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Morocco

Morocco's Elections in a Time of Despotism: Why Ballot Boxes Don't Produce Liberation



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“Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it.”
— **Frantz Fanon**, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961).

Einstein defined insanity as repeating the same experiment with the same tools under the same conditions while expecting different results. Today, I believe that Morocco is experiencing a form of political insanity in the Einsteinian sense. The elections on September 23 showcased the same familiar faces that have worn thin on the Moroccan public, accompanied by the same broken promises and poorly executed theatrics. Furthermore, it is the Ministry of the Interior that oversees the entire electoral process—from drawing constituency maps to organising the vote itself. Despite these circumstances, both old and new mouthpieces of power persist in trying to persuade us of the necessity of participating in this appointment to construct a new Morocco with the same old system. It is as if the sheer number of electoral lists could create genuine pluralism: 28 parties, 1,850 lists, 7,288 candidates—more than 18 candidates per seat—yet the political offerings remain fundamentally poor and largely unchanged.

Elections under an authoritarian regime

Contrary to what various forms of disinformation would have us believe, we are not voting in an imperfect democracy that merely needs “improvement”. We are voting in an absolute despotic system in which legislative, executive, and judicial powers are effectively concentrated in the hands of the king and his advisors—what might be called the real shadow government: unelected, unaccountable, and absent from any electoral platform. Parliament legislates only within the margin it is allowed. The government carries out decisions made elsewhere. The judiciary has only as much independence as it is granted. In this context, political parties do not compete to serve citizens; rather, they vie for a better position within the system by presenting themselves as the most capable of implementing the neoliberal policies that are devastating social and economic rights, the most skilled at “managing” popular anger, and the most devoted to advising the regime on how to prevent the next uprising. The winning party is not the one that wins voters but the one that convinces those above it that it can absorb the shock and delay the explosion. Nothing illustrates the situation better than the declarations heads of government routinely make upon taking office: that their essential mission is the literal execution of the royal agenda.

Parties: Biologically Aged, Programmatically Sterile

These are rotten parties, in the direct moral and political sense of the word, given the involvement of several of their leaderships in financial and administrative corruption scandals—and rotten in the figurative sense too, meaning that their shelf life (*périmé*) has expired. They are no longer even fit for the role they were created to play: camouflaging authoritarianism and lending legitimacy to a fictitious multiparty system that functions, in practice, much closer to a single-party model, despite the multiplicity of names and symbols.

Parties with old faces, leaderships that have lingered far too long, and programme sterility generate an almost automatic aversion among citizens. And what applies to the ruling majority applies equally to much of the opposition, which competes more for seats than for alternatives. Their platforms resemble one another, promising “the social state”, “dignity”, and “employment” in the same vague, exhausted language.

These platforms avoid the strategic questions altogether: What economic policy would rescue the country from chronic regional and social disparities? What specific redistribution of wealth is being proposed, and through which mechanisms will it be implemented? What equitable tax system could replace the current one, which places a heavy burden on wage earners and small traders while favouring major investors, beneficiaries, and the corrupt? What about the debt spiral that swallows up a significant share of the state budget in debt servicing? What is their stance on the vanity megaprojects and massive stadiums that are consuming billions in preparation for the 2030 World Cup, while hospitals and schools suffer from shortages? What alternative do they propose to rescue the education and health systems? How do we achieve food and water sovereignty in the face of recurring drought years and volatile global markets? And where do they stand on rising prices and the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a narrow elite?

All these questions are absent from these parties' platforms, and when they do appear, they are addressed with vague slogans that ultimately bless the very policies whose consequences Moroccans have been burnt by in their daily lives. The campaign degenerates into personal quarrels and mutual accusations among those racing for their share of the pie.

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Governments Allied with Despotism and the Ruling Oligarchy

We are not simply facing a government that has failed to deliver on its promises. We are facing a series of governments that are structurally an organic ally of despotism and of the ruling oligarchy—rather than an executive authority emanating from the will of voters and accountable to them. When the head of government is a businessman ranked, according to Forbes, among the continent's wealthiest people and owns companies that have become the target of wide-reaching popular boycott campaigns, we are not looking at a passing "conflict of interest" that a law could resolve. We see a structural fusion of political and economic power—between the legislator and the profit-maker. These governments do not rule as agents of the people; they administer public affairs as agents of a narrow oligarchic circle, which is organically tied to the real centres of decision-making, sharing the rents with that circle far more than they share decent public services with the citizens. They also join hands with our old and new colonisers for the further plundering of the country and its people.

In 2021, the current government promised a million jobs. Five years later, youth unemployment remains among the highest in the region. But this failure is not a technical shortcoming in "governance"—it is the logical result of a government whose real mission is not to serve the majority but to manage the political and economic capital of the very elite that produced it, ensuring the continued flow of rent toward circles close to power, even at the expense of health, education, and the purchasing power of millions of Moroccans.

This is a government that raises the banner of "the social state" while, in reality, merely executing major choices decided elsewhere—as citizens experience the deterioration of public services every single day. And when public anger finally exploded, it wasn't triggered by a UN report or an international index but by the deaths of pregnant women in a hospital in Agadir.

So do our people deserve better than governments whose primary mission is to protect the regime and its oligarchy

rather than serve the citizen? Given their struggles and sacrifices, do our youth deserve more than governments allied with those who benefit from the perpetuation of despotism?

The Gen Z 212 Uprising: A Path of Hope

Defenders of the status quo have wheeled out their old arsenal against every voice that disturbs them: “vandals”, “nihilists”, “foreign agents”... and the propaganda machine has rushed to replay the old record of “Moroccan exceptionalism”. But the Gen Z 212 movement, which erupted on September 27, 2025—as something like a second wave of a revolutionary process of anger whose spark first ignited in 2011 but is carried now by the tools of a new generation—proved that the anger never died. A movement that organised itself through the Discord platform, whose membership surpassed 220,000 within a few days, and that raised a simple, profound slogan: “Health first, we don't want the World Cup.” Thousands took to the streets in Rabat, Casablanca, Agadir, Marrakech, Fez, and smaller towns and marginalised regions, demanding healthcare, education, jobs, an end to corruption, and the resignation of the government.

This movement was met with the same security-first approach: arrests and prosecutions targeting dozens of young people and three deaths in Laqliaa near Agadir during the protests. And when the youth addressed the king directly, bypassing the government altogether, their action was itself a tacit admission that the government and the parties no longer convince anyone.

Today, almost a year later, these same young people are being asked to return to the ballot box as if nothing had happened. The statistics are clear: the percentage of registered voters aged 18–24 decreased from 8% to 4%, while the percentage of those aged 25–44 declined from 19% to 15%. This is a silent referendum on the credibility of the entire party landscape.

But we need an active response, not a protest vote or a passive boycott. What we need is a genuine collective consciousness, rising from the ground up, led by the youth themselves, toward radical change that liberates us not only from political despotism but also from dependency in all its colonial and neocolonial forms—toward genuine food, energy, financial, and cultural sovereignty that breaks with decades of neoliberal economics and its myths: the myth of “comparative advantage”, which has condemned us to exporting our water in the form of fruit and vegetables while our subsistence agriculture dries up; the myth of “trickle-down”, which promised that the wealth of the rich would eventually seep down to the poor, when in fact nothing has trickled down but debt and inequality; and the “theories” of economic freedom, which were never, at their core, anything but a cover for the freedom of capital to concentrate itself and evade taxation—never the freedom of the citizen to live with dignity.

Our generation's mission today is clear, despite all the obscurity surrounding it: to decide either to accomplish the task of full liberation or to betray it by settling for yet another electoral performance that changes nothing in the structure of power.

In her book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, Naomi Klein argues that the catastrophic environmental crisis produced by the globalised capitalist model of production, distribution, and consumption is, at the very same time, an opportunity to change everything. I embrace this hopeful, motivating vision for Morocco: radical change today is not an option but a duty we owe to the majority of our people and to future generations.

No serious alternative societal project in Morocco can afford to ignore the disasters caused by political despotism, economic liberalism, and their catastrophic convergence. The September 23 elections—whatever their results—will resolve none of this convergence, because they are held within the very structure that produced the crisis in the first

place. Our alternative must take our concrete reality into account, must grow out of our own culture and traditions, and must reconcile us with our identity. We must break with ready-made solutions imported and crudely imposed on our reality. We must break with the myth of "modernity" and the Orientalist view of development and radical change in our countries. At the heart of our alternatives, we must establish the full sovereignty of local communities over their resources—their land, water, sun, and minerals—managed democratically, in solidarity, and complementarily, by themselves and with others. We must build a better Morocco in which citizens control their own institutions so that those institutions respond to the essential needs of the majority for food, education, and health in ways that respect ecosystems and their capacity for renewal. This is the horizon worth fighting for—not a ballot box recycled every five years to reproduce the same despotism with new faces.

24 September 2026

Source: [CADTM](#).

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