

## Table of Contents

- ***Morocco's CNDH campaigns for women with disabilities' rights***
- ***HCP: 5.3 million women in Morocco experience domestic violence***
- ***Meet Mushima: Women weaving ethics into fashion***
- ***The Moroccan Outlaws: A youth social movement challenging obsolete laws on sexuality***
- ***Raissouni has been pardoned by the King of Morocco, but when will Moroccan citizens no longer be outlaws?***
- ***MOROCCO: The demand for justice continues to grow***
- ***Moroccan citizens take a stand against laws criminalising abortion and pre-marital sex***
- ***Moroccan journalist jailed for abortion that she says never happened***
- ***Many women in Morocco face abuse at home, some are now speaking out***
- ***Tangier court sentences husband to two years for raping wife***
- ***Morocco criminalises violence against women and sexual harassment***
- ***Moroccan women will soon be able to pass citizenship to non-Moroccan spouses***
- ***Will Morocco's new law protect women from violence?***
- ***In Morocco's Atlas mountains, Berber girls find the way out of rural poverty: an education***
- ***The dark reality for women migrants in Morocco***
- ***Burqa ban in Morocco sparks anew the debate over women's rights***

---

## **Morocco's CNDH campaigns for women with disabilities' rights**

***The initiative comes in response to a recommendation from the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.***

By Zakaria Elaraj

Morocco World News (01.01.2021) - <https://bit.ly/38nqgPo> - Morocco's National Council of Human Rights (CNDH) launched on Wednesday a digital campaign in an effort to stop discrimination against women and girls with disabilities.

The initiative also aims to promote the rights of people living with disabilities and raise awareness on respecting the rights of women and girls with disabilities, according to a Council press release.

CNDH initiated the campaign for social media users since social networks reach large segments of society.

Living with a disability adds to the existing challenging situation of women in Morocco, said CNDH President Amna Bouayach in the Council's statement.

Women and girls with disabilities are like the rest of females in the country, and Moroccans should join forces and stop all forms of bullying of those individuals, Khaoula Sika, CNDH's Guelmim-Oued Noun regional committee member, said in a video introducing the campaign.

This segment should be engaged in society and enjoy the same rights other people do, said Zhou El Horr, Coordinator of the National Mechanism for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In the video, she referenced employment and leadership positions as areas where greater engagement of women with disabilities can better benefit Morocco's society at large.

Taoufik Berdiji, president of CNDH's Laayoune-Sakia El Hamra regional office, said in the video that the situation of women and girls with disabilities is a pivotal case in the CNDH since many females with disabilities suffer discrimination in his region.

CNDH communicated that the campaign is not only the council's duty, it is also a nationwide responsibility and every individual in Morocco should engage and help promote tolerance towards women and girls with disabilities. All segments of society should help sensitize the importance of respecting their rights, CNDH officials stressed in the video.

"We should all join forces to eradicate stereotypes and prejudice that serve to restrict the disabled instead of encouraging them. The objective of CNDH is to ensure that disabled women and girls are participating in the management of public affairs," Bouayach concluded.

---

## **HCP: 5.3 million women in Morocco experience domestic violence**

***The statistics related to gender-based discrimination in Morocco show that policymakers still need to increase efforts to combat the prevalence of violence against women.***

By Safaa Kasraoui

Morocco World News (28.09.2020) - <https://bit.ly/3jGTQIW> - A lengthy report from the High Commission of Planning (HCP) showcased the prevalence of several types of violence against women in Morocco, including domestic violence.

The 142-page [report](#) on Morocco's implementation of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) devoted a whole section to gender equality and the progress the country has made in the field.

The report showed some remarkable changes in terms of improving gender equality, but indicated that the country's institutions must increase efforts to combat domestic violence and sexual harassment against women in Morocco.

The document reported an overall decrease in violence against women based on searches and surveys that the HCP carried out between 2009 and 2019.

The rate of violence against women aged between 18 and 64 decreased to 57 % in 2019 compared to 63% in 2009.

The statistics show that psychological violence against women dropped from 58% in 2009 to 49% in 2019. Physical violence decreased from 15% to 13% during the same period.

Economic and sexual violence, however, recorded a notable increase. Economic violence increased from 8% in 2009 to 15% in 2019, while sexual violence rose from 9% to 14% during the same period.

In rural Morocco, physical violence against women increased from 9% to 13% between 2009 and 2019.

The HCP also highlighted a remarkable decrease in violence against women in public spaces between 2009 and 2019.

According to the recent statistics, violence against women in public dropped from 33% to 13%.

However, domestic violence perpetrated by family members or marital partners affected 52% of women and girls in 2019.

The rate of marital violence increased by 46% between 2009 and 2019, with 5.3 million women aged between 15 and 74 experiencing violence from their partners.

The perpetrators are mainly boyfriends, husbands, ex-husbands, or romantic partners.

Married women are the largest category who reported violence, accounting for 52%. Around 59% of the victims are aged between 15 and 24.

Marital violence is most prevalent among women with "average education (54%) and unemployed women (56%)."

The HCP report found that psychological violence tops the list with 43% of women (15-74) experiencing this sort of violence from their partners in 2019.

Between 2009 and 2019, sexual violence from a third party against women aged 15-74 increased from 4.3% to 8.5% in Morocco.

Some 10.5% of victims of sexual violence experience such crimes in educational and training spaces (16.2% in rural areas and 9.3% in urban areas).

Sexual harassment also increased by 50% in 2019.

In working spaces, 15% of women were victims of psychological or economic violence.

Despite the alarming numbers, the report lauded a set of reforms Morocco launched to combat violence against women.

The report recalled the approach Morocco's General Directorate of National Security (DGSN) launched last year to assist women exposed to gender-based violence.

In 2019, DGSN introduced support units for women and girls who experienced violence.

The units seek to provide psychological support and guidance victims.

The report also mentioned Morocco's decision to implement Law 103-13 against gender discrimination.

Morocco enacted Law 103-13 in September 2018 to criminalize sexual harassment, assault in public spaces, and cybercrime.

Feminists and activists have long argued that the law contains loopholes due to the absence of a legal framework that would accompany victims during the reporting process.

---

## **Meet Mushima: Women weaving ethics into fashion**

***A social mission brand with a passion for traditional artistry, Mushmina is helping Moroccan women to achieve financial independence and personal empowerment one handmade carpet at a time.***

By Morgan Hekking

Morocco World News (08.02.2020) - <https://bit.ly/3bwsY4n> - In a world that seems to be dominated by fast-fashion giants like Forever 21 and Fashion Nova, it can be easy to get wrapped up in a culture of constant trend-chasing.

Growing alongside the thundering tidal wave of cheap materials and underpaid labor, however, is a strong undercurrent urging consumers to consider thrift-shopping, upcycling, and seeking out "slow" fashion brands that emphasize sustainable, ethical practices over profit.

One such brand is Mushmina.

Mushmina, a family nickname meaning "little sister," is the brainchild of New Jersey-born sisters Heather and Katie O'Neill.

Sitting at a cafe in Fez in 2004, the O'Neill sisters decided to start a business with the ultimate aim of empowering local artisans in Morocco, specifically rural women artisans.

Their dream became a reality in 2009, and Mushmina celebrated a decade in business in 2019.

### ***At the mercy of middlemen***

Heather first came to Morocco in 2003 as a 25-year-old Peace Corps volunteer with the US government.

"I left a design job in New York City and everyone thought I was crazy," she told MWN. "It was a leap of faith that I'm so glad I took."

Heather was assigned as a small business volunteer with the artisan sector in Boujad, a small town near Beni-Mellal in central Morocco. With her background in design, the assignment was a perfect fit.

She quickly picked up Darija and began forging meaningful connections with the artisans she worked with, taking a particular interest in women weavers, many of whom she is still linked to today.

Perhaps the most profound experience Heather had during her term with the Peace Corps was in Boujad's souk, an open-air market that takes place every Thursday starting at 5 a.m.

"One morning, I went with the women [weavers] to see how they sell [their handmade rugs], and that was my epiphany moment," she recounted. "I realized how at the mercy they are of the middlemen that come in from Marrakech and Fez."

She described seeing hundreds of women sitting on the ground with their carpets rolled out in front of them, waiting to make a sale. If hours pass and a woman has not sold any carpets, she may become desperate and take any price offered to her—even if it is well under what her product is worth.

"They had no bargaining power," she lamented. "That's when I decided that I wanted to help."

### ***Mushmina: Made with love in Morocco***

Heather wrapped up her three-year term with the Peace Corps and went on to graduate school. After completing her thesis on women's development, Heather moved back to Morocco—this time with a concrete plan to act on the revelation she had that day in the souk.

Heather and Katie launched Mushmina in 2009 with a clear vision: To empower Moroccan women and connect creators with US markets. Ten years later, the sisters still see the US as their main market but are looking beyond into more opportunities elsewhere.

Thanks to the duo's extensive background in design and retail, and with Heather's connections forged during her time with the Peace Corps, the sisters were able to launch Mushmina with only a shoestring budget.

"Our vision for the brand has always been colorful, creative, and discovering craft in rural regions. This is what we love most."

To get started, Heather reached out to the director of the Peace Corps, who connected her to current volunteers in Morocco in the small business sectors. The volunteers held focus groups with artisans who then crafted some of Mushmina's first orders.

The Peace Corps played an essential role not only in introducing Heather to Morocco and its colorful world of artisans but also in offering her an anchor of support upon her return to the country years later.

"I fell in love with Morocco—it's magic, its people, and the artisan craft," she said of her initial stint in Boujad. "I guess you could say Morocco called me back."

"I feel blessed to be able to live and work in such a creative and colorful country. Each day is different and some of my best days are those spent exploring new regions and working with rural women."

### ***Morocco's family-oriented business model***

While Katie fulfills her role as Mushmina's creative director from the US, Morocco has become home for Heather. She lives in a rural region outside of Casablanca with her Moroccan husband and their two children.

Her fluency in Darija has certainly given her a leg-up in handling business in the country. She personally finds and buys all of Mushmina's materials, trains and instructs her team, and hosts workshops for local women artisans.

"So much of working in Morocco is about personal connection," Heather explained. "People want to do business with people they like."

"We share tea, we know each other's families, and my children are often along with me for the ride," she said of her business partners and team members. "That is what I really appreciate about working in Morocco. It's a family-oriented place, even in business."

While Heather sees tough prospects for small businesses in the US, she is hopeful about Morocco. "The good news is that small business in Morocco is still very vibrant and the future is global."

### ***Mushmina's social mission***

Mushmina is arguably more of a social mission than a fashion brand, with Heather herself more interested in empowering women to perfect their craft rather than making profits from sales.

Unlike fast-fashion companies, Mushmina's success directly benefits the Moroccan men and women working for the small business.

"Our artisans are well-paid for their work because we believe in investing in handmade goods that have cultural integrity and intrinsic value," Heather maintained.

"We have seen artisans open bank accounts and buy land. Our metalsmith moved from a rooftop home studio to a full workshop with employees and a retail space. We have seen women gain confidence, finish training programs, and become businesswomen themselves."

A case in point is Halima, Mushmina's lead weaver.

Since working with the business, Halima has been able to buy land with her husband and become a businesswoman in her own right. Having made a name for herself in the local artisan community, Halima is often approached by women looking for work as weavers. Halima doles out order assignments to these women, and through offering them avenues for personal empowerment, she has become a local leader.

"Our customers feel connected to our brand as it is owned by women and our mission is helping women and artisans," Heather said.

"At the end of the day, we hope that we can continue to inspire the people who work with us and the customers who buy from us to think consciously about what we buy and who made it."

---

## **The Moroccan Outlaws: A youth social movement challenging obsolete laws on sexuality**

***An exclusive interview with Sonia Terrab by Human Rights Without Frontiers.***

By Brianna Hertford, *Human Rights Without Frontiers*

HRWF (30.10.2019) – In a recent interview with HRWF, Sonia Terrab, one of the coordinators of the *Moroccan Outlaws*, shared the successes and hopes of the youth who have taken a courageous stand on contested articles in the Moroccan penal code criminalising pre-marital sex and abortions.

This group mobilised around [the case of Hajar Raissouni](#), a journalist who was sentenced to one year imprisonment on 30 September 2019 for allegedly having pre-marital sex and an abortion. Her fiancée was also sentenced to one year and her physician was sentenced to two years for allegedly performing an abortion. These three individuals were charged under articles 454 and 490 of the Moroccan penal code.

Despite the welcome news that the [King of Morocco pardoned](#) all three on 16 October 2019, this movement was and continues to be focused on changing the laws themselves. The King's pardoning is a very encouraging sign, since it indicates the level of influence the *Moroccan Outlaws* has already achieved.

This grassroots initiative was kickstarted by a manifesto published on 23 September 2019 that demanded the de-criminalisation of consensual non-marital sex and abortions. Additionally, the *Moroccan Outlaws* hosted a press conference highlighting these obsolete laws and sent a letter to the Royal Prosecutor to the Court of Cassation and President of the Public Ministry, Mohamed Abdennabaoui, three days before the King's pardon. This publicity has led to a national debate on these issues in an unprecedented way in Morocco. These laws are now being discussed across all political groups and public circles, which is an immensely positive sign for the thousands of Moroccans rallying around this demand for change.

Many doubted that the manifesto would receive enough signatures to reach 490, which was the target symbolically chosen to reference article 490. However, not only did 490 courageous Moroccans sign, but the movement [more than doubled within a few weeks](#) and has continued to grow. As of 22 October 2019, there were 13,000 signatories. 70% of the movement's followers on social media are Moroccan women between the ages of 18 and 25, which demonstrates that Moroccan youth form the core of this initiative.

This massive mobilisation is a reaction to the extreme extent these laws intrude upon individuals' lives. For example, these articles of the penal code are not only used to serve political agendas, but also by families as a tool of revenge. If a young woman becomes pregnant before getting married, it is common for the man who impregnated her to be prosecuted. Sonia Terrab shared that 40-50% of prison inmates in Morocco are young men who have received sentences under these laws.

Furthermore, under the current penal code, the LGBTQ community in Morocco live in constant fear. By breaking the taboo on discussions around premarital sex and abortions, this movement has given hope to LGBTQ youth. If these laws were to be abolished, there would be space for conversations about other sexualities and gender identities without fear of legal punishments such as imprisonment. The fight for safety and equality for the LGBTQ community in Morocco would still take time, Sonia Terrab says, but the ability to speak out about their lived experiences is a critical first step.

There has been some opposition to the *Moroccan Outlaws*. They have received backlash from radical Islamists in Morocco who condemn the manifesto and call the female signatories "whores." This is reminiscent of the [Manifesto of the 343](#) in France that was published in 1971 during the fight to legalise abortion. Those brave women were also deemed "sluts" and personally attacked before the legislation was changed. Historically,

this type of backlash is testament to the extent to which grassroots movements such as this one shake up the status quo.

From the start, the desire for legislative and societal change has been personal for every member of the *Moroccan Outlaws*. They are demanding the freedom to love and be loved without the stigma, shame or prosecution that currently exists within this oppressive legal framework. Sonia shared that the next goal for the movement is to petition the Moroccan Parliament about these laws, which, according to the Moroccan constitution, will require 5,000 signatures. Moving forward, this initiative will continue fighting for social justice and equality in Morocco.

---

## **Raissouni has been pardoned by the King of Morocco, but when will Moroccan citizens no longer be outlaws?**

By Brianna Hertford, *Human Rights Without Frontiers*

HRWF (17.10.2019) – HRWF welcomes the news that Morocco’s King Mohammed VI [pardoned](#) journalist Hajar Raissouni, her fiancée Professor Rifaat al-Amin and her physician Dr Mohammed Jamal Belkeziz on 16 October 2019. However, it remains to be seen whether the underlying human rights issues involved in this case will now be addressed by the Moroccan Parliament.

There has been widespread criticism from the local and international community since Raissouni’s sentencing at the end of September 2019 that this was an attack on free [press](#). Raissouni expressed being targeted for her work at the Moroccan paper Akhbar Al-Yaoum and personal history, which fits within a pattern of Moroccan authorities silencing [critics](#).

However, the imprisonment of these three individuals was made possible by the articles of the Moroccan penal code criminalising premarital sex and abortion. These oppressive laws have a gendered component and infringe on individual rights to privacy and reproductive rights. They have and continue to significantly impact every Moroccan citizen’s ability to live and love freely without fear of imprisonment.

The official pardon was positioned as an act of compassion, as the Moroccan Ministry of Justice stated “that the royal pardon seeks to preserve Raissouni’s future and that of her fiancée, who were going to build a family in accordance with Morocco’s law ‘despite the error they may have committed,’ which led to their [arrest](#).” While understandable that the King justified the pardon as a gesture of mercy instead of publicly challenging the judiciary and executive branches, it is yet to be seen whether the Parliament will take action on this issue.

As HRWF has previously [reported](#), the group [خارجة-على-القانون](#) (*Moroccan Outlaws*) has taken a stand on the contested articles in the penal code. They are mobilising around this grave human rights issue and pressuring the government to change these laws.

This courageous movement has grown from 490 signatories to over [10,000](#). It is of the utmost importance that the international community actively supports them as they demand justice, not just for Raissouni, but for all Moroccan citizens who are currently living as outlaws.

---

## **MOROCCO: The demand for justice continues to grow**



HRWF (14.10.2019) - Last week, HRWF published an [article](#) about the courageous movement *خارجة-على-القانون* (*Moroccan Outlaws*) that formed after the sentencing of Hajar Raissouni at the end of September 2019. The *Moroccan Outlaws* published a manifesto denouncing obsolete and unjust laws within the Moroccan penal code, and have released this statement today (courtesy of Sonia Terrab):

## **AT FIRST, WE WERE 490.**

Today, we are more than **10 000**.

**10,000** Moroccan citizens to declare ourselves as outlaws. **10,000** Moroccan citizens to manifest our anger, our rejection of injustice and social hypocrisy. **10,000** Moroccan citizens who no longer wish to endure the law of silence and who refuse to ignore the individual tragedies to which the laws penalizing non-marital sexual relationships, adultery and abortion lead.

Rejecting these laws also means rejecting social inequalities since it is first and foremost the poor and the vulnerable who suffer from this legislation, and who are subject to daily pressures, extortion, and humiliation.

Our collective is becoming a movement. A youth movement, a citizen movement, led by female and male voices who herald the Morocco of tomorrow

This movement is gaining momentum, and it will need all the energies and talents at hand to become a force to be reckoned with.

## **WE HAVE TAKEN ACTION.**

We are, at this moment, in the process of delivering two letters to the following addresses :

## **Statement of the 10,000 Monday, October 14, 2019**

- To the Royal Prosecutor to the Court of Cassation and President of the public ministry, Mr. Mohamed Abdenabaoui, inviting him to pursue a criminal law policy which is more faithful to the spirit of the Moroccan Constitution and to the international Human Rights Charter, and asking him to immediately suspend the application of these repressive and arbitrary laws, and to abandon the prosecution and enforcement of sentences related to consensual, non-marital sexual relations between adults, to abortion, and to adultery.

- To the President of the HACA, and to the executives of television stations, radio, and public media, inviting them to schedule a slot in their programs de-

icated, over the maturity of the movement, to debating on individual liberties in Morocco with the intervention of deputies, political entities, civil society representatives, artists, and intellectuals, in order to guarantee a fair and balanced public debate which will in itself reflect the current state and evolution of Moroccan society

Additionally, we are preparing a petition which we will submit to Parliament demanding the repeal of these laws. The Constitution offers us this possibility, and we must seize it

To this end, we will need even more signatures. And we will get them.

Ultimately, we will launch a platform with the complete list of our names as signatories and more information regarding the procedure to be followed to support our bill and join our movement.

It is only the beginning.

## **ALL OUTLAWS, UNTIL THE LAW CHANGES.**

I COMMIT  
texte490@gmail.com



## **Moroccan citizens take a stand against laws criminalising abortion and pre-marital sex**

**490 courageous Moroccans sign a manifesto publicly declaring that they are outlaws.**

By Brianna Hertford, *Human Rights Without Frontiers*

HRWF (07.10.2019) - On the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2019, Hajar Raissouni was sentenced to one year imprisonment in Morocco under articles [454](#) and [490](#) of the penal code. These articles criminalise abortions and premarital sex. Her fiancée, Professor Rifaat al-Amin,

was also sentenced to one year for complicity in these acts and her physician, Dr Mohammed Jamal Belkeziz, was sentenced to two years for allegedly performing [abortions](#).

Since Raissouni is a journalist for the Moroccan daily paper Akhbar Al-Yaoum, it has been argued that this case is a stark example of how the Moroccan government silences opposition, especially within the [press](#).

Many, such as [Amnesty International](#), [Reporters Without Borders](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#), have called for the immediate reversal of this sentencing. Additionally, the [MENA Rights group](#) has advocated for Raissouni's release at the UN level.

Although the use of these laws by the Moroccan government to serve political aims is alarming in of itself and must be addressed, Moroccan citizens have taken it one step further. They have united in an attempt to abolish these antiquated laws.

A grassroots social movement has responded to this case with a moving manifesto titled "*Nous, citoyennes et citoyens marocains, déclarons que nous sommes hors-la-loi / We, Moroccan citizens, declare that we are outlaws.*" It currently has 490 signatories and bears much resemblance to the [Manifesto of the 343](#) published in France in 1971 that advocated for French citizens' reproductive rights.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2019, this [manifesto](#) was published denouncing the obsolete and oppressive nature of the Moroccan criminal code. It was co-written by author Leïla Slimani and filmmaker Sonia Terrab. Their bold words articulate the pain and frustration of all Moroccan citizens and demand change.

HRWF has translated this powerful manifesto from French into English (see below) to magnify the voices of these courageous Moroccan citizens.

The gender-specific nature of these articles of the penal code has been critiqued by many, especially considering that "according to official figures, Moroccan courts last year tried more than 14,500 people for 'debauchery', 3,048 for adultery, 170 for homosexuality, and 73 for having [abortions](#)." These figures demonstrate that these laws are still very much in use and have a significant impact on many Moroccan citizens' lives despite no longer reflecting modern Moroccan society.

In fact, it has been estimated that anywhere between 600 and 800 women have clandestine abortions in Morocco every [day](#). The current penal code is out of touch with the reality of its citizens and does not appear to act in their best interests.

Instead, it demonstrates an ongoing attack on individual freedoms and women's rights by the [government](#).

HRWF urges the international community to stand in solidarity with Raissouni and all who have had their liberty compromised due to these unjust laws, as well as the brave activists currently pushing for change in Morocco.

Click [here](#) for the original version of this manifesto in French and to view the 490 signatories.

### **We, Moroccan citizens, declare that we are outlaws**

We, both female and male citizens of Morocco, declare that we are outlaws.

We violate unfair, obsolete laws that should not exist anymore.

We have had sexual relations out of wedlock.

We have had abortions or been accomplices to another's abortion.

We have learned how to pretend and act as if we have not.

For how much longer?

Every day, every hour, in secret, women like me, men like you, conservative or progressive, public or anonymous persons, from all walks of life and all regions, dare to accept themselves as they are, dare to enjoy and exist freely, and break their chains and these laws.

Every day I am guilty of loving and being loved.

Every time a woman is arrested, I feel the shared guilt.

I think: it could have been me...

Then I keep silent, I go on with life as if nothing happened and try to forget...

But I cannot do it anymore.

I cannot stand it anymore.

Because my body belongs to me - it does not belong to my father, my husband, any of my relatives or to the gaze of men on the street and even less to the State.

Today, I don't want to be ashamed anymore.

I who loves, aborts, has sexual relations outside of marriage.

I who hides.

I who risks dishonour, infamy, prison.

This culture of lies and social hypocrisy generates violence, arbitrariness, intolerance.

These laws, that are oppressive and inapplicable, have become weapons of political or personal vengeance.

It is a Sword of Damocles which threatens us and reminds us that our lives do not belong to us.

How do we accept this?

Why should we accept this?

Again and again...

In 2018, in Morocco, 14503 people were prosecuted on the basis of article 490 of the criminal code, which criminalises sexual relations out of wedlock.

3048 people were sent to prison for adultery.

Every day, in our country, between 600 and 800 clandestine abortions are carried out.

Must all these people be sent to prison?

Their “accomplices” (physicians, human rights activists) as well?

We believe that Moroccan society is ready for change - ready for the respect of private life and the right for everyone to make decisions about their own body.

Our society and our country deserves that.

We call upon our political leaders, our decision makers, our law makers, to be courageous and to make one more step forward by opening a national debate on individual freedoms.

It is not a luxury, it is not a favour, it is a necessity.

How to encourage the full growth of our youth, how to enable the fair involvement of women in society, how to push our country towards true progress and human development, if our individual freedoms are not respected, if our dignity is trampled, if we – all of us, men and women – are outlaws?

All of us, men and women, are outlaws until these laws change.

*English translation by HRWF.*

---

## **Moroccan journalist jailed for abortion that she says never happened**

***Critics say Hajar Raissouni's one-year sentence is a crackdown on criticism of government.***

By Ruth Michaelson

The Guardian (30.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2nnJWOd> - A Moroccan journalist has been sentenced to a year in prison on charges of having an illegal abortion and premarital sex, in a trial observers say was concocted to crack down on criticism of the government.

A Rabat court sentenced journalist Hajar Raissouni to one year in prison, on charges of “having an illegal abortion and sexual relations outside marriage”. Her fiancée, Prof Rifaat al-Amin was given a one-year sentence for alleged complicity.

Dr Mohammed Jamal Belkeziz, accused of performing the abortion, was sentenced to two years in prison.

Raissouni previously described the charges as “fabricated”, in a letter from prison. The defendants maintain that the abortion never took place, and that Raissouni was targeted by the Moroccan authorities for her work with the independent Moroccan outlet Akhbar al Yaoum, where she won praise for her coverage of unrest in the country’s north.

Raissouni’s lawyer, Muhammad Sadkou, branded the verdict “regressive”. He added that the judge’s decision meant that the Moroccan state’s claims to respect international

conventions guaranteeing rights and freedoms were “lies that have nothing to do with reality.”

Raissouni was arrested outside a clinic in Rabat along with her fiancé on 31 August. Plainclothes police interrogated the 28-year-old, before detaining Belkeziz and two medical staff who said they had performed an emergency procedure on Raissouni to remove a blood clot. The journalist was then forced to submit to a gynaecological examination.

Her supporters and observers say that her arrest, interrogation and trial represent a state-led effort to publicly shame Raissouni and dissuade others from similar criticism. The lawyer for Belkeziz later provided medical evidence to the court to demonstrate that Raissouni never underwent an abortion.

Observers maintained that the charges against Raissouni were fabricated. TrialWatch, a subset of the Clooney Foundation for Justice which monitored Raissouni’s trial, said that it bore “the hallmarks of an unfair and punitive process”.

“The evidence did not sustain the charges,” it said. “The defence asserted that blood tests revealed that the levels of pregnancy hormone in the defendant’s blood were so low that it would have been impossible for her to be eight weeks pregnant as the police’s doctor claimed.”

Campaigners report that up to 800 abortions are performed daily in the north African country, where abortion is illegal except when the woman’s life is threatened due to pregnancy and with a husband’s permission. Prosecutions are rare, but charges involving a person’s personal life are sometimes used by the Moroccan authorities to push back on individuals seen as too critical, including journalists and members of the political opposition.

Morocco ranks 135 out of 180 countries for press freedom on Reporters Sans Frontières World Press Freedom Index, which says the Moroccan authorities frequently use the courts to harass reporters – including those who covered unrest in the country’s north Rif region.

“This is a blow to women’s rights in Morocco,” said Raouia Briki, Amnesty International’s campaigner on Morocco. “It’s a sign that reforms to the regressive abortion law and the law which criminalises sex outside marriage are urgent.”

Loubna Rais of the Moroccan feminist collective Masaktach, said that Raissouni’s sentence was proof of a lack of fundamental rights in the country.

“Women in particular, who are the most vulnerable to this kind of unjust persecution, are fighting for basic individual freedoms, the right to their bodies and private lives,” she said.

“Sentencing the doctor to two years and Hajar to one, it’s clear that the authorities would like us to think this whole trial is about an illegal abortion. But we are all well aware that this was just the pretext to silence a journalist’s right to free speech and a woman’s right to her own life and body, even if her connections appear threatening to political interests.”

*For more information regarding this case, read: [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#) and [Morocco World News](#).*

## Many women in Morocco face abuse at home, some are now speaking out

Euronews.com (10.06.2019) - <https://bit.ly/31skVRr> - Bearing pictures of scars and bruises she said she had suffered at home, Fatna Ben Ghala sought help at a women's counselling centre in a poor neighbourhood near Morocco's capital Rabat after she and her mother endured domestic violence by a relative.

The case of Ben Ghala, 40, and her mother was not unusual. Some 54.4% percent of women, amounting to millions in a country with a population of about 35 million, have been subjected to violence, according to a survey released last month by the Solidarity, Family and Social Development Ministry.

The survey, which showed the 25-29 age group is most vulnerable, also pointed up the amount of work to be done to remedy the abuse. Only 28.2% of abused women have spoken to a person or an institution about their suffering and only 6.6% have brought their case before justice, the survey said.

Ben Ghala said she was referred to the Araafa listening and counselling centre after she went to the hospital to seek treatment for her injuries.

"We live under oppression and we live in pain. The blow I received in my head deteriorated my vision," she said. Ben Ghala did not identify the relative who she said had abused her.

The Araafa centre can help only a small proportion of the women who say they have been abused. Last year, it offered advice to 146 women subjected to all kinds of violence and abuse. Morocco has dozens of such centres across the country.

"I had a miscarriage because of the beating and the mental pressures I was enduring," said Raja, an unemployed 19-year old, who said her husband had been violent and who now lives with her parents.

"I can't understand why that violence happened. Was it a habit or a mental illness or something else?," she said.

Charifa, 26, told Reuters she had been beaten by her husband, who expelled her from the house and prevented her from seeing her son and daughter, aged 7 and 6.

"I live now with my father and have no way of being next to my children who are not even registered in the family registry and hence unable to attend school like other children," she said, adding that her husband does not provide for the family.

Neither Raja nor Charifa identified their husbands.

### **'Much needs to be done'**

Ben Ghala, Raja and Charifa would need to provide more evidence and bring witnesses to court to see the alleged perpetrators brought to justice.

However, it is very difficult to bring witnesses in domestic violence cases, which happens behind closed doors, as courts often dismiss the testimony of those who might hear but not see screaming, said Naima Saber, Araafa's director.

Morocco adopted a law in September last year criminalising domestic violence and various kinds of verbal and online harassment, "but much needs to be done in order to reduce evidence requirements," she said.

Women are also discouraged from bringing cases to court as they are often asked by other relatives and sometimes local officials to compromise for the sake of keeping the family together, said lawyer Houria Elhamss, who has handled such cases.

"This often prevents women from having access to justice," she said.

Solidarity, Family and Social Development Minister Bassima Hakkaoui told 2M TV channel on Sunday that the law criminalising violence against women has encouraged women to report and sue their aggressors.

"Several people were indicted by virtue of this law," she said. But the rate of violence against women is "scary", she said, adding it calls into question the role of education and the law.

"We ask woman to cooperate with us and to report violence cases in order to enforce deterrence by implementing the law," Hakkaoui said.

---

## **Tangier court sentences husband to two years for raping wife**

***The court's decision could pave the way for a law that criminalizes marital rape in Morocco.***

Morocco World News (29.12.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2H1KNx6> - The Tangier Court of Appeals has sentenced a husband to two years in jail for raping his wife. The court also ordered the man to pay an MAD 2,000 fine and MAD 30,000 in compensation to the victim.

The convicted 25-year-old husband from Larache, a town near Tangier, had violently forced his wife to engage in sexual intercourse, reported Al Ahdath al Maghribiya on Saturday. The woman suffers from severe depression.

The court's decision was based on Articles 485 and 400 of the penal code. Article 400 states: "Any act of violence or assault, even if it caused no disability or illness is punishable by imprisonment from one month to one year in addition to a fine of MAD 200 to 500."

The wife's lawyer reported that her medical certificate verified serious indications of physical violence. The lawyer noted that the woman already suffers from depression, and the rape could induce her to become suicidal.

Law 103-13 to eliminate violence against women, sexual harassment, and gender-based discrimination, which took effect in September, does not list marital rape as a punishable crime.

---

## **Morocco criminalises violence against women and sexual harassment**

## ***New bill imposes tougher penalties on various types of sexual violence and harassment, but critics say it falls short.***

Al Jazeera (12.09.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2xbQ6Ce> - A new law in Morocco criminalising violence against women goes into effect on Wednesday, in what critics say is merely a first step in the right direction.

Approved by parliament on February 14, the bill imposes tougher penalties on perpetrators of various types of violence committed both in the private and public spheres, including rape, sexual harassment and domestic abuse.

Locally known as Hakkaoui law after family affairs and women's issues minister Bassima Hakkaoui, the legislation also declares the definition of sexual harassment, including unsolicited acts, statements or signals of a sexual nature, delivered in person, online or via telephone.

Along with harassment, there are also measures stipulating punishment for people who try to force someone into a marriage using violence or the threat of violence.

Those found guilty of violating the law face prison terms ranging from one month to five years and fines from \$200 to \$1,000.

While welcoming the law, critics say it stops short of addressing the full repertoire of crimes.

More specifically, the legislation does not explicitly outlaw marital rape or spousal violence, and does not provide a precise definition of domestic violence, leaving women vulnerable.

The law also fails in providing financial assistance for survivors and does not define the government's role in providing support and services to victims, Human Rights Watch group said in a press release.

### ***Women violence***

Violence against Moroccan women remains widespread and a largely taboo subject in the country, according to research data.

In 2009, a national survey reported that 62.8 percent of women had experienced physical, psychological, sexual or economic abuse.

Of the sample interviewed, 55 percent reported "conjugal" violence and 13.5 percent reported "familial" violence.

It also became a hot issue last August after a video was posted on the internet showing a young woman on a bus being sexually molested by a group of boys while the driver or other passengers failed to react to her appeals for help.

This sent shockwaves throughout the country and intensified calls for more to be done in the kingdom.

According to AFP news agency, about 1,600 cases of rape were heard by Moroccan courts last year, twice as many as previous years.



## **Moroccan women will soon be able to pass citizenship to non-Moroccan spouses**

By Safaa Kasraoui

Morocco World News (17.03.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2FSsQjL> - Moroccan women will finally be able to pass their citizenship on to their non-citizen spouses, according to a recent statement from Bassima Hakkaoui, the Minister of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development on the sidelines of the 62nd UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62) in New York.

"Borders should not deprive people of the right to nationality," said the minister on Wednesday, adding that Morocco is currently working to put in place procedures that would allow women to easily transmit citizenship to their husbands.

At the meeting organized by the NGO "Global Campaign for Equality of Rights in Nationality" and UN-Women. Hakkaoui said that no child in Morocco is living in a situation of statelessness, as the authorities are working to allow Moroccan women to transmit their nationality to their non-citizen spouses.

The high-level meeting was attended by several UN officials, including Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Executive Director of UN-Women; Sierra Leone's Minister of Social Affairs, Gender and Children, Isata Kabia; and the Director of the Global Campaign for Equal Rights in Nationality, Catherine Harrington

The Moroccan official pointed out that more than 33,500 children of Moroccan mothers and non-citizen spouses have been granted Moroccan nationality, as mandated by the nationality law adopted in 2007.

Moroccan citizenship is also granted to children of unknown parents and children in Morocco or abroad, according to a statement from Hakkaoui printed in Moroccan news source 2M.

---

## **Will Morocco's new law protect women from violence?**

***Legislation criminalises violence against women, but some claim law falls short, leaving domestic abuse victims at risk***

By Ahmed El Amraoui

Al Jazeera (08.03.2018) - <http://bit.ly/2oUtlWv> - A new law in Morocco criminalising violence towards women has divided opinion, with some observers applauding the legislation as progress while critics claim some women would still be left at risk.

Until recently, women were vulnerable to various types of violence in private and public spheres, including rape, sexual harassment and domestic abuse.

Much of this abuse had gone unreported, with such incidents considered private matters and not criminal.

In a bill approved by parliament on February 14 after years of debate among political parties, civil and women's rights groups, the new law defines violence against women as "any act based on gender discrimination that entails physical, psychological, sexual, or economic harm to a woman. It also criminalises cyber harassment and forced marriage".

The new law imposes tougher penalties on perpetrators, including prison terms ranging from one month to five years and fines from \$200 to \$1,000.

The law, however, does not explicitly outlaw marital rape or spousal violence and does not provide a precise definition of domestic violence.

### ***Domestic violence***

Bassima Hakkaoui, minister of Family, Solidarity, Equality and Social Development, praised the bill as defining "all kinds of violence against women, offers preventive and protection measures and increases penalties for people who commit violent acts against women."

Human Rights Watch said the law includes positive provisions, but leaves women at risk of being abused in a marriage.

"The law allows for protection orders that prohibit an accused person from contacting, approaching, or communicating with the victim," the rights group said. "But these can only be issued during a criminal prosecution or after a criminal conviction. Moreover, the orders can be cancelled if spouses reconcile which will only add more pressure on women to drop such orders."

In 2009, in a survey of 8,300 women, 62.8 percent said they had been subject to psychological, physical, sexual or economical violence, according to High Planning Commission (HCP), an independent government statistical institution.

Miloud Kaouass, professor of Islamic studies at Ibn Tofail University in the city of Kenitra, applauded the law, but stressed the importance of raising awareness for such a move to be effective.

"The law is good but we need to enhance the importance of moral values and manners among our youths both in school and at home. As long as we get away from ethics, morality and manners, violence and harassment against women would never stop.

"Teaching our youth Islamic values will also help. Islam considers even looks with some kind of sexual attraction as harassment," Kaouass told Al Jazeera.

Kaouass claimed it would be difficult for the new law to address claims of violence by married women against husbands, saying loopholes in the legislation could lead to false accusations.

"A relationship between a husband and wife is supposed to be based on love and consent. In the case of a married couple, it is difficult to differentiate if the relationship was with or without consent," he said.

Hayat Ndichi, a member of the Aspiration Feminine NGO, said the law lacks clarity, which in turn would not deter molestation or limit violence.

"The main problem of the new law is the way it defines abuses. Articles of the law lack clarity and are not as precise as international norms. This means opening the door for many legal loopholes and interpretations," she told Al Jazeera, adding conjugal rape had been ignored.

However, she praised the bill for getting tough on perpetrators and including cybercrimes.

***'I didn't know what to do. I was so afraid'***

Fatima Zahra, a 17-year-old journalism student, said proving violence against women could be challenging.

"If you don't have evidence that someone did something bad to you, you can't prove it and police can't prove it as well. So how the law would be implemented?" she said.

"When a man harasses you, he knows you can do nothing about it. Because you will be afraid of those people who are around who will think that you are the reason because you attracted him.

"The problem is always you. This is why there are many places where I can't wear whatever I want, especially if I am alone," she told Al Jazeera.

Sarah, a 22-year-old university student, remembers with bitterness one of many incidents where harassment went beyond words.

"I don't know from where some men get the nerve to ... start touching you.

"I remember once, I was in my first year of high school and I got into a taxi, which is supposed to be a safe place. He started to feel my leg with his hand. I didn't know what to do. I was so afraid," she told Al Jazeera.

**Further reading:**

[Morocco: New Violence Against Women Law](#)

[Violence against Women: 16 Reasons to Amend Morocco's 103-13 Bill](#)

---

## **In Morocco's Atlas mountains, Berber girls find the way out of rural poverty: an education**

*The remoteness of many villages meant that secondary school was not an option*

By Nicola Slawson

The Guardian (19.06.2016) - <http://bit.ly/1ZZb8uy> - Deep in Morocco's High Atlas mountains, in the hamlet of Tazalt, two girls are doing their laundry in stream water. Inside one of the small reddish-brown stone houses, Malika Boumessoud, 38, is serving sweet mint tea and looking at a photo of herself while shaking her head at how old she looks.

In the next room, where five of her six children all sleep on two single mattresses on the floor, Boumessoud's daughter Zahra, 19, is preparing to leave this classic scene of rural Moroccan life. She is a participant in a bold new experiment that could transform the lives of the girls and young women in the region: unlike the vast majority of her peers, Zahra is being granted an education.

For the past seven years, she has lived in a boarding house run by a small Moroccan NGO, Education For All (EFA), in the town of Asni, 56 kilometres away. The house is a five-minute walk from the school she has attended during the week since the age of 12. In September, she hopes to go to university in Marrakech. Her mother, who married at 16, is acutely aware of how different her daughter's life could have been had Zahra finished school at 12, like most of the other girls in the valley.

"I still wish I had gone to school," says Malika. "Even after all these years of marriage and having all my children, I still regret not finishing my education. I don't go out of the village, I just stay in the house day after day. I feel like a bird without any wings."

In rural Morocco, her experience is far from rare. Illiteracy rates for rural women and girls remain as high as 90%. Girls, especially those in areas such as the High Atlas, are more likely to drop out after primary school. Only 26% of girls in rural areas enrol for secondary education, according to the World Bank.

These problems disproportionately affect the Amazigh, commonly known as Berbers, the indigenous people of Morocco. While most Berbers adopted Islam and began speaking Arabic after the conquests of the seventh century, Berber culture and dialects of the Tamazight language survived, especially in the High Atlas. At school, lessons are in Arabic, which for most Berber children is their second language, if they have it at all. Unsurprisingly, they do poorly compared with Arabic children.

But in rural areas, it's the distance to secondary schools that presents the biggest barrier, especially for girls. Khalid Chenguiti, education specialist at Unicef Morocco says: "Girls' education, especially at secondary level, remains a challenge. There are many reasons for this, including the fact that schools are often poorly equipped with washrooms and sanitary facilitation, transportation is often difficult and, in some areas, girls are still required to support domestic tasks and face sociocultural barriers for completion of higher secondary education. These factors often disproportionately affect girls in rural areas."

Chenguiti explains why it's a crucial problem to solve: "Providing girls with an education helps break the cycle of poverty: educated women are less likely to marry early and against their will; less likely to die in childbirth; more likely to have healthy babies; and are more likely to send their children to school."

EFA's solution is to bring the girls to the schools, an approach which is beginning to change the lives of Berber girls in a way that could transform the region's future. Their boarding houses, which are run solely by Berber women, provide accommodation, healthy food, support with homework and extra French and English lessons. On average, the pass rate for all academic years is 97%.

Zahra bubbles with enthusiasm for the chance that has been handed to her: "At primary school, I really enjoyed studying but I knew there was little chance I would get to go to secondary school. When I was selected [by EFA], I was so happy. I was really nervous when I first got to the boarding house but I feel like I have found myself since being there.

"I believe I will now have a good future and will be able to improve things for my family. My parents have been so supportive. They wanted me to have a better life than the one they have had. My first year of university will be very hard," she says. "I'm sure, as it's a very different life there, but I think it will be good for me."

In bustling Marrakech, which feels like a different planet in comparison to the mountain villages, Khadijah Ahedouami, 21, knows exactly how Zahra is feeling. Three years ago she was in the same position. She has no regrets, but it has been far from an easy road.

"I actually failed my first year," she says. "Coming to Marrakech and studying all these new subjects was a hard thing for me to do, especially because I had only just got used to learning in Arabic, but at university everything is in French. I also had to get used to living in the city which is so different."

The culture shock wasn't the only thing she struggled with. Her mother had died while she was in upper secondary school and soon afterwards she lost her brother-in-law. "I had some family problems and my father had just remarried following the death of my mother.

"Even though it was a year and a half after she died, my first year was the hardest time because I was living away from home. With everything going on, I thought 'if I push myself with my studies, I'm going to lose my mind', so I decided it was OK to take things slowly and repeat my first year."

Ahedouami was one of the 10 girls who went to live in Asni with EFA when the first house opened nine years ago. It was her mother who passionately wanted her to have an education because she had grown up in Casablanca, where it's normal for girls to be in school. But they first had to persuade her father.

She says: "My father agreed we could go to see the house and when we found it, he thought it seemed OK and liked Latifa, the house mother. He asked if I wanted to stay, and of course I said, yes. Studying is my purpose in life."

Khadijah is now not only the most educated girl in her village but the most educated in the whole valley. So respected is she that when she is home villagers come to her house to ask for advice on problems with their businesses or families. A lot of responsibility rests on her young shoulders.

She says: "In my final year of school, I started to prepare my parents for the idea that I might go to university. By then, my parents trusted me but they only did because I earned it. During my years with EFA, I learned how to talk to people, how to spend my money, and how to stay respectable. And because other families look to me as an example when trying to decide whether to send their girls to school, I feel like I have to act very responsibly so they know education doesn't make you go off the rails."

Maryk Stroosnijder, one of the founders of EFA, says: "I think it is quite hard for the first girls because others look up to them, but the attitudes are slowly changing. The first parents took a risk and now we have parents begging us to take their girls."

Nor is Stroosnijder surprised to hear about Zahra's mother feeling like a bird without wings because, she says, many mothers feel the same. "But," she adds, "they are giving their daughters wings."

---

## **The dark reality for women migrants in Morocco**

***Morocco's policy toward migrants is more generous than most, issuing work permits and refusing to evict undocumented refugees. But it does little to account for gender, leaving women living in refugee camps vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.***

By Fabíola Ortiz

The World Post/Huffington Post (23.02.2017) - <http://huff.to/2mt32R1> - Born and raised in Lagos, 16-year-old Juliet Bamawo left her home and her family a year ago to travel thousands of miles from Nigeria to Morocco, propelled by the dream of studying at a European university and one day becoming a nurse. But soon after she arrived, reality set in. Instead of living in an apartment in Europe and learning about nursing, Bamawo is living in a makeshift camp beside Fez's newly refurbished train station, in a tent made

from plastic and scraps of material. There is no running water, and the tents are surrounded by garbage.

"I came here to travel to Europe, but there is no money," she says. "I am now trying to get money, I am looking for help. It is difficult to live here. If there was a job and I was paid, I would work."

Bamawo is among 15 Nigerian women living in the camp of around 300 residents from 10 sub-Saharan countries. Many were drawn by Morocco's recently relaxed immigration policy, which tolerates camps like the one in Fez. But that's as far as the welcome goes: Once migrants arrive, usually planning to continue on to Europe, they are given no support and essentially left to fend for themselves.

The lack of provisions leaves migrants unable to find work, abandoned in squalid, crime-ridden camps, and unable to move on to their final destination. And for women migrants who come to Morocco without an accompanying man, that usually means arriving to a life of poverty, exploitation and abuse.

The North African country of 35 million people has historically been a magnet for migrants. Many arrive with an "obsession to cross Gibraltar at any cost," says Mohamed Khachani, president of the Moroccan Association for Studies and Research on Migration. But in response to the ongoing refugee crisis, many European countries have strengthened their borders, leaving large numbers of migrants stuck in Morocco. "There used to be evictions of clandestine migrants from Morocco. Nowadays it is not common to deport anymore," says Khachani.

The drop in evictions is a result of a new strategy on immigration and asylum that Morocco announced in 2013, based on recommendations issued by the Moroccan National Human Rights Council. According to the report, Morocco "undoubtedly suffers from the effects of a strict European policy of control of its external borders." So the government decided to adopt a human rights-based approach to documenting migrants. In a one-off move, Moroccan authorities issued around 27,000 residence permits to migrants between September 2013 and February 2015. The *carte de séjour* includes a work permit and offers access to primary and secondary schooling, but not to public health insurance.

The majority of women migrants who come to Morocco in hopes of crossing through the country to gain entry into Europe are from Nigeria and Cameroon, but there are also women from Mali, Ivory Coast and the Democratic Republic of Congo. And for many of them, the already risky journey along the Trans-Sahara Highway is made even more treacherous by the constant threat of exploitation and sexual violence.

"Women suffer more than men. When they cross over 6,000 kilometers (3,700 miles), imagine every single border they have to cross," says Khachani. "They suffer countless violations of numerous types." According to his research, one-third of the migrant women living in Morocco were abused on their way to North Africa.

The U.N. Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates that of the over 6,000 refugees and asylum seekers considered persons of concern in Morocco, 44 percent are women. And a study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) found most women migrants in Morocco travel without family members, but often in groups with other migrants.

According to a report by the IOM, more than half of the women are single mothers, the majority of them having become pregnant on the route, most likely in a context of abuse.

Migrants' rights advocates say that while Morocco's new immigration policy seems to treat migrants more humanely than many other countries, it fails to protect those most vulnerable once they arrive. "Women should be treated differently, they should be protected from rape and human trafficking. We should give them shelters and healthcare support," says Moha Ennaji, president of the South-North Center for Intercultural Dialogue and Migration Studies and director of Morocco's first PhD program in gender studies. "And for those who have babies, we should help them with daycare and kindergartens."

Noting that Morocco has no women-only migrant shelters, Ennaji, who also works as a consultant to the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, says more needs to be done to help migrants once they get to Morocco. The new policy "basically says that we don't deport them, we don't beat them up ... we tolerate them, [but] they can beg and fight for a job."

As head of the national body for the care and protection of migrants in Morocco, Fatima Attari deals directly with girls like Bamawo who are living in refugee camps. Attari says fighting against racism and discrimination are key to helping integrate undocumented women. "We need to welcome, listen, inform, guide, advise, assist them and provide legal, social and professional support," she says.

While Bamawo still plans to one day make the dangerous sea crossing to Europe, these days she isn't driven as much by her dream of becoming a nurse as by her desperation to move to somewhere safe and clean. "If I had good shelter, I would stay in Morocco," she says. "Look at our environment here, it is very dirty. We need help; we are sick. We don't know who can help us."

---

## **Burqa ban in Morocco sparks anew the debate over women's rights**

Africa Times (11.01.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2iFVBjS> - Morocco's decision to ban the burqa, at least in part, has again touched off a controversy over women's right to choose to whether they wear the full-body Islamic covering, or whether the burqa represents an unacceptable security risk to society.

The Moroccan Ministry of Interior has announced it will prohibit the manufacture and sale of the burqa, effective immediately across the nation. The Morocco World News reported Tuesday that the ban is meant to stop criminals who have "repeatedly used this garment to perpetrate their crimes," according to media reports.

The decision was countered by a Moroccan human rights organization that issued a statement condemning the ban – although technically, Morocco's new law does not yet infringe on the right to wear one, as opposed to making or selling them. The ban violates women's right to express their identities, and political, social and cultural beliefs, it said.

Similar bans have long sparked debate in Europe, where this summer Switzerland joined France and Belgium in enacting a ban, and other nations with geographically limited or partial bans in place. The ban in France extends to those who would force a woman to wear a burqa, which is often associated with extremist or jihadist thought.

Yet Muslim nations in Africa also have banned the burqa, primarily for security reasons. Chad enacted a law in 2015 after bombing attacks in N'Djamena by people who were wearing them.

Former Prime Minister Kalzeube Pahimi Deubet said the risk of terror attacks in which the burqa serves as camouflage – as well as the niqab, which also covers the face – warranted the decision. The region’s Boko Haram threat prompted similar bans in parts of Niger and Cameroon. Nigeria and Senegal have considered it, while Congo-Brazzaville enacted a law that bans it in public places, specifically to limit the terror threat.