

Morocco's policy against radicalisation and the EU

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<https://euobserver.com/opinion/143795>– Just before Christmas, two young Scandinavian women were brutally murdered in the Atlas mountains where they were hiking.

Four men said to commit the murder were quickly arrested.

They had videoed their murder and decapitation of the two women and posted the video to the internet.

One of them has a criminal record and since 2013 has been known to the police for his extremist views. He is said to have instilled violent jihadist beliefs into the three other suspects, according to Boubker Sabik, spokesperson of the General Directorate of National Security and Territorial Surveillance (DGSN).

As many other Muslim-majority countries, Morocco has been infiltrated by the Salafist ideology in recent decades.

Morocco's formal response to terror threats began after the 2003 Casablanca bombings, which killed 33 people and wounded over 100 others.

The aftermath of an April 2011 terrorist attack in Marrakesh that killed 17 people saw enhanced prevention efforts.

During the past 15 years, Morocco's government tightened its security apparatus, increased control of its borders, asserted authority over the religious sphere, revised religious education at school and created an institute for the training of imams.

To tighten security, Morocco launched its own version of the FBI, the Bureau Central d'Investigation Judiciaire (BCJI).

Since its creation in 2015, it reportedly uncovered 40 terrorist cells, including a ten-women IS group, arrested almost 600 people and helped several EU countries to arrest suspects with ties to terrorism.

Official sources list 1,692 Moroccans as fighting with ISIS in the Middle East and Rabat arrested 242 fighters on their return home.

Returnees typically receive sentences ranging from 10 to 15 years in prison.

Safer than most EU states

To place this all in context, the recently published Global Terrorism Index 2018 listed Morocco at 132 out of 163 (the higher the number the lower the impact of terrorism).

This puts the North African country among the nations least affected by terrorism, safer than most EU countries.

In an effort to prevent the salafisation of its youth, Morocco began 10 years ago to educate its own imams.

In 2015, the country opened the Mohammed VI Institute in Rabat where imams from all over the world can study and teach moderate Islam.

The school currently hosts 250 Moroccans (100 of whom are women) and 675 students from Mali, the Ivory Coast, France, Niger and French Guinea.

With the same goal, the ministries of national education and vocational training and the religious endowments and affairs reviewed school materials to promote education on the Islamic values of tolerance and coexistence with other cultures and to encourage openness to the modern era.

The Salafist movement resisted the changes in education materials when members learned that “Islamic education” would become “religious education.”

Some Salafist groups also criticised one of the pictures on the cover of a new textbook, which shows boys and girls of different races holding hands in front of the sun.

Bilateral security cooperation is central to Morocco’s relationships with European countries.

In recent years, Morocco established partnerships with many EU member states to prevent terrorism.

These are beneficial to both sides. France, Spain, Germany, the UK and other European countries have made particular effort to reinforce their security cooperation with Rabat.

Morocco’s domestic security is a key element of human security in Europe.

Anti-terrorist cooperation between vulnerable EU member states and the north African kingdom needs to be further developed.

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