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Morocco

# GenZ 212 movement in Morocco

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**The youth movement in Morocco is part of the evolution of Moroccan society over almost twenty years, and in particular the difficulties of the workers' movement and of all resistance forces in their relationship to the power of the state.**

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**In what context did the Generation Z 212 [\[1\]](#) movement emerge?**

The context was characterized by high social tension, stemming from the accumulation of popular discontent. The country has experienced unprecedented inflation for the past four years, but anger has remained dormant, failing to erupt into the kind of protests seen in 2006-2007, with the emergence of coordinating committees against the high cost of living. Not forgetting, of course, the deterioration of public services, particularly education and healthcare, and the spread of unemployment, following decades of strict adherence to the directives of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Overall, since the crackdown on the Hirak Rif movement in 2017, the situation has been characterized by the suppression of opportunities for protest and freedom of expression, with strict censorship and the arrest of bloggers and journalists. Popular resistance thus took the form, in 2018, of a boycott campaign targeting the products of several large companies, in protest against rising prices. Among these companies was the oil company owned by the current Prime Minister, one of the country's wealthiest capitalists, whose net worth is estimated at US\$2 billion. The movement of popular struggle in disadvantaged regions, which emerged in the second half of the 1990s and reached its peak in Sidi Ifni in 2005-2008 and in the Rif region in 2016-2017, has lost momentum.

A movement of popular struggle emerged after the earthquake in the Haouz region (in September 2023), but it was repressed and some of its leaders were imprisoned. Given the impact of climate change, many regions now face shortages of drinking water, leading to a resurgence of protests, particularly in rural areas, but these struggles have not been coordinated due to the weakness of leftist forces.

It was then that the Hirak movement in Figuig (November 2023) emerged, in response to a measure aimed at privatizing water services. The country has experienced sectoral struggles led by young people, particularly those of medical students and teachers (often contract workers) and workers in the health sector...

Then came this year's wave of popular struggles, beginning with the Aït Bouguemez march last July, a two-day trek between the mountains and the city of Azilal, demanding social improvements: education, healthcare, the right to build rural housing, and an end to road and digital isolation. This victorious march marked the start of a wave of similar marches in the region. Simultaneously, other regions experienced popular demonstrations due to the shortage of drinking water (Morocco is experiencing an unprecedented drought that has lasted for 10 years), as well as a popular movement in the city of Taounate, protesting against the widespread deterioration of the social situation. Finally, the Generation Z movement emerged following a demonstration in front of the Agadir Regional Hospital on September 14, 2025, after the deaths of eight women in the hospital's maternity ward. Due to prolonged austerity in healthcare spending, public hospitals are in such a state of disrepair that they no longer meet the minimum needs of citizens. This is a deliberate policy aimed at diverting citizens from the public sector to the private sector, which has been given free rein and has seen considerable growth, expanding from clinics to large healthcare complexes. The demonstration in Agadir resonated widely on the national level, especially since it was repressed, and that allowed many victims of the public healthcare system to speak out about their tragic situation.

Less than two weeks after the spark in Agadir, the Generation Z movement protest began on September 27, 2025.

**That's the context of the GenZ 212 movement from the perspective of popular social struggle. What about the working-class context?**

The Generation Z 212 movement began its struggle three days after the entry into force of a law that effectively outlawed workers' strikes. The adoption of this law represents a historic defeat for the Moroccan workers' movement and demonstrates its extreme weakness, which has rendered its influence on young people engaged in the struggle virtually non-existent. Due to the dominance of political forces advocating social peace within the workers' movement, defeats have followed one after another under the pretext of "social partnership," which involves the state integrating union leaders into all plans aimed at eroding social gains.

Starting with what was called the National Charter for Education and Training, a neoliberal charter (1999) that paved the way for the destruction of the public education service in favour of capital invested in the sector. There was also a restructuring of social protection (health insurance and pensions) according to the same neoliberal logic, and the modification of labour law towards greater job insecurity and the elimination of historical gains, as well as the application of workforce management methods specific to the private sector in the public sector (temporary contracts, increased exploitation, etc.).

Added to this is the inability of the workers' movement to oppose creeping privatization, the policy of high rates of unemployment, widespread job insecurity, and the repression of union freedoms. Thus, Moroccan law still contains provisions that criminalize strikes (an "obstruction of the freedom to work") and prohibit strikes by civil servants (a law dating from 1958), as well as forbidding strikes by workers involving requisitioning of their workplaces. The policies of union bureaucracies have weakened unions and eroded their credibility, leading to workers' anger being expressed through sectoral coordinating bodies that have further fragmented and disintegrated the union landscape.

Of course, workers' resistance continues as a last line of defence (fighting against layoffs, defending union rights, etc.), but it is fragmented, lacking a unified programme of struggle or a clear political horizon. The biggest struggle in this context was the three-month-long strike by education workers (2023-2024) to repel the attack aimed at imposing a statute that would destroy hard-won gains and impose difficult working conditions. This movement was characterized by the emergence of new coordinating bodies that mobilized teachers, including the rank and file of the unions, most of which had supported the Ministry of Education's plan. The movement achieved a partial victory, with the state abandoning certain provisions of the statute and granting a salary increase unprecedented in the sector's history, exceeding that obtained during the February 20, 2011 movement. However, this increase did not fully satisfy teachers, as inflation limited its impact. But the absence of a union left prevented the structuring of the base of the movement, as well as the extension of the strike to at least two major sectors of the state which were in turmoil at the time: local authorities (90,000 employees) and health (80,000 employees), an extension which could have opened the way to a general strike giving the union movement renewed dynamism and new perspectives.

Instead, union leaders continued their policy of collaboration with the state by accepting the adoption of a law that eliminates the right to strike, while feigning opposition. They also agreed to continue the reform of the pension system, following an initial reform in 2016 (raising the retirement age for civil servants to 63, reducing pensions, and increasing the amount of payroll deductions). Finally, union leaders agreed to modify labour law in the direction of greater flexibility and job insecurity.

These fundamental setbacks have aggravated the crisis of the trade union movement and caused it to lose all respect in the eyes of the working class.

The Moroccan trade union movement was therefore completely taken by surprise by the GenZ 212 movement, while it is in a state of organizational weakness and under the domination of leaders who collaborate with the state, which makes it incapable of supporting the struggle of young people and responding to it as required by the duty to

struggle.

The position of union leaders, some guided by reformist or reactionary religious opposition parties, while others are directly subordinate to the palace, is not new: the same approach was followed during the February 20, 2011 movement, and it intensified after the revolution that began in Syria turned into a civil war. At that time, they emphasized safeguarding stability and social peace, exceeding the state's expectations in this regard. This was confirmed in the face of the Hirak movement in the Rif and the entire wave of popular struggle in neglected regions. Union bureaucracies systematically avoid any convergence between workers' and popular struggles, in the name of social peace and maintaining stability.

We are therefore far from the example of Madagascar, where the Generation Z movement coordinated via the Internet with the unions to call for national strikes.

### **What is the social base of the Generation Z 212 movement, what are its demands and what forms does its struggle take?**

In the background, there is the social catastrophe that the Covid-19 pandemic brought to the forefront of the political and media scene: more than 4.5 million families need social assistance, hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost due to the pandemic and successive droughts, public services (especially health) have deteriorated due to decades of austerity and support for the private sector, etc.

The GenZ 212 movement, due to the dynamics linked to its creation and operation, is a movement of young, highly qualified digital activists, graduates of the education system, who are confronted with the reality of the labour market, characterized by high unemployment rates and great job insecurity.

The unemployment rate for 15-24 year olds (the largest segment of Generation Z) reaches 35.8 per cent, and 47 per cent in urban areas. Most jobs offered to young people are extremely precarious, with fixed-term contracts becoming the norm following the widespread use of temporary work and employment agencies. The sectors employing young people are also characterized by overexploitation, as evidenced in particular by the security sector (120,000 employees), call centres (130,000), and electrical wiring for the automotive industry.

Initially, the movement's demands were of a general social character, lacking precision and a direct political dimension. The movement adopted the slogan "We don't want the World Cup, health first," widely disseminated by the Agadir protest on September 14, and it demanded reform of the education and health sectors, improved living conditions, and the fight against corruption.

The demand for the government's removal appeared on October 3, expressing illusions about a superficial change that would not touch the core of neoliberal policy and would only be a false political outcome undermining the struggle dynamic of the Generation Z 212 movement, like the renewal of the superficial government during the February 20, 2011 movement, which had contributed to extinguishing that movement.

After six days of protests, the movement clarified its demands, addressed directly to the king by a list of eight demands: the dismissal of Aziz Akhannouch's government for failing to protect the purchasing power of Moroccans ; the launch of an impartial judicial process to combat corruption; the dissolution of political parties implicated in corruption; the implementation of the principle of equality and non-discrimination, guaranteeing equal opportunities for young people in health, education, and employment, free from patronage and nepotism; the strengthening of freedom of expression and the right to political dissent; and freedom for all detainees linked to peaceful demonstrations; the release of all prisoners of conscience , participants in popular uprisings and student movements;

the organization of a national public accountability session under the auspices of the king.

This document was followed by another, published on October 10th and entitled "List of Demands of Moroccan Youth: For the Activation of the Constitutional Contract and the Realization of the Ambitions of the New Development Model." As its title indicates, it draws on the state's discourse, beginning with the 2011 Constitution, rejected by the February 20th Movement and the entire political opposition, and the "new development model," governed by a purely neoliberal logic. Even if the demands contained some illusions, they reflected a very broad dynamic of politicization among young people, long considered to be disinterested in politics. This dynamic quickly shattered some of these illusions after the great hopes that the Generation Z 212 movement had placed in the king's personal intervention. Hopes that the king disappointed in his opening speech to the parliamentary session on October 10th.

Compared to the February 20th Movement of 2011, launched by young people influenced by the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, the Generation Z 212 movement operates at a lower political level. The two main slogans of the February 20th Movement were: "Freedom, dignity, and social justice" and "The people want the fall of tyranny and corruption." The young people of GenZ212 retained the first slogan and half of the second, without calling for the fall of tyranny. The February 20th Movement envisioned replacing despotic power with a parliamentary monarchy where the king would reign but not rule. A statement from the GenZ 212 movement, released on Discord on September 18, clarified that the group "clearly affirms that it is not against the monarchy or against the king, but on the contrary, considers the monarchy as an element of stability and continuity of Morocco" and that it demands "radical reform and positive change within the state and its institutions, so that priority is given to education, health, employment and the fight against corruption, so that Moroccan citizens can live in dignity and social justice."

The forms of protest employed by the Generation Z 212 movement consist of street demonstrations, some of which have turned into marches, which have been met with repression and resulted in arrests from the very first day. A major factor fragilizing the movement has been the involvement of the most oppressed groups of young people. These are the young people from the impoverished margins of society, the unemployed, victims of the education system, and victims of the spread of drugs and violence. The towns of Lqiaa and Aït Amira, in the Souss plain, have experienced the most significant acts of vandalism and arson, and the equipment and premises of the security forces have been targeted by masked youths. These cities are working-class neighbourhoods, home to young people from all over the country seeking employment in the Souss plain, which concentrates the majority of the agricultural workforce (70,000 to 100,000) on large capitalist farms, most of whose produce is destined for export. These young people, victims of the violence of an authoritarian capitalist system and its repressive apparatus (105,000 prisoners in Morocco, half of whom are under 30), responded to state violence with predictable vengeful violence that reached its peak on the fifth day, October 1st. Undoubtedly, the nature of the Generation Z movement, whose organization on Discord contrasts sharply with its organization on the ground, fuelled the outbreak of violence, unlike the demonstrations organized in rural areas and those organized by the workers' movement.

After these acts of violence, from which the Generation Z movement distanced itself, it began to precisely determine the location and duration of its demonstrations in order to avoid the intervention of hooded youths, which led to a decrease in participation in the demonstrations, a sign that this phase of the movement was coming to an end.

### **What was the regime's reaction?**

Pro-regime media attacked the Generation Z 212 movement with the usual accusations that it was directed from abroad and had objectives hostile to the regime. Marches and rallies were violently dispersed, and numerous arrests were made. The Moroccan Association for Human Rights documented approximately 1,000 arrests, many of whom have since been released. By mid-October, 272 people, including 36 minors, remained in detention, while 221 had been released on bail. Sentences to prison terms and fines continue to be handed down.

In a speech delivered on October 10th, the king stated that "job creation for young people and concrete improvements in the education and health sectors" were priorities, but he did not mention the youth protests or the measures the government would take to achieve these goals.

Then came the communiqué from the royal palace after the meeting of the Council of Ministers (chaired by the king) on October 19, 2025 on the draft finance law for the year 2026, which attempted to highlight the social character of the budget by emphasizing the priority given to the creation of jobs for young people and to increasing the budgets of the health and national education sectors.

The announcement made in this press release will have an immediate calming effect, but its weakness will quickly become apparent given the scale of the population's social needs and expectations, while the same general policies persist. Similarly, the Minister of Health announced measures and funding for the Agadir regional hospital in the aftermath of the September 14th demonstration, which proved far below what was needed. This is to be expected as long as there is no radical overhaul of the socially destructive neoliberal capitalist policies. Such an overhaul requires a relationship of forces favourable to the working class, in which the GenZ212 movement has played a significant role, but which still remains far from achieving this goal.

### **What will be the impact of the Generation Z 212 movement on the workers' movement and left-wing forces?**

The main characteristic of GenZ 212 is the politicization of a large segment of youth after decades of sectoral struggles, the most significant of which was that of unemployed university graduates. This latter movement structured youth struggles for over twenty years and disappeared after the state replaced direct recruitment with competitive examinations. Instead of fighting together, young people were pitted against each other. The country also experienced struggles by young teachers, the most important of which was that of the Teachers' Coordination, organising contract workers, which shook the education sector for six years.

Higher education has experienced fragmented struggles, particularly in institutes and higher schools, the most important of which was that of students in faculties of medicine and pharmacy, which lasted 11 months (December 2023-November 2024).

The unifying nature of the Generation Z 212 movement and its demands, which concern the working class as a whole, make it a significant step in the evolution of youth consciousness. Furthermore, the confrontation with state repression and the shift from social to political demands—including the removal of the head of government and the disappointment sparked by the king's speech on October 10th, 2025—represent a move towards greater political clarity. This has manifested itself in the political debates organized by the movement on the Discord platform, with the participation of political actors, all from the left and supporters of a parliamentary monarchy that strips the king of his absolute powers.

There is no doubt that the influence of the movement, which has temporarily receded under the weight of repression and promises from the government, will extend to young workers, who are also active in the digital space, to all young people from the working classes, as well as to the base of the trade union movement.

Will young people find their way toward forms of self-organization that structure their movement outside the virtual world? Will they evolve toward a radical, comprehensive political perspective? This will depend on the workers' movement and its involvement in sectors that employ a large number of young people, as well as on the emergence within it of a left-wing pole that defends the real interests of the working class with a vision that offers an alternative social project. It will also depend on what left-wing forces do. As usual, some of these forces are content to express their solidarity with social struggles from afar, call on leaders to reform, and wait for elections, while their grassroots

activists play a significant role in numerous popular struggles and in everyday union resistance. As for the radical left, most of it is called upon to review its tactics, whether in union work, where it refuses to defend an alternative line to that of the bureaucracy, aligning itself with the latter in exchange for positions in the apparatus, or in the course of electoral political life, where it adopts a sterile abstentionist position.

The politicization of Generation Z and the rapid evolution of their consciousness represent a major shift in the Moroccan political landscape, a landscape rich in possibilities that opens up unprecedented opportunities for left-wing forces. For over forty years, young people have been radicalizing in a reactionary fashion, strengthening Islamist forces, which has practically turned the page on the Marxist youth radicalization that characterized the 1960s and 70s. Today, we are facing a wave of politicization in a completely different context, due to the profound erosion of class consciousness following the defeats of the workers' movement and national liberation movements, but this is not, however, an Islamist politicization.

Since young people took to the streets on September 27, 2025, the conditions for building a broad anti-capitalist left have improved, based on the social demands at the heart of youth struggles—the same demands as those of workers' resistance and popular resistance in rural areas. Everything depends on how we act, drawing on events as they unfold. Politics is nothing other than the art of acting appropriately in response to circumstances.

Globally, the youth uprisings in many Asian countries and in Madagascar, as well as the global solidarity movement with Palestine, of which the general strike in Italy was a qualitative step, have had positive effects, to which must be added, at the regional level, the general and global strike that took place in the Tunisian province of Gabès on Tuesday, October 21, 2025. There is great hope that internal and external developments will combine to give new impetus to the workers' and popular struggle in Morocco.

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[1] 212 is the international telephone country code for Morocco.