

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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> Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment please email Basesdedonnees.DatabaseUnit@irb-cisr.gc.ca.

12 March 2013

MAR104307.E

Morocco: Situation of individuals who renounce Islam (commit apostasy) in favour of atheism, including treatment by society and authorities; state protection available (2010-Feb. 2013)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Information about the situation of individuals who renounce Islam (commit apostasy) in favour of atheism was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1. Statistics

According to the *International Religious Freedom Report for 2011* published by the US Department of State, the population of Morocco is approximately 98.7 percent Muslim, 1.1 percent Christian, and 0.2 percent Jewish (US 30 July 2012, 2).

2. Situation of Individuals Who Commit Apostasy

A PhD candidate in Political Science at McGill University, who conducted extensive research in Morocco (PhD candidate 18 Feb. 2013), including research related to Islamic social movements, post-colonial history in the Maghreb and political mobilization in the "Arab Spring" (McGill University 2 Mar. 2013), in correspondence with the Research Directorate, stated that

[i]ndividuals who renounce their religion in Morocco do not face state prosecution unless they actively and publicly seek to advertise it and/or attempt to make other people renounce their religion, in which case they may be prosecuted and/or jailed. Such an occurrence is extremely rare and I cannot recall any case of an atheist being harassed or jailed by the authorities in the last twenty-five years. Atheists who advertise their views publicly will certainly face social criticism but very likely no reaction from the authorities (unless they actively try to disturb the social peace by say provoking people in front of a mosque). (PhD candidate 18 Feb. 2013)

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The *International Religious Freedom Report* states that the constitution as well as other laws and government policies "protect religious freedom, but in practice, the government restricted religious freedom in some cases" (US 30 July 2012, 1). The report further notes that "government policies discouraged conversion from Islam" (ibid.). Similarly, AllAfrica notes that, although the constitution guarantees freedom of religion, it is not tolerated in practice (23 Nov. 2011). Freedom House says in *Countries at the Crossroads* that "converting Muslims is illegal, and both the person who seeks to convert and the Muslim who renounces Islam may face arrest and harassment" (2011). AllAfrica reports that the Moroccan penal code provides for up to

three years of imprisonment for a person who "'destabilises' the faith of Muslims" and further notes that "Moroccans who are born Muslim but adopt another religion or atheism fall under this category" (23 Nov. 2011). For additional information on legislation and conversion from Islam, please refer to Response to Information Request MAR103889.FE.

The *Economist* reports that a Moroccan blogger had to flee the country when people found out that he had created the anonymous blog Atheistica.com (24 Nov. 2012). Two other sources indicate that the blogger received death threats (*Le Post* 10 Apr. 2011; AllAfrica 23 Nov. 2011). AllAfrica explains that, when the blogger publicly expressed his views about Islam and called on the international community to end Sharia law, a Muslim preacher incited others to kill him (ibid.). In an interview with *Le Post*, the blogger said that he received the threats from the [translation] "protectors of Islamic religion" (10 Apr. 2011). According to AllAfrica, the blogger received political asylum in Switzerland in April 2011 (23 Nov. 2011). The *Economist* also reports that the blogger was granted asylum in Switzerland (24 Nov. 2012).

Further information on the situation of individuals who renounce Islam in favour of atheism could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

AllAfrica. 23 November 2011. Abderrahim El Ouali. "Believe or Leave." (Factiva)

The Economist. 24 November 2012. "Atheists and Islam: No God, Not Even Allah." (Factiva)

Freedom House. 2011. "Morocco." By Guilain Denoeux in *Countries at the Crossroads 2011*. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/inline_images/Moroccofinal.pdf> [Accessed 5 Mar. 2013]

McGill University, Montreal. 2 March 2013. Interuniversity Consortium for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies. "Researchers." <<http://www.mcgill.ca/icames/researchers>> [Accessed 8 Mar. 2013]

PhD candidate, McGill University, Montreal. 18 February 2013. Correspondence with the Research Directorate.

Le Post. 10 Apr. 2011. "Interview: Kacem El Ghazzali, blogueur et libre penseur marocain." <http://archives-lepost.huffingtonpost.fr/article/2011/04/10/2461639_interview-kacem-el-ghazzali-blogueur-et-libre-penseur-marocain.html> [Accessed 28 Feb. 2013]

United States (US). 30 July 2012. Department of State. "Morocco." *International Religious Freedom Report for 2011*. <<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/193111.pdf>> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2012]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact representatives or academics at the following organizations were unsuccessful: Association marocaine des droits humains, Centre Jacques Berque pour les Études en Sciences Humaines et Sociales au Maroc, University of Strasbourg.

Internet sites, including: L'aménagement linguistique dans le monde; American Center for Law and Justice; Amnesty International; Association marocaine des droits humains; Association des ombudsmans et médiateurs de la francophonie; *Aujourd'hui le Maroc*; BBC; Carnegie Endowment; Centre Jacques Berque pour les Études en Sciences Humaines et Sociales au Maroc; Channel North Africa; *The Christian Post*; Collectif Démocratie et Modernité; Compass Direct News; eoi.net; *El País*; Factiva; *Le Figaro*; Hein Online; *The Journal of North African Studies*; Legislationline; Maghreb Christians; Middle East Forum; Minority Rights Group International; *Le Monde*; Morocco – Department of Justice; Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life; *Political Handbook of the World*; Scholars Portal Journals; *Slate Afrique*; United Nations – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Refworld, UN Development Program; University of Strasbourg; *La Vie Éco*.

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