



Immigration and
Refugee Board of Canada

Commission de l'immigration
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31 October 2007

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Morocco: Any evidence that military conscripts are mistreated; whether conscripts of Berber descent are targeted; reports of court cases related to misconduct in the army; whether military court records are publically available (2004-2007)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

The Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Morocco in Ottawa stated in a telephone conversation with the Research Directorate that conscription was eliminated on 31 August 2006 by government decree (Morocco 9 Oct. 2007). The Research Directorate was unable to obtain a copy of this decree within the time constraints of this Response. Media and non-governmental sources corroborate that Morocco ended mandatory military conscription in 2006 (*The Weekly Standard* 2 Oct. 2006; Jamestown Foundation 15 Feb. 2007; *IOL* 30 Nov. 2007; *Washington Post* 29 Sept. 2006).

Regarding the period before mandatory military service was abolished, a professor at the Royal Military College in Canada who specializes in military and strategic issues as they pertain to the Middle East and North Africa provided the following information in correspondence received by the Research Directorate on 19 September 2007 and 9 October 2007.

With respect to what life was like for conscripts, the Professor described the first months in uniform as being difficult (19 Sept. 2007). He indicated that superior officers treat officers under their command however they see fit and that some observers have called this treatment "an abuse of power" (Professor 19 Sept. 2007). However, he stated that in general, conscripts were "not treated better or worse than other soldiers" (*ibid.*). He added that "tensions are palpable" between soldiers who have been in the military for a long period of time and new recruits (*ibid.*). Those of Berber descent are not treated differently from other soldiers, according to the Professor (*ibid.*).

In correspondence dated 9 October 2007, the Professor stated that he was not aware of reports of court cases related to misconduct in the Moroccan military. Records of court cases regarding military misconduct are supposed to be publicly accessible (Professor 19 Sept 2007). However, the Professor expressed doubt that these records would, in practice, be accessible to the public, "despite the official claim" of government transparency (9 Oct. 2007).

The information provided by the Professor could not be corroborated 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 additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Independent Online (IOL). 30 November 2006. "Morocco Scraps Mandatory Military Service." < http://www.int.iol.co.za/index.php?from=rss_Africa&set_id=1&click_id=0&art_id=qw1164922206918B256 > [Accessed 9 Oct. 2007]

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Morocco. 9 October 2007. Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco, Ottawa. Telephone interview with the Deputy Head of Mission.

Professor, International Relations (Military and Strategic Issues) at the Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston. 19 September 2007. Correspondence.

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The Washington Post. 29 September 2007. John Thorne. "Extremist Islam May Be Rising in Morocco." <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/29/AR2006092900750.html>> [Accessed 4 Oct. 2007]

The Weekly Standard. 2 October 2006. Vol. 12, Issue 3. Olivia Guitta. "Extremism is Displacing Moderation in the North African Kingdom." <<http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/012/740boykt.asp>> [Accessed 4 Sept. 2006]

Additional Sources Consulted

Publications, including: *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International (AI), Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Freedom House, *Jeune Afrique*, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), War Resisters' International.