

MOROCCO

Overview: The Moroccan government continued its comprehensive counterterrorism strategy of vigilant security measures, regional and international cooperation, and counter-radicalization policies. The investigation of the April Marrakech bombing and indications from Moroccan authorities' disruptions and investigations of other groups supports previous analysis that Morocco's terrorist threat stemmed largely from the existence of numerous small independent extremist cells. These groups remained isolated from one another, small in size, limited in capabilities, and had limited international connections. The Government of Morocco's counterterrorism efforts have effectively reduced the threat, but the Marrakech bombing underscored the need for continued vigilance.

2011 Terrorist Incidents: On April 28, Morocco suffered its worst terrorist attack since 2003, when Adil el-Atmani detonated a 15 kilogram explosive device at the Argana Restaurant in Marrakech. The attack at the café, popular among tourists, killed 15 foreign nationals and two Moroccans, and injured more than 25 others. El-Atmani used an ammonium-based explosive device that he detonated with a cell phone. Hakim el-Dah and seven others helped el-Atmani plan and carry out the attack. The cell was not connected to any organized terrorist groups, but the Ministry of Interior described el-Atmani as a Salafist and an admirer of al-Qa'ida (AQ).

Legislation and Law Enforcement: Morocco aggressively targeted and dismantled terrorist cells within the kingdom by leveraging intelligence collection and police work, and collaborating with regional and international partners. Morocco continued to participate in the Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance program. Morocco's counterterrorism efforts led to the following disruptions of alleged terrorist cells:

- In January, the Moroccan security services arrested 27 members of a terrorist group linked to al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). According to the Ministry of Interior, this cell had stockpiled weapons in Western Sahara and was planning suicide and car bomb attacks against Moroccan and foreign security forces.
- In September, Moroccan authorities arrested a three-member cell called the "Battar Squadron," who planned to receive training from AQIM outside of Morocco with the goal to return and attack Western targets. According to the Moroccan National Police, the leader of the cell had ties to al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI), and the group had been in close communication with AQ members in Syria, Turkey, Yemen, and Somalia.
- In October, security services arrested a five-member cell that was communicating with AQ elements through the Internet. The group had also been in communication with el-Atmani, the Marrakech bomber, and planned to carry out attacks against tourist sites and Western targets.
- Also in October, Moroccan authorities arrested an individual in Casablanca for suspected terrorism-related activities. The man, reportedly in contact with AQ, had bomb-making materials in his home and planned to attack sensitive sites within Morocco.
- In December, the national police arrested an individual for his involvement with a Moroccan terrorist cell that was dismantled in 2010. Authorities accused this individual of recruiting volunteers in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia.

While there were diminishing reports of Moroccans either preparing to go or going to Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia to receive training from AQ-linked facilitators and/or to conduct attacks, the government remained concerned about veteran Moroccan terrorists returning from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya to conduct terrorist attacks at home, and about Moroccans who were radicalized during their stays in Western Europe, such as those connected with the 2004 Madrid train bombings.

The Government of Morocco made public commitments that the struggle against terrorism would not be used to deprive individuals of their rights and emphasized adherence to human rights standards and increased law enforcement transparency as part of its approach. Demonstrating this commitment, the government's investigation of the April bombing was conducted professionally and transparently. In contrast with its response to the 2003 Casablanca bombings, security services did not carry out mass arrests, and the Ministry of Interior granted the media unprecedented access to cover the aftermath of the attack.

In addition, the Moroccan government continued to provide more access for defense lawyers and more transparent court proceedings than in previous years. Moroccan counterterrorism laws were effective in leading to numerous convictions and the upholding of convictions of multiple terrorism suspects, as noted below:

- In April, the Moroccan terrorism court sentenced four men to 20 years in prison each for planning to commit terrorist acts in Morocco and send violent extremists to Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia. Three others were sentenced to 10 years each for their involvement.
- In May, Moroccan police, acting on an INTERPOL Red Notice, arrested an individual who was wanted for making terrorist threats. The Moroccan Ministry of Justice deported the individual in October.
- Also in October, Adel el-Atmani was sentenced to death for his role in the Marrakech bombing. His accomplice Hakim el-Dah received a life sentence. Four others involved in this crime were given four years each, and three others received two-year sentences.

Countering Terrorist Finance: Morocco is a member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force, a Financial Action Task Force (FATF)-style regional body, and in July, joined the Egmont Group. In January, Morocco adopted legislation to strengthen the definition of the terrorist financing provisions of the criminal code. The new law extended courts' powers to prosecute money laundering crimes committed within the country and abroad, and expanded the list of people and organizations obliged to report on suspicious financial activities. Morocco was publicly identified by the FATF in February 2010 for strategic anti-money laundering/counterterrorism finance deficiencies. Morocco committed to an action plan with the FATF to address these deficiencies and has made significant progress.

For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, we refer you to the *2011 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR)*, Volume 2, *Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*: <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/index.htm>.

Regional and International Cooperation: Morocco is a founding member of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF). Morocco maintained cooperative relationships with European and African partners by sharing information, conducting joint operations, and participating in training maneuvers. Morocco was also a partner nation in the Global Initiative to Counter Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) and hosted a GICNT radiological response exercise in March and an Africa outreach meeting in November. Morocco was a Mediterranean Dialogue partner of the European Union's (EU) Barcelona Process and a major non-NATO ally.

While Morocco and Algeria are members of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership and GCTF, the level of bilateral cooperation on counterterrorism between the two countries did not improve. Algeria and Morocco's political disagreement over the Western Sahara remained an impediment to deeper counterterrorism cooperation.

Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism: In the past decade, and specifically following the Casablanca (2003) and Madrid (2004) terrorist bombings, Morocco has increasingly focused on countering youth radicalization, upgrading places of worship, modernizing the teaching of Islam, and strengthening the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs (MEIA). The MEIA has developed an educational curriculum for Morocco's nearly 50,000 imams to advance tolerance and anti-extremism, which are inherent to the Maliki rite of Sunni Islam (the dominant form of Islam in the country). Additionally, the Moroccan Council of Ulema for Europe and the Minister Delegate for Moroccans Living Abroad also worked to promote a tolerant, peaceful Islam among Moroccan expatriate communities in Europe.

To counter what the Government of Morocco perceived as the dangerous importation of violent extremist ideologies, it has developed a multi-component strategy aimed at strengthening the theological and intellectual credibility of Morocco's tolerant Maliki Islamic legal tradition. In addition, Morocco has accelerated its rollout of education and employment options for youth and expansion of legal rights and political empowerment for women. The U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Department of State both fund a suite of programs aimed at establishing better governance of Moroccan prisons, improving prison conditions, and rehabilitating and reintegrating convicts into society.

Annually during Ramadan, the king hosts a series of religious lectures, inviting Muslim speakers from around the world to promote moderate and peaceful religious interpretations.

[Click this link to see the entire 2011 Country Report on Terrorism](#)