moroccans – it is the basis of their civilisations, their families, relationships. They live and die with it (Willacy, Mark 2006, 'Morocco – Covert Christians', *Foreign Correspondent*, 7 March <http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/content/2006/s1589161.htm> – Accessed 10 August 2007 – Attachment 8).

An article dated 6 March 2006 in *El Pais* reports on Ali, a Moroccan Christian convert who believes the problem is no longer the authorities. According to Ali the problem is family, neighbours and society in general:

It hasn't been easy to find Ali or his fellow Christians. Moroccan churches do not appear in the telephone book, nor do they have websites. Catholic or protestant churches, which are legal in Morocco and can only serve European and Sub-Saharan Christians, barely know the converts and don't provide their numbers. A long chain of contacts must be followed to locate them. When one of them decides to trust the reporter, the entire community opens up.

"They still bring us Christians into the police station once in a while; the last time I was brought in was a couple of months ago, but it's just to chat with us in a friendly way, and try to get information out of us," he adds. "They don't beat or threaten us, or give us warnings,

much less throw us into jail like during the reign of Hassan II.” Ali continues, “There is only what you might call excessive zealotry in small places.”

“The problem,” says Ali as he examines out of the corner of his eye a possible informer sitting near our table, “is no longer the authorities,” although in Massa, in the southern part of the country, Jamaa Ait Bakrim was sentenced in 2003 to 15 years for proselytism and destruction of public property. “The problem is family relatives, neighbors, society in general,” he insists. “The makhzen [royal court officials] want to know all about what we’re doing, but they don’t want to stop us, as long as we’re careful.” Adds Ali: “They’re also concerned about our safety, that we might be attacked by fanatics.”

...“Do you know that, for the people around me, it’s more acceptable to be an atheist than to be a Christian?,” asks the pastor [Abdelhak], married and the father of two children. Ali goes on to explain that while being an atheist is a mistake young people make, being a Christian is interpreted as betrayal: “Not only have you rejected Islam, you’ve converted to the religion of the French colonizer.” “People think that you’ve converted because then it will be easier for you to legally immigrate to Europe or get some kind of economic benefit.”

...Radouan Bencheikroun, president of the Council of Oulemas (religious chiefs) of Casablanca, helps encourage this anti-Christian sentiment: “Evangelicals trick people, attract them with money and social support.” “They spread lies about Islam and Muslims,” he adds. “Rejecting their religion is the worst sin that a Muslim can commit.”

For this reason, as Ali revealed his new faith, he gradually lost friends (‘Morocco’s Muslims who dared to convert’ 2006, *El Pais*, 6 March – Attachment 9).

An article dated 25 January 2006 in *The Morocco Times* reports that Marrakesh police department recently seized documents which “confirm the existence of a secret evangelical group” who have been “trying to convert many Moroccans to Christians”. The documents include a “list of secret spiritual places and the names of Moroccans who are running them”. *The Moroccan Times* report that the new converts “are very discrete” and “don’t usually go to church for fear of stigmatisation” (Rhanem, Karima 2006, ‘Evangelical missionaries in Morocco back in the limelight’, *Morocco Times*, 15 January, WorldWide Religious News website <http://www.wwrn.org/article.php?idd=20201&sec=20&cont=3> – Accessed 10 August 2007 – Attachment 10).

On 4 December 2005, Mark Willacy for *Foreign Correspondent* reported on the conversion of Moroccans to Christianity. Extracts of the report follow:

Those Moroccan Muslims who do convert to Christianity face ostracism and even jail.

...MARK WILLACY: It’s a drizzly Sunday morning in Rabat, but inside Jean Luc Blanc’s church the congregation is radiant.

...Among them there is not a single Moroccan.

JEAN LUC BLANC: Well, because all Moroccans are Muslims, or a few of them are Jews. They’re not allowed to go to church.

...JEAN LUC BLANC: There is no religious freedom in Morocco. That’s a fact. The Moroccan individual is not allowed to change from one community to the other one. Well, it’s a kind of apartheid in a way, religious apartheid.

MARK WILLACY: Despite the law and the threat of prison some Moroccans have changed faiths.

...MARK WILLACY: 29-year old Younes converted to Christianity along with his parents.

He says the punishment for abandoning Islam isn't confined to the law.

YOUNES: I know one guy, he came into my home at four o'clock in the morning, knocking on my door. When I opened the door to him, he said my father threw my clothes outside the house and he told me never come back.

Another guy I know, also, he was, his father, he swear to not eat with him, talk to him, until he quit the house.

I think this is what's painful for the people to change. It's mainly the pressure from the families.

... Some Muslim Imams have openly called for Moroccans who accept Christianity to be killed.

Convert Younes says he's already been warned that he must re-embrace Islam.

YOUNES: Some guys with the beard, they came to me, they tried to convince me and tell me you need to go back to Islam (Willacy, Mark 2005, 'Morocco: the new Christian crusade', *Foreign Correspondent*, 4 December

<http://www.abc.net.au/correspondents/content/2005/s1522716.htm> – Accessed 17 August 2007 – Attachment 11).

An article dated 5 July 2005 in *The Jerusalem Post* reports on the “controversy” over the conversion from Islam to Christianity in Morocco:

But a new phenomenon – largely unreported in the Western media – is occurring: Muslims, especially in the Maghreb (north-west Africa) are becoming Christians.

The controversy over the conversions has been most acute in Morocco. Since the beginning of the year there have been numerous articles in newspapers such as *Le Matin*, *La Gazette du Maroc*, *Le Journal Hebdomadaire*, and even business magazine *La Vie Economique* and political weekly *Telquel* have written about this “greatest danger.”

According to most reports, the culprits are American evangelical missionaries operating in major cities such as Casablanca, Rabat, Marrakech and Fez to remote areas in the mountains or the countryside.

The statistics differ wildly: Missionaries are reported to number anywhere from 150, according to French weekly newsmagazine *Le Nouvel Observateur*, to the 800-plus figure most often used. Converts are said to number anywhere from 7,000 to 58,000. These discrepancies are easily explained by the fact that both missionaries and converts have to stay constantly below the radar.

Even though Morocco is a much more tolerant country than say Saudi Arabia regarding freedom of religion, it nonetheless imprisons anyone trying to convert a Muslim for up to three years.

...Nationalist MP Abdelhamid Aouad went even further when he declared that the evangelists' ultimate goal was to convert 10 percent of the Moroccan population by 2020. He even raised this issue in the Moroccan Parliament and asked the minister of Islamic affairs what the government was doing about the massive evangelization underway. Despite the minister's assurance that there was nothing to worry about, in March the authorities deported on "immigration grounds," a South African church representative who had been in the kingdom since 1999.

Also, a March "confidential" report ordered by the government on the topic of conversion and cited by *La Gazette du Maroc*, confirmed that there were indeed around 800 foreign missionaries in the kingdom. Qualified as "top-notch proselytizers," they used all available means such as Web sites, radios, satellite TV, video and audio tapes and books to succeed in their mission. Indeed, plenty of bookstores in Morocco carry translations of the Bible printed in the US and in French. According to one pastor, some missionaries also openly distribute on the streets of Casablanca leaflets about Christianity mostly meant for young people and promising them "a better life."

CLEARLY, THE evangelists are focusing their energies on the young and the poor, but that's not the whole picture. Another target, according to Pastor Jean-Luc Blanc are the intellectuals and the privileged. However, there is no typical profile of a convert (Guitta, Olivier 2005, 'Evangelists inroads in Muslim Morocco', *Jerusalem Post*, 5 July, WorldWide Religious News website <http://www.wwrn.org/article.php?idd=17720&sec=20&cont=3> – Accessed 17 August 2007 – Attachment 12).

2. In what way has the attitude of the authorities to Christians changed (if it has) from 1990 to 2007?

The 1992 Moroccan Constitution guarantees freedom of worship. Information sourced from the US Department of State suggests that the attitude of the authorities to Christians has generally remained the same from the early 1990s to 2006. Between 1993 and 1998 Islamic law and tradition called for strict punishment of Muslims who converted from Islam. Converts also faced social ostracism and occasional imprisonment by the authorities. Between 1999 and 2006 converts faced social ostracism and occasional imprisonment by the authorities. At the beginning of this second period converts were no longer imprisoned under Koranic law.

Article 6 of the 1992 Moroccan Constitution provides that "Islam is the religion of the State which guarantees to all freedom of worship" (*Morocco – Constitution 1992*, International Constitutional Law website http://www.servat.unibe.ch/law/icl/mo00000_.html – Accessed 13 August 2007 – Attachment 13).

1993:

US Department of State:

According to Islamic law and tradition, conversion of any kind from Islam is strictly prohibited, and any attempt to induce a Muslim to convert is punishable by imprisonment (US Department of State 1994, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1993 – Morocco*, 31 January, Section 2c – Attachment 14).

1994:

US Department of State:

Islamic law and tradition call for strict punishment of any Muslim who converts to another faith. Any attempt to induce a Muslim to convert is similarly illegal (US Department of State 1995, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1994 – Morocco*, February, Section 2c – Attachment 15).

1995:

US Department of State:

Islamic law and tradition call for strict punishment of any Muslim who converts to another faith. Any attempt to induce a Muslim to convert is similarly illegal.

...On January 9, the Government released Gilberto Orellan, a Salvadoran citizen, from prison, deported him, and banned him from reentering Morocco. Orellan was arrested in December 1994 and sentenced along with two Moroccan citizens for “preaching Christianity among Muslims.” During their search of Orellan’s residence, the police reportedly confiscated Bibles and Christian magazines.

On September 15, a court sentenced Jama Ait Bakrim to 1 year in for disturbing the Islamic religion and breaking the fast during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. However, some observers alleged that Bakrim’s actual offense is that he repeatedly spoke about Christianity in public.

On August 5, Mehdi Ksara, who was 88 years old at that time, was arrested and imprisoned along with three other Moroccan men on charges related to their practice of Christianity. All four were released on August 17. Ksara was formerly a Muslim and reportedly converted to Christianity more than 60 years ago. The three other men are Fouad Jaafar, 27, Muhsin Ibrahim Bel Haj, 20, and Samir Ben Ali, 24. One of the three was a Muslim who was reportedly arrested after the authorities discovered a Bible in his possession (US Department of State 1996, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1995 – Morocco*, March, Section 2c – Attachment 16).

1996:

US Department of State:

Islamic law and tradition calls for strict punishment of any Muslim who converts to another faith. Any attempt to induce a Muslim to convert is similarly illegal (US Department 1997, *Morocco Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996*, 30 January, Section 2c – Attachment 17).

1997:

US Department of State:

[C]onverts from Islam to other religions experience security force intimidation and occasional imprisonment.

...Islamic law and tradition calls for strict punishment of any Muslim who converts to another faith, although voluntary conversion is not a crime under the Criminal or Civil Codes. Any attempt to induce a Muslim to convert is illegal (US Department of State 1998, *Morocco Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997*, 30 January, Introduction & Section 2c – Attachment 18).

A 1997 report by [Jubilee Campaign](#), a nonprofit organisation seeking to help the persecuted church around the world, provides information on the situation of Christian converts in Morocco. For comments by Christian converts on their situation please refer directly to the report which is included as Attachment 19. According to Jubilee Campaign, Moroccan converts to Christianity “are likely to face some form of negative response to their conversion from family members or the authorities or a combination of both.” The report continues:

As a country with a predominantly Islamic population, local converts to Christianity usually come from a Muslim background and are likely to face some form of negative response to their conversion from family members or the authorities or a combination of both. Such treatment is not unusual because of the prohibitions in Islam against converting from Islam to another religion.

...Whilst we recognise that there are some converts who do not have to face much adversity for their conversion, many of them do have to endure pressure and even ill-treatment from their families and/or the authorities (Jubilee Campaign 1997, *The Christian Community in Morocco*, January <http://www.jubileecampaign.co.uk/world/mor1.htm> – Accessed 14 August 2007 – Attachment 19).

1998:

US Department of State:

[C]onverts from Islam to other religions continue to experience social ostracism.

...Citizens who convert to Christianity and other religions often face social ostracism, and in the past a small number have faced short periods of questioning by the authorities.

...Islamic law and tradition call for strict punishment of any Muslim who converts to another faith, although voluntary conversion is not a crime under the criminal or civil codes. Any attempt to induce a Muslim to convert is illegal. ...At the times of those arrests [February and May], a small number of Moroccan Christians in Meknes were summoned for questioning but released shortly thereafter. A company in Casablanca was denied permission by the Ministry of Communications to display bibles at a book fair in Casablanca in November (US Department of State 1999, *Morocco Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998*, 26 February, Introduction & Section 2c – Attachment 20).

1999:

US Department of State:

Islamic law and tradition call for strict punishment of any Muslim who converts to another faith. Citizens who convert to Christianity and other religions sometimes face social ostracism, and in the past a small number have faced short periods of questioning by the authorities. Although voluntary conversion is not a crime under the Criminal or Civil Codes, it remains a crime under religious law and few citizens make such a distinction (US

Department of State 1999, *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999: Morocco*, 9 September, Section I – Attachment 21).

2000:

US Department of State:

Islamic law and tradition call for strict punishment of any Muslim who converts to another faith. Citizens who convert to Christianity and other religions sometimes face social ostracism, and in the past a small number have faced short periods of questioning or detention by the authorities. Voluntary conversion is not a crime under the Criminal or Civil Codes; however, the authorities have jailed some converts on the basis of references to Koranic law (US Department of State 2000, *2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Morocco*, 5 September, Section I Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom – Attachment 22).

2001:

US Department of State:

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious; however, converts to Christianity sometimes faces social ostracism.

...Islamic law and tradition call for punishment of any Muslim who converts to another faith. Citizens who convert to Christianity and other religions sometimes face social ostracism, and in the past a small number of persons have faced short periods of questioning or detention by the authorities. Voluntary conversion is not a crime under the Criminal or Civil Codes; however, in the past the authorities have jailed some converts on the basis of references to Koranic law (US Department of State 2001, *International Religious Freedom Report 2001–Morocco*, October, Introduction & Section II Restrictions on Religious Freedom – Attachment 23).

2002:

US Department of State:

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, converts to Christianity sometimes face social ostracism.

...Islamic law and tradition call for punishment of any Muslim who converts to another faith. Citizens who convert to Christianity and other religions sometimes face social ostracism, and in the past a small number of persons have faced short periods of questioning or detention by the authorities. Voluntary conversion is not a crime under the Criminal or Civil Codes; however, until 4 years ago, the authorities had jailed some converts on the basis of references to Islamic law. Christian citizens sometimes still are called in for questioning by the authorities (US Department of State 2002, *International Religious Freedom Report 2002 – Morocco*, 7 October, Introduction & Section II Restrictions on Religious Freedom – Attachment 24).

2003:

US Department of State:

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, converts to Christianity generally face social ostracism.

...Citizens who convert to Christianity and other religions generally face social ostracism, and a small number of persons have faced short periods of questioning or detention by the authorities. Voluntary conversion is not a crime under the Criminal or Civil Codes; however, until 4 years ago, the authorities had jailed some converts on the basis of references to Islamic law. Christian citizens sometimes still are called in for questioning by the authorities (US Department of State 2003, *International Religious Freedom Report 2003 – Morocco*, 18 December, Introduction & Section II Restrictions on Religious Freedom – Attachment 25).

2004:

US Department of State:

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, converts to Christianity generally face social ostracism.

...Citizens who convert to Christianity and other religions generally face social ostracism, and a small number of converts have faced short periods of questioning or detention by authorities for proselytizing and have been denied issuance of passports. Voluntary conversion is not a crime under the criminal or civil Codes; however, until 5 years ago, the authorities had jailed some converts on the basis of references to Islamic law (US Department of State 2004, *International Religious Freedom Report 2004 – Morocco*, 15 September, Introduction & Section II Restrictions on Religious Freedom – Attachment 26).

2005:

US Department of State:

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, converts to Christianity generally face social ostracism.

...Citizens who convert to Christianity and other religions generally face social ostracism, and a small number of converts have faced short periods of questioning or detention by authorities for proselytizing and have been denied issuance of passports.

According to the foreign non-governmental organization Middle East Concern, on January 6, police arrested for proselytism a Christian convert from Islam, Hamid al-Madany, whose passport was found on a foreign Christian arrested for distributing Christian materials in Tetouan. At the end of the reporting period, al-Madany was free on bail, with his next hearing set for October 2005. Middle East Concern also reported that as of mid-July 2004 authorities had either confiscated or refused to renew the passports of five citizens who had converted from Islam to Christianity. Three of the converts received their passports by August 2004, but foreign Christian leaders in the country alleged that two of them experienced police harassment and long interrogation sessions. The remaining two received their passports by the end of the reporting period. The reports on these individuals could not be confirmed by other sources.

Voluntary conversion is not a crime under the criminal or civil codes; however, until 6 years ago, the authorities had jailed some converts based on references to Islamic law that prohibit conversion. Nevertheless, Muslim citizens are allowed to study at Christian and Jewish schools (US Department of State 2005, *International Religious Freedom Report 2005 – Morocco*, 8 November, Introduction & Section II – Attachment 27).

2006:

US Department of State:

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 three to six months' imprisonment and a fine of \$10 to \$50 (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.

...Citizens who convert to Christianity and other religions may face social ostracism, and a small number of converts have faced short periods of questioning or detention by authorities for proselytizing and have been denied issuance of passports. There were no reports of such occurrences during the reporting period.

...Voluntary conversion is not a crime under the criminal or civil codes.

...While there is generally an amicable relationship among religious groups in society, Muslim converts to Christianity may face social ostracism (US Department of State 2007, *International Religious Freedom Report 2006 – Morocco*, 15 September, Section II Restrictions on Religious Freedom & Section III – Attachment 1).

3. Is there any evidence of discrimination against non-French speakers?

No reports could be located which addressed the question of whether non-French speakers are discriminated against in Morocco. Nonetheless, sources were located which report that French remains the language of the establishment to some extent.

According to the US Department of State, "French functions as the language of business, government, and diplomacy" in Morocco (US Department of State 2007, *Background Note: Morocco*, February <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm> – Accessed 15 August 2007 – Attachment 28). According to the US Department of State, the official language of Morocco is Arabic:

The official language was Arabic; however, both French and Arabic were used in the news media and educational institutions. Science and technical courses were taught in French, thereby preventing the large, monolingual Arabic-speaking or Tamazight (Berber)-speaking populations from participating. Educational reforms in the past decade emphasized the use of Arabic in secondary schools. Failure to transform the university system similarly led to the disqualification of many students from higher education in advanced technical fields. The poor lacked the means to obtain additional French instruction to supplement the few hours per week taught in public schools (US Department of State 2007, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2006 – Morocco*, 6 March, Section 5 National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities – Attachment 29).

A book by Moroccan linguist [Professor Moha Ennaji](#) published in 2005 provides information on multilingualism, cultural identity and education in Morocco. Today in Morocco, "French and Classical Arabic are used either simultaneously or alternatively in education, government, the public sector and the media. French is widespread in modern and scientific fields like industry, finance, medicine, telecommunications, transports, international trade and

the like.” Standard Arabic “competes with French in domains as education and administration.” French “still predominates in Higher Education, Ministries of Post and Telecommunications, Health, Transport, Finance, Fishing Industry, Agriculture, Commerce and Industry, Tourism, Planning, Equipment, and the private sector, where science and technology play a crucial role.” According to Ennaji, “there are no official statistics concerning the number of people who speak and read French in Morocco. According to Santucci (1986: 139), the number of people aged ten and older who have learned French at school has increased remarkably since independence, and thus, over 25% of the population speak French.” Chapter 5 provides information on French in Morocco (Please see ‘Introduction’ p.97, ‘Major Varieties of French in Morocco’ p.98, ‘Functions and Domains of Use of French’ pp.101-102, ‘French in the Media’ pp.103-105, ‘French in Education’ pp.105-107, ‘French in the Private Sector’ pp.108-109, ‘French in the Administration’ pp.109-110) (Ennaji, Moha 2005, *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco*, Springer, USA, pp.102, 106 & 186 – Attachment 30).

A paper by Dr Dawn Marley, Department of Linguistic, Cultural and International Studies at the University of Surrey, provides information on language attitudes in Morocco following changes in language policy. In French Morocco, French could not compete with Arabic in religious contexts but became the language of education and administration. The subsequent policy of Arabisation aimed to replace French with Arabic. Despite this policy, French continued to be used. In 2000, after more than 40 years of Arabisation, the Charter for Educational Reform was introduced. The new policy “has three major thrusts: ‘the reinforcement and improvement of Arabic teaching’, ‘diversification of languages for teaching science and technology’ and an ‘openness to Tamazight’.” The Charter does not mention French by name “although at present this is the language of science and technology in much of higher education” (Marley, Dawn 2004, ‘Language attitudes in Morocco following recent changes in language policy’, *Language Policy*, Vol. 3, No. 1, March, pp.25-46 – Attachment 31).

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UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/tehis/vtx/home>

Non-Government Organisations

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

Freedom House <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=1>

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Pew Global Attitudes Project <http://pewglobal.org/>

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