

A Battle of Perceptions: Morocco's Political and Social Conflict with Migration

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Abstract

The Kingdom of Morocco has slowly evolved from a country of emigration to a vital epicenter of migration activity in the 21st century. The country has become a burgeoning transition country to Europe as well as a popular destination country for migrants and refugees alike. This capstone project evaluates the treatment of refugees and migrants in Morocco; special attention is paid to the differences in treatment of sub-Saharan and Syrian refugees and migrants. Morocco lacks a comprehensive national system of asylum which has led to inconsistent enforcement, foreign interference, and human rights abuses of migrants and refugees. I argue that Syrian and Arab refugees and migrants have certain advantages on a societal level compared to sub-Saharan migrants and refugees due to a shared ethno-religious-linguistic identity.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank the *Bureau of Population, Refugee, and Migration at the United States Department of State* in Washington, D.C. and *La Fondation Orient-Occident* in Rabat, Morocco for allowing me to work alongside them for several months each. Specifically, I would like to thank the individuals at these organizations who provided valuable insight and expertise that greatly assisted my research.

I. Introduction

When I first landed in Rabat, Morocco in January 2017, I arrived with certain hypotheses about the ways religion would manifest in refugee and migration relations. I hypothesized it would be a relatively straightforward us-versus-them mentality. The “us” being a Muslim Arab/Berber Moroccan population who felt threatened by the influx of Christian sub-Saharan African migrants. I thought this dichotomy would be demonstrated through de facto limits on Christian migration to the country, slanderous news articles, attacks on Christian holy places, etc. I set out thinking this would be an explicitly religious conflict and it turns out, upon further inspection, that is a much more complex issue of ethnicity, religion, and identity. In some ways, however, the extent of the violence and discrimination against sub-Saharan migrants far exceeded my expectations. The media in Morocco pays little attention to the violence, arbitrary detention camps, and forced deportations that happen on a regular basis. In fact, even international news coverage applauds Morocco for the steps it has taken to modernize its migration policy and glosses over the human rights violations.

As I reflected upon my research back in the United States, a grim observation became evident. I had spent six months at a refugee and migration center in Rabat and had never actively seen a Syrian refugee (See Appendix A where I describe my Research Plan). Only sub-Saharan migrants were visible in society and terrorized by methods of intimidation. While Syrian refugees and other Arab migrants are welcomed and integrated into Moroccan society, sub-Saharan refugees and migrants face bureaucratic obstacles, barriers to integration, human rights abuses, and unclear fates. As the main target of discrimination, sub-Saharan African refugees and migrants struggle to find their place in Moroccan society and beyond. My research

questions became: How does the Moroccan society's treatment of Syrian/Arab refugees and migrants differ from its treatment of sub-Saharan African refugees and migrants? What factors explain the difference?

To answer these questions, I began paying attention to the social conditions that produced the hostile environment for sub-Saharan Africans and integration for Syrians. I found that *linguistic challenges* continually proved to be a barrier to entry for both francophone and anglophone migrants. Although the majority of urban Moroccans speak French and/or often English, they have a strong linguistic Arabic identity and show a preference for Arabic-speaking minorities. *Racial bias* against dark skinned individuals in employment, education, incarceration, deportation, etc. recurred throughout my research. *Religious practices* shared amongst Muslims appeared as strong binding agents between members of the religion regardless of nationality. These three major themes shaped the way I evaluated the relationship between sub-Saharan African migrants, Syrian refugees, and the Moroccan public.

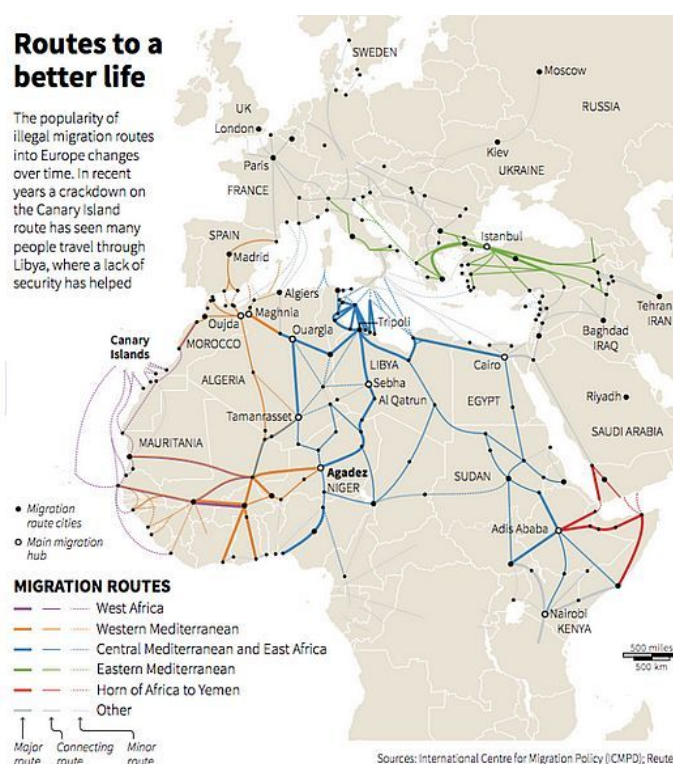
My amended hypothesis asserts that sub-Saharan Africans face human rights abuses and insurmountable obstacles to integration in Moroccan society while Syrians benefit from social connections due to their traits shared with Moroccans. To find an institutional basis for these claims, I next traced the history and evolution of the Moroccan governmental policies that impact refugees and migrants. On an international level, *foreign influence* was the most prominent recurring element. Moroccan policy is often shaped by its desire to appease or negotiate with a certain foreign entity. Internally, despite its emergence as a critical migration hub, there is no comprehensive asylum policy for refugees or migration policy. The migration dynamics in Morocco have changed significantly since the country gained independence in the

1950s. It has evolved from a country primarily of emigration to a destination and transit country for other migrants. Upon studying the evolution of migration policy in Morocco, it became evident that King Mohammed VI's updates to modernize the law are largely stabilizing moves for the monarchy rather than sustainable changes for the Moroccan society.¹

II. Moroccan Governmental Policy Towards Refugees and Migrants

The global refugee crisis has reached new extremes in the past decade. There are over 21 million refugees in the world, 7 million of which reside in Africa. 86% of global refugees live in developing countries, including 10,000 who are officially registered in Morocco.² In recent years, the Kingdom of Morocco has maintained a stable government despite political volatility in the region. The nation's relative stability stems from a careful balance of the contradictory interests of the monarchy, the state, the private

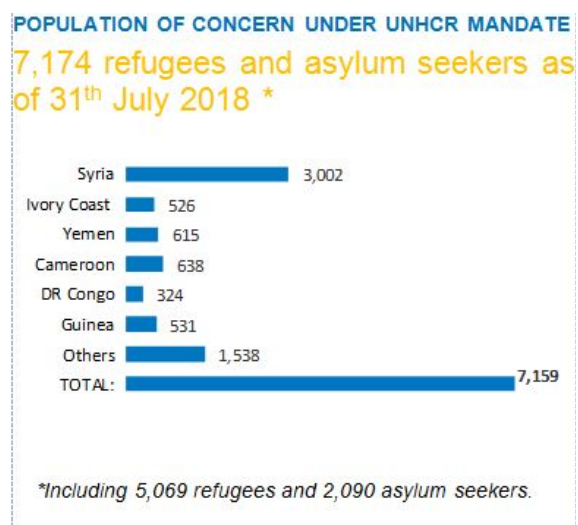
sector, regional and ethnic groups, religious movements, political parties, and non-governmental



¹ King Mohammed VI's regime in Morocco is among the most secular in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. However, religion, language, and ethnicity play an important role in daily life and official decrees. The King of Morocco has always claimed the title of "Commander of the Faithful." Given that the vast majority of Moroccans are Muslim, the King gains legitimacy by claiming ancestry descended from the Prophet Mohammed. During the reign of King Mohammed VI, the laws in Morocco have become more secular than they were under his father King Hassan II (r. 1961-1999).# Given his liberalization of many Moroccan policies, King Mohammed VI is propagated as the "King of the People" who works to represent the public's interests.

² "Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Migrants." *Amnesty International*, Amnesty International, 2018.

stakeholders.³ Representatives from international organizations, the European Union, African leadership, and local associations regularly praise Morocco for its efforts to address burgeoning migration issues on the continent. Despite this praise, Morocco has been the center of a deportation and detention crises that has raised worries about human rights abuses of sub-Saharan migrants. The country is a source, destination, and transit country for migrants⁴



across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It also serves as a host for several thousand refugees⁵ and asylum seekers⁶ from sub-Saharan Africa, Syria, Yemen, and so on. Migration flows across the Western Mediterranean increased twofold in 2017 compared to 2016. It's location at the north-west edge of the African continent, just 14 miles south of Spain, makes it a tumultuous

migration hub. The migrants who cross from Morocco to Europe are typically either Moroccans or West Africans transiting through North Africa. Domestically, Morocco has been developing a migrant regularization program but has not yet implemented a standardized system.⁷ Syrians automatically have a choice between refugee and regularization status with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Chart⁸). Ensuring the success of these regularization programs and the creation of a comprehensive asylum policy is critical to

³ Verluise, Pierre, "Maroc: quelles perspectives", *Le Monde*, 21 November 2012.

⁴ See Glossary

⁵ See Glossary

⁶ See Glossary

⁷ DeBel-Air, F. "Migration Profile: Morocco." *Migration Policy Center*, 2016.

⁸ "Morocco Fact Sheet". UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Aug. 2018.

integrating migrants into society, preventing irregular trans-Mediterranean migration, and combating human trafficking. (Map⁹)

a. Evolving Governmental Migration Policies

The circumstances of migration in Morocco have evolved greatly since independence in the 1950s. It is no longer primarily a country of emigration; it is a turbulent destination and transit country for migrants of a variety of origins. In 1956, Morocco became the first African country to sign the 1951 Geneva Convention. In the 1990s, sub-Saharan migrants began using Morocco as a temporary base before continuing to Europe.¹⁰ The European Union quickly began encouraging Morocco through financial incentives to regulate migration across the Mediterranean. The first law the Moroccan government passed on migration was in 2003. Law 02-03 criminalized irregular migration, established sanctions for support for migrants, and increased control capacities on the borders with Algeria and Spain. In practice this law was implemented through raids of migrant settlements, physical abuse, and ultimately over a dozen deaths of sub-Saharans.¹¹ Local and international organizations began campaigns to reform migration policy but none were heard until the Arab Spring in 2011. At the time, the Moroccan-based NGO *Groupe Antiraciste de Défense d'Accompagnement des Etrangers et Migrants* (GADEM) released a critical report about the Moroccan government's treatment of migrants.¹² Simultaneously, the United Nation released a statement on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families which also criticised the practices

⁹ Kostas, Stylianos "Morocco's Triple Role in the Euro-African Migration System." *Middle East Institute*, Middle East Institute, 18 Apr 2017.

¹⁰ DeBel-Air, F. "Migration Profile: Morocco." *Migration Policy Center*, 2016.

¹¹ Natter, Katharina, "Almost Home? Morocco's Incomplete Migration Reforms" *World Politics Review*. World Politics Review, LLC, 5 May 2015. Web.

¹² Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (2014). Analysis of the Mobility Partnership signed between the Kingdom of Morocco, the European Union and nine Member States on 7 June 2013.

of the Moroccan government towards sub-Saharan Africans.¹³ The protests and critiques humiliated Morocco in the international arena and directly correlated with the release of new policy on migration.

King Mohammed VI revealed the new human rights-based approach to migration was revealed in September 2013. The reforms promised regularization for irregular migrants who could prove several years of residency, stable work for a Moroccan national, or family ties to a Moroccan national such as a spouse which made Morocco the only country in the MENA region to implement such a program.¹⁴ Prior to these reforms, the Moroccan approach to migration was strictly security-based rather than focused on human autonomy.¹⁵ The reforms coincided with the creation of a new Department on Migration Affairs which is dedicated to dealing with refugee regularization and residency permits.¹⁶ Later in 2013, Morocco signed the Mobility Partnership with the EU to “reinforce and implement instruments to combat irregular migration” to Europe.¹⁷

In December 2016, the King announced the second phase of the migrant regularization campaign. Following the announcement, the National Commission for the Regularization and Integration of Migrants met at the Ministry of Interior to adopt a plan to integrate 40,000 undocumented migrants.¹⁸ Until the Moroccan government drafts an official and comprehensive asylum law, UNHCR registers and processes all asylum claims in the country. In a 2008

¹³ United Nations (2013). International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families: Concluding observations on the initial report of Morocco adopted by the Committee at its nineteenth session.

¹⁴ Hassouri, Parastou “Refugees or Migrants? Difficulties of West Africans in Morocco” *Middle East Research and Information Project*. Relief Web. Web.

¹⁵ “Morocco.” *International Organization for Migration*. International Organization for Migration, 13 May 2016. Web. 22 Mar. 2017.

¹⁶ DeBel-Air, F. “Migration Profile: Morocco.” *Migration Policy Center*, 2016.

¹⁷ Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (2014). Analysis of the Mobility Partnership signed between the Kingdom of Morocco, the European Union and nine Member States on 7 June 2013.

¹⁸ De Hass, Hein. “Morocco: Setting the Stage for Becoming a Migration Transition Country?” *Migration Policy Institute*. Migration Policy Institute, 02 Mar. 2017. Web.

agreement, Morocco recognized UNHCR's refugee determination based on the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees.¹⁹ There are two options for refugees in Morocco: refugee cards and residency cards. The Moroccan government has been responsible for distributing residency cards since 2013. Refugee status, however, is jointly determined by UNHCR and Moroccan government officials. This shared model theoretically builds the capacity of the Moroccan officials, particularly in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Migration Affairs. The refugees who are registered by UNHCR are referred to Moroccan authorities. If approved by the Moroccan officials, the refugees then receive regularized status, a refugee card, and a residency permit.²⁰ In practice, asylum-seekers first go to the UNHCR office in Rabat for a "Refugee Status Determination" interview. If UNHCR approves the individual, that person is then processed by the Office of Refugees and Stateless Persons who make the final status determination. This migration and asylum procedure enable refugees to access basic services such as education, healthcare, and jobs. However, the delays in the implementation of new policies has led to persistent gaps in access and protection.

b. Moroccan Governmental Policies Concerning Syrian Refugees

Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, approximately 8 million Syrians have left the country. Given the bombings and chemical attacks, the people fleeing Syria fall under the 1951 Geneva convention's²¹ definition of a refugee. The majority of Syrians fled to nearby countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. However, as Gulf countries refuse entry and the European Union closes its borders, North Africa has become a destination for Syrian refugees²². Over

¹⁹ MPC Team, "MPC – Migration Profile" *Migration Policy Center*. European University Institute, June 2013.

²⁰ "Morocco" *The UN Refugee Agency*. The UN Refugee Agency, 2018. Web.

²¹ See Glossary

²² See Glossary

24,000 Syrians have made their way to the region since the onset of the conflict. In 2017, more than 3,000 Syrians and Yemenis arrived in Morocco. They account for nearly 70% of the country's refugee population.²³

According to UNHCR, Syrians aren't included in many current migration policies in Morocco due to "perceived security reasons." They did, however, benefit greatly from the 2014 regularization campaign. Over 5,000 Syrians received legal residency between 2013 and 2015. Many Syrians are still waiting for new laws to be passed which will give them permanent residency. (Map²⁴)



Syrians, for the most part, use their real passports and leave Syria through the Aleppo or Damascus airports. They arrive in Morocco either via direct flights or crossing the border from Algeria.²⁵ Until 2015, Algeria did not require Syrians to have visas in order to enter the country. Therefore, a number of Syrians would fly to Algeria and wait to cross illegally to Morocco.²⁶ There have been a handful of scandals in recent years where Morocco and Algeria have conflicted over how to handle Syrians illegally crossing between their borders. In 2017, Amnesty International criticized Morocco for violating "their international obligations in the field of

²³ UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2017, Statistical report

²⁴ Bajekal, Naina. "This Graphic Shows the Astonishing Scale of Syria's Refugee Crisis." *Time Magazine*, Time Magazine, 10 Sept. 2015.

²⁵ UN High Commissioner for Refugees. "Information Note on Syrians Applying for Asylum in Morocco." UNHCR, 2015.

²⁶ Bailleul, A. "Syrian Refugees in Morocco: Exile to Survive." *HuffPost Morocco*, 28 Sept. 2015.

refugee protection by blocking a group of 25 Syrian refugees in a desert zone on the border between Morocco and Algeria and depriving them of the possibility of seeking asylum and receiving emergency humanitarian aid.”²⁷ Morocco has made it difficult for Syrians to enter the country but the government has tried to bolster its image in the international arena by improving the human rights conditions for these refugees.

Despite the difficulty entering the country, the situation once Syrians settle in Morocco is more straightforward. Syrian refugees in Morocco are all immediately eligible to receive benefits and protection from UNHCR upon arrival.²⁸ UNHCR automatically grants refugee status to Syrians which also gives them access to renewable residency permits. The Moroccan government asked UNHCR to grant Syrians “UNHCR asylum-seeker certificates” but the government itself does not recognize the refugee status.²⁹ A UNHCR employee explained Morocco’s strategy as follows:

“Calling someone a refugee would mean directly that there is some kind of unrest, conflict, or war in the country of origin. And that is pointing a finger on that country, saying ‘something is wrong with your country’,... and this is a political statement. So [Morocco prefers] to host Syrian refugees without going to that political debate. After the Syrian civil war began, Morocco closed the Syrian Embassy in Rabat and has yet to reopen it.”³⁰

In short, as part of the greater Arab community, Morocco does not want to make a political statement about the human rights crisis in Syria. As a result, UNHCR, rather than the government, offers a variety of programs to benefit the Syrian refugees.

²⁷ “Morocco: Syrian refugees’ situation to be resolved.” *Middle East Monitor*, 21 June 2017.

²⁸ Belhajâli, Salma. “Syrian Refugees Find Support and Solace from Moroccans.” *Morocco World News*, Morocco World News, 6 Aug. 2016.

²⁹ UN High Commissioner for Refugees. “Information Note on Syrians Applying for Asylum in Morocco.” UNHCR, 2015.

³⁰ Chenok, Hannah. “Syrian Refugees Lived Experiences in Morocco.” SIT Digital Collections, Fall 2017.

The government's lack of official recognition predictably leads to issues for Syrians living in Morocco. Specifically, UNHCR notes Syrian refugees have difficulty "access[ing] the labor market [which] keeps them in a certain precariousness."³¹ In 2017, this issue was mended in part when the United Nations and the Ministry of Labor agreed on a memorandum to allow Syrians to work in Morocco. After living in Morocco for four years, Syrians can apply for residency like other migrants. However, once they receive the residency card they can no longer benefit from UNHCR services for refugees. In light of this legal dilemma, Syrians have to make difficult strategic decisions to maximize their ability to stay and work in Morocco.

c. Moroccan Governmental Policies Concerning Sub-Saharan Refugees

Sub-Saharan African countries make up eight of the top ten fastest growing immigrant populations. The number of emigrants from the top eight countries has grown by 50% or more since 2010.³² As of 2017, 25 million sub-Saharans live outside their country of birth.

Sub-Saharan refugees in Morocco originate from 35 countries—mostly Senegal, Congo, Cote D'Ivoire, and Nigeria—and reside in approximately 50 cities across the Kingdom. Academic studies on the Sub-Saharan migrant community find that the majority of migrants are single (70%) male (70%) and between the ages of 15 and 44 (90%).³³

The new migration policy in September 2013 equally impacted sub-Saharan refugees and migrants³⁴. The King promised to provide documentation and legal status to 20,000 to 40,000 sub-Saharan African migrants.³⁵ For the rest, the process of asylum status and migration is very

³¹ "Morocco Fact Sheet". UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017.

³² Connor, Phillip. "International Migration from Sub-Saharan Africa Has Grown Dramatically since 2010." *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 28 Feb. 2018

³³ Mourji, Fouzi, Jean-Noel Ferrie, Saadi Radi, and Meghi Alioua. "Les Migrants Subsahariens Au Maroc: Enjeux d'une Migration de Residence." *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*, 2016.

³⁴ See Glossary

³⁵ De Hass, Hein. "Morocco: Setting the Stage for Becoming a Migration Transition Country?"

similar to Syrians. UNHCR carries the bulk of responsibility in registering and caring for refugees. However, UNHCR cannot track all refugees and migrants in the country so there is no official record of how many sub-Saharan Africans are living in Morocco. Furthermore, the Moroccan government does not prioritize protection for sub-Saharan migrants and refugees.³⁶ Civil society is generally non inclusive of sub-Saharan Africans which leads to barriers to integration.³⁷ As a result, these refugees end up lost in Moroccan society with little to no access to education, health care, or the job market.

Due to the comparatively small size of the vulnerable populations in Morocco, International Organizations such as UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have smaller operations in Morocco than in other North African countries. There is confusion among both Moroccan politicians and local society about how to respond to the increase in sub-Saharan refugees and migrants who do not share a similar culture, language, or religion. Despite Morocco's efforts to improve the legal and social frameworks for migrants, many sub-Saharans still struggle with daily life and face major human rights abuses.³⁸ Morocco has been slow to implement a national policy that grants asylum to refugees or protection to vulnerable sub-Saharan migrants.

A major obstacle for sub-Saharan refugees and migrants is health care. Regularized migrants and recognized refugees have legal access to Regime d'Assistance Medicale (RAMED)

Migration Policy Institute. Migration Policy Institute, 02 Mar. 2017. Web.

³⁶ "Morocco Fact Sheet". *UN High Commissioner for Refugees*, 2017.

³⁷ "Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Migrants." *Amnesty International*, Amnesty International , 2018.

³⁸ "Morocco Fact Sheet". *UN High Commissioner for Refugees*, 2017.

which is Morocco's health care system for the uninsured.³⁹ The system covers more than 8 million Moroccans but is limited by the crumbling public healthcare infrastructure. The care provided by RAMED is substandard and overburdened.⁴⁰ Hospitals, health centers, and emergency services often lack necessary resources, delay appointments, and charge high fees for prescription medication. On top of the inefficiency of the system, a study by UIR indicates that 95% of the sub-Saharan migrants surveyed did not realize they had access to health care.⁴¹ The majority of surveyed migrants who were aware they could benefit from RAMED reported that they did not know how to access the services.⁴² This confusion leads to lack of protection and increased vulnerability for both recognized and unrecognized refugees and migrants.

From the lack of national policy to the gaps in protection to prejudice in Moroccan society, sub-Saharan refugees and migrants are at-risk upon settling in the country. The vast majority do not have the benefit of social connections or ethno-religious-linguistic solidarity with the Moroccan people. The international media has praised Morocco's progress and inclusivity of migrants and refugees.⁴³ However, both official policies and first hand accounts of day-to-day reality reveal the extent to which the sub-Saharan population in Morocco is marginalized.

³⁹ Anders, Victoria, "For a public-private partnership to achieve migrant health equality in Morocco: A Cross-Analysis of Integration Policies and Migrant Peer Educator Programs." Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection. 2482, 2016.

⁴⁰ "Morocco - Healthcare" *Export.gov*, International Trade Administration, Oct. 25 2017.

⁴¹ Alioua, Mehdi. "Les Migrants Subsaharien Au Maroc." *Université Internationale de Rabat*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung E.V, 2016.

⁴² Alioua, Mehdi. "Les Migrants Subsaharien Au Maroc." *Université Internationale de Rabat*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung E.V, 2016.

⁴³ Lewis, Simon. "Germany to Cut Migrants from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia." *Time*. Time, 28 Jan. 2016. Web.

III. Moroccan Social Influences on Refugees and Migrants

a. Treatment of Syrian Refugees

In Syria, Morocco has a reputation for being overly generous to refugees. Syrians flock to Morocco in search of this generosity and the shared Arab Muslim identity that bonds them together. Yasser Al Baten, a Syrian refugee living in Kenitra, explicitly states that he brought his wife and four children to Morocco instead of Europe because he “wanted to raise his children in an Arab Muslim society.”⁴⁴ He explains “we don’t suffer racism⁴⁵” in Moroccan society. The lack of prejudice towards Syrian refugees is linked to the idea that Syrians are part of the Moroccan in-group with a shared Sunni Muslim Identity. Khazna Khalaf, a 70 year old Syrian refugee in Morocco, affirmed the in-group theory saying she “came to Morocco around the Islamic holidays of Eid Al-Adha. People here are really generous and friendly, they even slaughtered a sheep for us on the Eid day.” Solidarity over religious holidays is a significant factor that bonds Muslims together. Mokhtar Challal, a trader living in Kenitra, expressed a similar sentiment: “Moroccans here share everything with [us] food, clothes, and couscous on Fridays. Anything that can make [us] happy.”⁴⁶ Syrian refugees are automatically welcome in Muslim spaces such as mosques and religious celebrations.

While Syrians are generally treated well by Moroccans, they are not treated as native citizens. In fact, the president of the Syrian Community in Morocco, Ghassan Abou Selah, classifies Syrian refugees into three categories. First, there are the individuals who migrated to Morocco in search of job opportunities. A large proportion of Syrians in Morocco are

⁴⁴ Belhajâli, Salma. “Syrian Refugees Find Support and Solace from Moroccans.” *Morocco World News*, Morocco World News, 6 Aug. 2016.

⁴⁵ See Glossary

⁴⁶ Belhajâli, Salma. “Syrian Refugees Find Support and Solace from Moroccans.” *Morocco World News*, Morocco World News, 6 Aug. 2016.

entrepreneurs in the restaurant business. The second category includes individuals who chose Morocco based on friends or familial connections in the country.⁴⁷ The last group, he names “gypseas”, are poorer refugees. A UNHCR employee identified this group as the “Dom” ethnic minority, a heavily stigmatized group in Syria.⁴⁸ They are often uneducated and end up as beggars. They make it to Morocco with purchased passports and beg outside of mosques, relying on the rumors of Moroccan generosity.

Although Syrians have full access to UNHCR benefits, the degree to which Syrian refugees utilize the services are mixed. Many Syrian refugees report that they do not take advantage of the services at all. Zareii, the Syrian who manages the restaurant in Kenitra, says “in my opinion, whether they exist or not would not change anything.” Others try to benefit from UNHCR programs but do not find them sufficient. Al Baten, the Syrian with a wife and four children in Morocco, states that “UNHCR used to give us 600 MAD [\$63 USD] every three months. It is hard for me to manage this amount of money for a family of six members.” Kalaf, the 70 year old Syrian, says “I am just living in a house with my young grandchildren. UNHCR gave me 1000 MAD [\$106 USD] three times.” Others, however, have taken full advantage of UNHCR’s offerings to make a new life in Morocco. Diyaa received a grant from UNHCR that allowed him to buy a sewing machine which he used to create a thriving shoe making business. He now employs young Moroccans from poor neighborhoods and helps other Syrians open businesses.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Belhajâli, Salma. “Syrian Refugees Find Support and Solace from Moroccans.” *Morocco World News*, Morocco World News, 6 Aug. 2016.

⁴⁸ Chenok, Hannah. “Syrian Refugees Lived Experiences in Morocco.” SIT Digital Collections, Fall 2017.

⁴⁹ “Syrian Refugee Starts from Scratch in Morocco.” *USA for UNHCR*, USA for UNHCR, 7 Mar. 2018.

Whether they have residency cards or not, Syrians are integrated into the Moroccan education system. Elementary and secondary schools allow Syrians to attend as long as they can provide identification, a passport, and a residential address in Morocco. They are also able to enroll in universities without proof of residency.⁵⁰ Another critical aspect of Syrian success in Morocco is their existing social and familial connections in the country. During an interview with Rahem Abadi, a Syrian refugee in Rabat, she identified large Syrian communities in Casablanca and Tangier.⁵¹ These communities, she said, have created an “ecosystem” which assists fellow Syrians in the country. Syrian restaurants in Morocco are abundant and thriving. By accessing connections in the Syrian ecosystem, there is support for both employment at existing restaurants and entrepreneurship to open new restaurants. These connections are valuable for blue collar work. However, white collar work is difficult to access without a Moroccan residency card. Therefore, doctors and lawyers from Syria still struggle to find meaningful work.

Ayselin Yildiz of Yale University identifies four categories of refugees living in Morocco. Those categories include: individuals who actively chose Morocco as a destination, individuals en route to Europe, individuals who decided to stay rather than return to their country of origin, and individuals who were trafficked to Morocco.⁵² She categorizes most Syrians as individuals who chose Morocco and choose to stay until the end of the Syrian civil war. Despite the hospitality and comparatively successful integration, the majority of Syrian refugees in Morocco desire to return to Syria upon the conclusion of the civil war. Al Baten summarizes the

⁵⁰ Eqtsad. “Syrians in Morocco and Algeria: Life and Investments.” *Zaman al WSL*, 19 Apr. 2018.

⁵¹ Interview with Abadi in Appendix 3

⁵² Yildiz, Ayselin “The European Union’s Immigration Policy: Managing Migration in Turkey and Morocco.” *Palgrave MacMillan*, 2016.

sentiment by saying “honestly, if the situation is getting better in Syria, I would definitely go back to my homeland.” Diyaa, the successful shoemaker, “longs to return to Syria” and “raise his children in the country where he grew up.”⁵³ There is also evidence that Syrians view Morocco as a transitional country to Europe. More than 1,500 Syrians arrived in Spain between December 2016 and September 2017. Of those 1,500 refugees, 60 percent reported that they reached Spain through the Spanish enclave of Melilla and Ceuta in Morocco.⁵⁴ This indicates that there are a variety of motivations for Syrians living in Morocco. Furthermore, the longevity of their stay is variable. However, evidence supports the idea that the majority of Syrian refugees desire to return to their home country upon the cessation of the war.

Syrians do not necessarily have easy, seamless lives in Morocco. They face challenges from the government, labor market, UNHCR, etc. However, their transition is eased by the comparatively positive reception by the Moroccan society and the existing Syrian community in Morocco. In general, Moroccan people are more accepting of their Muslim compatriots in need when compared to other demographic groups of migrants. Established Syrian families in country, as well as natives, have developed support systems that enable new Syrian refugees to integrate into society without facing racism or many other common social boundaries. While Syrians are still barred from official recognition from the Moroccan government, they are able to build upon their social relationships, similar language, and shared religion to make a sustainable life. The same social infrastructures do not exist for sub-Saharan African migrants and refugees.

⁵³ “Syrian Refugee Starts from Scratch in Morocco.” *USA for UNHCR*, USA for UNHCR, 7 Mar. 2018.

⁵⁴ “Desperate Journeys.” *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 2017.

b. Treatment of Sub-Saharan Refugees and Migrants

Moroccan public discourse has perpetuated the image of poor, transient sub-Saharan migrants passing through Morocco en route to Europe. This mischaracterization relies on the premise that irregular migration is driven by poverty and desperation. In reality, a study from the International University of Rabat (UIR) found that 70% of sub-Saharan migrants have lived in Morocco between two and eight years, 91% came from urban areas in their home country, and 87% had at least a secondary level of education with 50% having a university level of education.

⁵⁵ Several sub-Saharan African countries, including Senegal and Mali, enjoy visa-free travel to Morocco. The majority of refugees and migrants in Morocco arrive legally via plane then overstay their visa limits or attend university in Morocco and are unable to obtain work permits.

⁵⁶ Contrary to popular belief, the average sub-Saharan migrant in Morocco is comparatively educated and intent on settling in Morocco rather than transiting to Europe.

Camila Alvarez is a Spanish humanitarian aid worker currently working in Tangier, Morocco. She works specifically with sub-Saharan children who are at-risk for exploitation due to their migratory patterns. When I emailed her asking for an update in September 2018, I received a disconcerting response: “the situation is catastrophic and it has all changed since the summer. Morocco has started deporting immigrants and indiscriminately detaining them.”⁵⁷ Troubled, I asked which institutions were responsible for helping these populations. Alvarez responded “I cannot refer any organization because they are all ‘kidnapped’ in this mess.”⁵⁸ A

⁵⁵ Mourji, Fouzi, Jean-Noel Ferrie, Saadi Radi, and Meghi Alioua. “Les Migrants Subsahariens Au Maroc: Enjeux d’une Migration de Residence.” *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*, 2016.

⁵⁶ Natter, Katharina, “Almost Home? Morocco’s Incomplete Migration Reforms” *World Politics Review*. World Politics Review, LLC, 5 May 2015. Web.

⁵⁷ “La situación es ahora catastrófica y todo ha cambiado desde el verano. Marruecos ha empezado a deportar y a detener indiscriminadamente a las personas migrantes.”

⁵⁸ “No podría recomendarte ninguna asociación porque están “raptadas” en esta ambigüedad.”

month later in October 2018, she added: “Morocco has destroyed everything it has built; the picture is bleak.”⁵⁹ “The picture is bleak”: this phrase encompasses the desperation of the sub-Saharan migrants and refugees currently in Morocco. Sub-Saharan migrants and refugees are subject to random deportation and detentions at the hands of the Moroccan government. Despite promising changes to migration policy in the early 2010’s, Morocco has regressed especially in relation to its growing sub-Saharan migrant population. A persistent gap remains between the rhetoric and the reality of human rights for migrants in the country.

Language. Language is a major barrier to entry for many migrants. Most courses targeted towards sub-Saharan Africans are taught in French which isolates Anglophone migrants. Furthermore the ability to speak the colloquial Moroccan dialect of Arabic, called Darija, is uncommon among migrants which leads to social stratification from the local population. The level of Darija is higher among migrant children, however, many children do not go to school due to the lack of required legal documents.⁶⁰

Racism. Researchers and observers have identified racism as being the most dominant obstacle that sub-Saharan migrants face. In 2012, 63% of migrants interviewed by Medecins Sans Frontier (MSF) reported they had experienced violence in Morocco.⁶¹ Observers indicate that violence against sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco is largely based on racial profiling by police.⁶² A prominent example of racial profiling is the case of Alain Toussaint. Toussaint was a Congolese teacher residing lawfully in Rabat who was killed by police in 2013. He was pushed through a window of a moving bus as a result of a police “cleansing” operation aimed at

⁵⁹ “Marruecos ha destrozado todo lo que había construido, el panorama es desolador.”

⁶⁰ Alioua, Mehdi. “Les Migrants Subsaharien Au Maroc.” *Université Internationale de Rabat*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung E.V, 2016.

⁶¹ “Morocco.” *Global Detention Project*, Global Detention Project, 2018.

⁶² “Morocco.” *Global Detention Project*, Global Detention Project, 2018.

deporting irregular migrants.⁶³ His death was one in a stream of cases where sub-Saharan migrants have been abused or killed by Moroccan authorities. A critical issue is that many Moroccans possess a reductionist view that sub-Saharan Africans wander the streets aimlessly and rely on public charity for survival.⁶⁴ For example, in September 2005 a Moroccan newspaper ran a headline stating that “Black Locusts’ are taking over Morocco!”⁶⁵ Again in November 2012, the prominent newspaper *Maroc Hebdo* published a cover depicting a black, sub-Saharan man with the title “The Black Danger” written above him. The corresponding article suggested that sub-Saharan migrants increase drug trafficking, prostitution, unemployment, and pose a human security problem.⁶⁶ Furthermore, many sub-Saharan migrants are Christians which leads to stigmatization from the Muslim-majority Moroccan society. Although churches and local NGOs provide support to migrants, social relations between migrants and Moroccans remain limited.⁶⁷ The racist epithets and ideologies manifest in violence towards migrants and significant struggles for migrants to access education, jobs, housing, medical care, and social acceptance.

Sub-Saharan African migrants face additional difficulties when searching for housing. A study by UIR found that 56% of respondents claimed that landlords had rejected their rental application because they were sub-Saharan migrants.⁶⁸ An apartment building in Casablanca,

⁶³ Chaudier, Julie. “Le Maroc va-t-il devoir « réadmettre » tous les Subsahariens clandestins de Sebta et Méléria?” *Yabiladi*. 6 September 2012.

⁶⁴ “Foreigners and Human Rights in Morocco for a Radically New Asylum and Migration Policy.” *Conseil National Des Droits Des Hommes* (n.d.): 5-13. Web. 22 Mar. 2017.

⁶⁵ De Hass, Hein. “The Myth of Invasion: Irregular migration from West Africa to the Maghreb and the European Union.” International Migration Institute. International Migration Institute, Oct. 2007. Web.

⁶⁶ De Hass, Hein. “Morocco: Setting the Stage for Becoming a Migration Transition Country?” Migration Policy Institute. Migration Policy Institute, 02 Mar. 2017. Web.

⁶⁷ Natter, Katharina, “Almost Home? Morocco’s Incomplete Migration Reforms” *World Politics Review*. World Politics Review, LLC, 5 May 2015. Web.

⁶⁸ Alioua, Mehdi. “Les Migrants Subsaharien Au Maroc.” *Université Internationale de Rabat*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung E.V, 2016.

Morocco attracted international coverage for its sign on the front door which read: “It is strictly forbidden to rent apartments to Africans” read a sign at an apartment building in Casablanca Morocco.⁶⁹ Several media outlets picked up the story in 2013, commenting on the concerning state of forced evictions and racism in Morocco. Many of the sub-Saharanans who are successfully able to find housing do so on an informal basis which still leaves them in a precarious housing situation. Respondents in the UIR study from Meknes and the Rif region reported resorting to living in shanty towns in forested areas surrounding the cities.⁷⁰ When denied housing, a migrant is more likely to view Morocco as a transitory country to Europe rather than a destination

Morocco has been increasingly central in the conversations about human rights abuses in North Africa. Amnesty International characterizes Morocco’s “large-scale crackdowns” as “cruel and unlawful.”⁷¹ In 2018, the Royal Gendarmerie and Auxiliary Forces have escalated raids on neighborhoods, random detention, and unlawful deportations. “This shocking crackdown on migrants and refugees in Morocco is both cruel and unlawful. It represents a worrying backslide for a government that in 2013 introduced new asylum and migration policy commitments to bring Morocco into compliance with international standards,” said Heba Morayef, Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa Director. Since July 2018, an estimated 5,000 sub-Saharan Africans have been placed on buses and abandoned in remote areas near the Algerian border.⁷² These individuals were a combination of migrants, asylum seekers, and

⁶⁹ “A Casablanca, des propriétaires tentent d’interdire la location aux “Africains”.” *Les Observateurs*, France 24, 18 July 2013.

⁷⁰ Alioua, Mehdi. “Les Migrants Subsaharien Au Maroc.” *Université Internationale de Rabat*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung E.V, 2016.

⁷¹ “Morocco: Relentless crackdown on thousands of sub-Saharan migrants and refugees is unlawful.” *Amnesty International*, Amnesty International, 7 Sept. 2018.

⁷² “Morocco: Relentless crackdown on thousands of sub-Saharan migrants and refugees is unlawful.” *Amnesty International*, Amnesty International, 7 Sept. 2018.

refugees who were unlawfully detained without checking their legal documentation. Pregnant women and children are indiscriminately included in these roundups.⁷³ Upon being abandoned, these migrants have to walk for miles before reaching urban centers. There have also been reports of security services setting fire to makeshift refugee camps in the north. One migrant, who had lived in Morocco for four years, retold the story of the Royal Gendarmerie breaking into his house in Tangier at 4am one morning. He said, "The police came in the middle of the night wearing masks, broke our door and started seizing the members of my family, including women and children. There were many vehicles outside with officials breaking into our neighbours' houses."⁷⁴

The 2011 Moroccan constitution includes protections against arbitrary detention and guarantees legal assistance and communication with relatives upon arrest (Art. 23). Furthermore, detained foreign nationals can only be held for 24 hours and are to be immediately informed of their rights and assigned legal counsel (Art. 35). However, mass roundups and summary deportations have enabled Morocco to become a “cheap and natural detention center” for migrants.⁷⁵ For example, migrants who have been deported from Spain back to Morocco are detained in a prison in Tetouan. They are arbitrarily charged with offenses such as “irregular stay and exit”, “insulting public officials”, “armed rebellion”, and “possession of weapons.” They face trial and are almost always deported.⁷⁶ Article 34 of the Migration Act stipulates that immigration detention centers are permissible as long as they are not under the prison

⁷³ “Morocco.” *Global Detention Project*, Global Detention Project, 2018.

⁷⁴ “Morocco: Relentless crackdown on thousands of sub-Saharan migrants and refugees is unlawful.” *Amnesty International*, Amnesty International, 7 Sept. 2018.

⁷⁵ “Morocco.” *Global Detention Project*, Global Detention Project, 2018.

⁷⁶ “Morocco: Relentless crackdown on thousands of sub-Saharan migrants and refugees is unlawful.” *Amnesty International*, Amnesty International, 7 Sept. 2018.

administration. The government never created official immigration detention centers so detainees are held in a variety of “prisons, jails, transit zones, and ad hoc facilities to confine people.”⁷⁷ There are reportedly “73 detention facilities in Morocco, including 3 central prisons for long-term imprisonment and 58 local prisons for pretrial and short term detainees.”⁷⁸ Reports indicate that, within the prisons, men are separated from the women and children who are kept together. Administrative migrant detainees are held alongside criminal detainees. Such forcible detention makes sub-Saharan migrants vulnerable to “sexual exploitation, prostitution, and forced labor linked with human-trafficking networks.”⁷⁹

Human trafficking is a major issue faced by sub-Saharan Africans. Most commonly, young west African women leave their countries in hopes of finding more sustainable livelihoods to the north. They are often recruited by traffickers with the promise of employment in Europe who then enslave the women in Morocco, usually in the sex trade. Morocco drafted an anti-trafficking law in 2015 and set up an anti-trafficking commission to combat the issue. However, the legislation was never completed and the domestic tactics to combat trafficking are severely limited. Victims of trafficking automatically qualify for refugee status with UNHCR but the lack of regulation in Morocco leaves the international organizations’ with tied hands.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the existing legislation focuses on arrests and expulsions rather than proactively attempting to identify trafficking victims and provide protection.⁸¹ Without proper regulation or

⁷⁷ “Morocco.” *Global Detention Project*, Global Detention Project, 2018.

⁷⁸ Méndez. Juan E. 2013. “Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Mission to Morocco.” Human Rights Council.

⁷⁹ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). 2009. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers: Vulnerable people at Europe’s doorstep: MSF is providing healthcare, calling for minimum reception standards, and denouncing the systematic detention of vulnerable people. MSF. 6 July 2009.

⁸⁰ Hassouri, Parastou. “Refugees or Migrants? Difficulties of West Africans in Morocco.” *Middle East Research and Information Project*, Middle East Research and Information Project, 12 Sept. 2017.

⁸¹ “Morocco.” *Global Detention Project*, Global Detention Project, 2018.

protection, human trafficking has continued to grow in Morocco with little attention paid to the consequences.

The majority of sub-Saharan migrants and refugees in Morocco live under the oppression of institutional and criminal violence. Racism and violence are daily realities for the sub-Saharan Africans who find themselves struggling in the country. They do not have social infrastructure or support in place to assist them in acclimation. Despite entering the country in pursuit of sustainable livelihood or protection, sub-Saharan refugees and migrants face insurmountable barriers to integration. They lack proper access to health care, education, jobs, and basic protection. Beyond the societal problems, the lack of Moroccan national asylum policy is problematic. There is an uneven administration of punitive measures, distribution of residency permits, and acknowledgement of asylum claims. The result is a confusing and dangerous melange which leads to human rights abuses and unnecessary strain on the sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco. However, it is notable that, despite the difficulties they face in Morocco, sub-Saharans still find it preferable to face these challenges than return to their home countries.

IV. Exogenous Factors Influencing Moroccan Migration Policy

Morocco has been politically and financially incentivized by members of the European Union to expand its policies regarding refugees and migrants. Immigration control is a high ranking agenda item for the European Union. Particularly, the issue of Morocco readmitting irregular migrants is a consistent issue for negotiations between the two parties. Morocco is uniquely situated as a buffer between sub-Saharan Africa and Europe; therefore, Morocco finds itself playing a critical role in border management and control for the European continent. In 2004, the European Union launched the European Neighbourhood Policy with Morocco which

pledged to uphold “shared responsibility and commitment to human rights, democracy, and rule of law”.⁸² As part of the agreement, the European Union’s bilateral assistance to Morocco under the European Union has ranged from €728 million to €890 million from 2014-2017. In 2016 alone, at least €60 million has been allocated towards migration-related issues.⁸³

In a similar vein, Morocco signed a Mobility Partnership with the European Union in June 2013. The initiative includes nine European countries—Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom—and Morocco which represents the “Southern Frontier” of Europe. The aim of the agreement is to provide a framework for policy dialogue about migration which has linked Morocco to the European Union for decades. More specifically, the countries involved hope to create a “spirit of partnership” to ensure better management of migration based on a comprehensive and planned approach. However, the Mobility Partnership has had little impact thus far. The only tangible result has been the allocation of €5 million euros to support the project’s implementation.⁸⁴ One report estimates that Europe spends €250 million annually ensuring that migrants cannot reach Europe through Morocco. When Morocco wants to pressure the European Union over trade agreements, it uses migration as leverage. There is a correlation between Moroccan displeasure with European Union policies and an increase in irregular arrivals to Europe.⁸⁵

⁸² European Commission (2014) *European Neighbourhood Policy And Enlargement Negotiations*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

⁸³ European Commission (2014) *European Neighbourhood Policy And Enlargement Negotiations*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

⁸⁴ European Commission (2014) *European Neighbourhood Policy And Enlargement Negotiations*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

⁸⁵ Hassouri, Parastou “Refugees or Migrants? Difficulties of West Africans in Morocco” *Middle East Research and Information Project*. Relief Web. Web.

The European Union's motivation for Morocco to properly manage its migrant populations has mounted increasing pressure over the past decade. Morocco has joined many international organizations that provide aid in exchange for preventing refugees from entering Europe. A few of the partnered organizations include: IOM, International Labour Organization (ILO), Arab League, UNHCR, European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), Union for the Mediterranean and Organization for African Union (MPC Team). UNHCR in Rabat, for example, receives a majority of its funding from Switzerland, Monaco, and Italy.⁸⁶ The IOM, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), has a strong presence in Morocco developing coherent approaches to mixed migration flows within participating Maghreb nations. The initiative also partners with local NGOs to reinforce humanitarian assistance in the form of health structures, delivery of non-food items, and awareness on hygiene.⁸⁷ As a result of these improvements, UN members, such as Germany, have started to limit migration from Morocco. The justification is that Morocco is now a "third country" which provides a safe environment for refugees and those attempting to leave are unlikely to be granted asylum elsewhere.⁸⁸ The intricate partnerships between international organizations and the government have left NGO's bearing much of the responsibility for acclimating the refugees to Moroccan society. From July to October 2016, UNHCR conducted 267 home visits, provided 399 households with monthly cash assistance, provided free legal aid for 118 refugees and asylum seekers, and provided legal documentation for 15 others.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Morocco – UNHCR Operational Update (1 July -1 October 2016)." Refworld. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 1 Oct. 2016. Web.

⁸⁷ "Morocco." International Organization for Migration. International Organization for Migration, 13 May 2016. Web. 22

⁸⁸ Lewis, Simon. "Germany to Cut Migrants from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia." Time. Time, 28 Jan. 2016. Web.

⁸⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Morocco – UNHCR Operational Update (1 July -1 October 2016)." Refworld. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 1 Oct. 2016. Web.

The European Union has continuously shown its willingness to overlook human rights abuses in favor of deporting migrants to Morocco. Heba Morayef, Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Director, has said:

“Efforts to control irregular migration from Morocco to Spain are frequently praised by the Spanish authorities, who keep cooperating with Morocco to stop the arrival of migrants and refugees without conditioning such cooperation upon the respect of the rights of all people on the move. Spain and the EU in general should refocus their cooperation with Morocco, prioritizing the protection of human rights and the creation of an asylum system in the country, as required under international law.”⁹⁰

Morocco's relationship with Spain particularly notable since there are two Spanish enclaves in the north of the country. Spain considers Melilla and Ceuta the “southern border” of Europe. The borders between the enclaves and Morocco have become contentious and violent spaces. In August 2018, Spanish authorities deported 115 sub-Saharan Africans from Ceuta back to Morocco. The migrants and asylum seekers were in Ceuta for less than 24 hours which has raised questions about Spanish authorities' procedural safeguards for the return procedures. Only 12 lawyers were assigned to provide legal counsel to all 116 individuals and the lawyers were not informed when their clients were deported. In those 24 hours, there was not time to conduct proper assessments of asylum claims or potential risks these individuals would face in Morocco.

The European Union has actively built high security walls and increased patrols off the Mediterranean coast to push migrants back into Morocco.⁹¹ NGOs have argued that the mobility agreements between Morocco and the EU ignore Morocco's treatment of migrants and lacks incentive for the Moroccan government to prevent human rights abuses. A study conducted by the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) indicates that:

⁹⁰ “Morocco: Relentless crackdown on thousands of sub-Saharan migrants and refugees is unlawful.” *Amnesty International*, Amnesty International, 7 Sept. 2018.

⁹¹ Hassouri, Parastou “Refugees or Migrants? Difficulties of West Africans in Morocco” *Middle East Research and Information Project*. Relief Web. Web.

“By strengthening a type of cooperation whose impact remains uneven, the European Union runs the risk of contributing directly to the implementation of migration policies that are contrary to the basic rights of migrants and refugees. In so doing, the EU also encourages bilateral policies and practices between its member states and the countries of North Africa, even though the latter are little concerned with the rights of migrants and refugees”⁹²

The EU has a significant amount of influence over migration policy in Morocco yet does not use its influence to positively impact the human rights situation. Instead, it allows Morocco to handle migrants by whatever methods as long as Europe’s southern border is secured.

Beyond the European Union’s involvement in Morocco’s migration policy, Morocco’s geopolitical identity significantly shapes its behavior. King Mohammed VI is known to set political priorities in a way that helps the country raise itself to international, western norms. Two prominent examples include Morocco’s transition to a constitutional democracy and its revision of women’s rights. However, the country also strives to maintain its pan-Arab identity across the Levant and Gulf regions. As a result, Moroccan policy is often pulled in diverging directions due to its split loyalty. Migrants find themselves at the crossroads of Morocco’s dual motive. Arezki Daoud, an analyst of North African affairs for the North Africa Journal, explains that in Morocco “migrants are used for political purposes” and they are “a political tool to use against its neighbor[s].”⁹³ Morocco relies heavily on exogenous factors when shaping its migration policy which has led to the disastrous internal conflict.

⁹² André, M; Guillet, S., Sammakia, N. “Study on Migration and Asylum in Maghreb Countries: Inadequate Legal and Administrative Frameworks cannot guarantee the Protection of Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers.” *Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network*, EMHRN. July 2010.

⁹³ Hayoun, Massoud. “Syrian Refugees are Stuck at the Intersection.” *Pacific Standard*, The Social Justice Foundation, 26 April 2017.

V. Recommendations

The treatment of sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco is a complex problem rooted in identity, racism, economic concerns, and institutional bias. While there is no clear solution of how to improve the lives of the thousands of sub-Saharan refugees and migrants living in Morocco, three recommendations that circulate through academic and NGO conversations are: accelerated integration measures, promotion of a pan-African unity, and improved government infrastructures.

a. Accelerated Integration Measures

Recommending better “integration” of sub-Saharan refugees and migrants into Moroccan society is a complicated suggestion. First, the definition of assimilation is contested. One argument is that assimilation is “to make one similar to the host population and to render one’s identity alike the host population” while “adopting the values and culture of another country.”⁹⁴ Measuring assimilation, or even defining it, is not a straightforward science. In standard practice, integration is often gauged through measuring socioeconomic status, language competence, and intermarriage with natives.⁹⁵ Other measures of integration focus on the inclusion of migrant labor in the workforce.⁹⁶ It is unclear the extent to which sub-Saharan Africans can or should integrate or assimilate to Moroccan culture. None of the measures of integration indicate whether the migrant must surrender their own culture in favor of the host country; they do not necessarily

⁹⁴ Parisi, Domenico, Federico Cecconi, and Francesco Natale. "Cultural change in spatial environments: the role of cultural assimilation and internal changes in cultures." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47.2 (2003): 163–179.
Van Everdingen, Yvonne M., and Eric Waarts. "The Effect of National Culture on the Adoption of Innovations." *Marketing Letters*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2003, pp. 217–232.

⁹⁵ Xin Meng, Dominique Meurs, "Intermarriage, language, and economic assimilation process: A case study of France", *International Journal of Manpower*, 2009, Vol. 30 Issue: 1/2, pp.127.

⁹⁶ Hoorens, Stijn. "Examining the Socioeconomic Inclusion of Migrant Workers." *Rand Corporation*, Rand Corporation, 2018.

imply a rejection of another culture or set of values if those cultures and values are not considered exclusive. Balancing the preservation of indigenous culture with integration to Moroccan culture has caused friction between sub-Saharan groups and Moroccan people.

Rahem Abadi, the Syrian refugee living in Rabat, commented that she believes integration is the key to sub-Saharan resettlement in Morocco.⁹⁷ She further asserts that, in her opinion, it is the responsibility of international organizations and NGOs to support integration. Her vision is largely reflected in the reality in Moroccan civil-society. In reaction to scapegoating and racism, IOs and NGOs including religious organizations, lawyers, migrants, and support groups work to provide practical assistance and advocate for migrant rights to residency permits and public services.⁹⁸ Aicha Walsh, a sub-Saharan African living in Rabat, started a radio show aimed at integrating sub-Saharan culture into Moroccan culture. She invites prominent sub-Saharan Africans onto the show to discuss their careers, music, ideas, etc. The goal is to “share values and change people’s perceptions of each other,” according to Walsh.⁹⁹ However, these small scale movements have not been scaled large enough to impact the severity of the integration issues in Morocco. Furthermore, the obvious skin color difference between sub-Saharan Africans and Moroccans makes integration more difficult than for the Syrian refugees.

⁹⁷ Interview with Abadi in Appendix 3

⁹⁸ Haas, Hein de. “Morocco: Setting the Stage for Becoming a Migration Transition Country?” *Migration Policy Institute*, Migration Policy Institute, 2 Mar. 2017.

⁹⁹ Interview with Walsh in Appendix 2

b. Promotion of Pan-African Unity

In January 2017, King Mohammed VI announced Morocco's intention to rejoin the African Union after a 33-year absence.¹⁰⁰ Moroccan attitudes towards the African continent have been characterized by bitterness in regards to their split from the union. Moroccans have not been eager to identify themselves as "African" and often opted to use self-identifying labels such as "North African" or "Arab." A popular "us versus them" mentality has framed the conversations between Moroccans and sub-Saharan African people. Morocco's return to the African Union has been celebrated as a unifying measure.¹⁰¹ Now all 48 countries of the African continent are members of the African Union which attempts to build networks between nations to solve communal problems. Morocco volunteered responsibility for the migration affairs portfolio. The result has been multiple conferences with African leadership, UN representatives, and African academics in Morocco. The goal of the conferences is to roadmap a unified African policy on migration, to encourage a unilateral African position on the Global Compact on Safe Migration, and foster pan-African unity.

In the wake of Morocco rejoining the African Union, there has been an internal academic and political push to improve relations with other African cultures and societies. Institutions such as L'Académie du royaume (Royal Academy) and L'Institut des études africaine (Institute of African Studies) at Mohammed V University in Rabat actively engage with the Moroccan public to challenge existing perceptions of sub-Saharan Africans and create space for discussion. Both institutions host regular conferences, forums, and panels marketed to professional, academic

¹⁰⁰ In 1984, the African Union (AU) recognized the Western Sahara as an independent state. Morocco has claimed the Western Sahara as its own territory since 1956. As a result, Morocco refused to remain a member of the AU until it rescinded its support for an independent Western Sahara. However, in 2016 Morocco re-submitted its membership with the understanding that the status of the Western Sahara will remain independent by the AU.

¹⁰¹ Mohamed, Hamza "Morocco rejoins the African Union after 33 years." *Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 31 Jan. 2017.

audiences in Morocco. Panelists and speakers range from Moroccan professionals and professors to sub-Saharan migrants and researchers. During a panel hosted by L'Académie du royaume, Khadi Benga, a professor from Dakar, Senegal, called for more research to be done on Africa by Africans. His definition of "African" includes both sub-Saharan and North Africans under one title. Moroccan professor Mehdi Bousaria agreed that further research is vital to unifying the continent and educating the public. However, Bousaria emphasized that less than 1% of the current Moroccan budget is allocated to research and better funding is needed in order to conduct the research currently needed on migration. These panels bring Moroccans, sub-Saharan Africans, and foreign specialists together to bring awareness to the problems with current migration policy.

The Mohammed VI Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rabat is a progressive museum that features exhibitions about complicated topics in Morocco. During April 2017, the museum housed the "Africa on the Move" exhibit which featured prominent sub-Saharan artists and artwork. The self-proclaimed purpose of the exhibit was to provoke conversation about migration and security in Africa. During a symposium conducted during the exhibit, hosted by the National Museum Foundation and the National Council for Human Rights, migration specialists from around the world argued for the acceptance of migrants and refugees in Morocco. Many Moroccans in the audience expressed their concern about security in the face of heavy migration from sub-Saharan Africa. The exhibit and symposium reminded attendees that 70% of African migrants settle in other countries on the continent. As such, the exhibit argues, unity between African nations should be encouraged rather than feared.

Despite the commitment to raising awareness about sub-Saharan African culture in academic circles, there is still a high level of racism and misunderstanding about the status of sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco. Scholars confirm that fear and misunderstanding are common forces behind racist ideologies. Thomas Faist, a scholar in transnational relations, asserts that natives often feel that immigrants cause wage depression, increase welfare dependency, spike crime, etc.¹⁰² Continued discussion and opportunities for inter-cultural exchange could eventually create a pan-African unity that would improve the environment for sub-Saharan Africans living in Morocco.

c. Improved Governmental Infrastructures

Integration and unity can only achieve so much, there is a desperate need for the Moroccan government to address migration in official, comprehensive policy. Moroccan authorities need to reassess and strengthen their national migration policies so they align with international human rights laws and foster acceptance of newcomers in local society. Many International Organizations have recognized the depravity of the migration situation in Morocco and made recommendations for improvements. The National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) advises Morocco to recognize pending national legislation and institutional plans of asylum, to establish a policy of integration for refugees, and to comply with the Geneva Convention's precedent of non-refoulement in addition to ensuring access to legal representation, developing training programs, and banning violence against refugees.¹⁰³ Amnesty International has stated:

¹⁰² Klausen, Jytte. "The Islamic Challenge." *Oxford University Press*, Oxford University Press, 2005.

¹⁰³ "Foreigners and Human Rights in Morocco for a Radically New Asylum and Migration Policy." Conseil National Des Droits Des Hommes (n.d.): 5-13. Web.

“The Moroccan authorities must immediately cease these discriminatory round ups and uphold the positive commitments taken over the past five years to respect the human rights of migrants. Going forward, it must adopt a law on asylum that will set out correct procedures and protections in line with international law.”

“While the Moroccan authorities have the right to regulate entry, stay and exit, this right must be exercised in a way that is consistent with international human rights law and in accordance with the Refugee Convention.”¹⁰⁴

There is clearly a need for Morocco to address migration issues institutionally and humanely.

The Middle East Institute recommends that the focus of Moroccan migration policy shouldn't be solely on limiting the influx of migrants. Instead, it should focus on the most appropriate methods of ensuring conditions of lawful entry. There should be an emphasis on protection and free access to fundamental rights.¹⁰⁵ Despite these recommendations and diligent work by activists and NGOs, the situation for migrants and refugees in Morocco continues to worsen. The Moroccan government has not made any progress on national asylum policy in recent years. Yet, the need for improved, modernized policy increases with every new flow of refugees and migrants entering the country.

VI. Conclusion

The patterns of migration across the Mediterranean have changed and intensified over the past few decades. North African countries have felt increased pressure to provide a buffer for migrants attempting to reach Europe. Morocco has emerged as a transition and destination country for migrants and refugees across the region which has challenged the country to adjust to

¹⁰⁴ “Morocco: Relentless crackdown on thousands of sub-Saharan migrants and refugees is unlawful.” *Amnesty International*, Amnesty International, 7 Sept. 2018.

¹⁰⁵ Kostas, Stylianos. “Morocco's Triple Role in the Euro-African Migration System.” *Middle East Institute*, Middle East Institute, 18 April 2017.

the changing geopolitical circumstances. Despite some institutional improvements, migrants and refugees of all origins struggle to adapt to Moroccan society. International organizations have proven to be committed forces that provide assistance to and advocate for refugees and migrants. However, the Moroccan government has been slower to embrace the changing demographics. Given Morocco's proximity to Europe, Exogenous factors, particularly the European Union, continue to shape and define the Moroccan approach to migration. The lack of national policy or asylum laws generated by the Moroccan government regarding refugees and migrants has led to persistent gaps in treatment of these vulnerable populations.

Although all refugees are registered through UNHCR and struggle to establish legitimacy with the Moroccan government, Syrian refugees are advantaged by social connections and ethno-religious-linguistic similarities with the local Moroccan people. This shared identity allows Syrians to maintain a comparatively high quality of life that is not found among sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco. Societal and institutional racism tied to ethno-religious-linguistic differences influences the increasingly tumultuous and dangerous environment for sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco. The human rights abuses faced by sub-Saharan Africans has inspired members of the international community to encourage reform. Accelerated integration measures, promotion of pan-African unity, and improved governmental infrastructures would likely lead to decreased violence against sub-Saharan African refugees and migrants. As Morocco continues to play a critical role in the Mediterranean migration crisis, it is pertinent that their treatment of refugees and migrants are kept in check by the international community.

VII. Suggestions for Future Research

Due to the limited timeframe of research, this study was unable to address all of the questions that have arisen in this budding field. This study has provided original insights into the lived experiences of migrants and refugees in Morocco. Whereas this study focused on the ethno-religious-linguistic aspects of integration focused on Syrian versus non-Syrian populations, future research can build upon these findings and attempt to disaggregate these factors among sub-Saharan African migrants. How would a black sub-Saharan Muslim migrant or refugee be received in Moroccan society? Would he/she be generally accepted on the basis of his religion? Or would his skin color, language, cultural background, etc. place him in the “outsider” category regardless of his religion? This study implies that religion is not always an explicit category nor is it necessarily distinguishable from racial, linguistic and cultural identifiers. Further research can explore the nuances and specific aspects of identity that cause tension between locals and migrants in Moroccan society.

Glossary

- *Asylum Seeker*: A person who is seeking international protection abroad but has not yet been recognized as a refugee.¹⁰⁶
 - The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 14) states that everyone has the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution in other countries.
- *Migrant*: A person who moves from one country to another, often in search of economic opportunity or family reunification.¹⁰⁷
 - *Regular Migration*: The migrant has official permission to stay in the country of destination.
 - *Irregular Migration*: The migrant does not yet have official permission to stay in the country of destination.
- *Moroccan Government*: includes but is not limited to: The Ministries of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation, Interior, Justice, Education, Health, and Labor, the Delegated Ministry to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Council on Human Rights, the Inter-Ministerial Delegation for Human Rights, the Higher Institute of the Judiciary, the police, and the royal Gendarmerie.
- *Non-Refoulement*: The international legal principle states that no asylum seeker nor refugee should be forced to return to a country where their life or wellbeing is at risk.¹⁰⁸
 - The 1951 UN Refugee Convention protects refugees from being returned to countries where they risk being persecuted.

¹⁰⁶ “Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Migrants.” *Amnesty International*, Amnesty International, 2018.

¹⁰⁷ “Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Migrants.” *Amnesty International*, Amnesty International, 2018.

¹⁰⁸ “Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Migrants.” *Amnesty International*, Amnesty International, 2018.

- *Racism in Morocco*: Racial tensions in Morocco fall along multiple fault lines. From Morocco's time as a French protectorate, there is a white versus Arab racial distinction. Within Moroccan society, there is tension between Arab and Berber racial categories. Most relevant to this thesis, there is tension between Moroccan Arab/Berbers and black Africans. Racial discrimination against black Africans and legacies of slavery perpetuate discrimination in social inclusion, education, housing, etc.¹⁰⁹
- *Refugee*: A person who has fled their own country due to risk of serious human rights violations. Due to the inability of their own government to protect them, they are forced to seek international protection¹¹⁰
- *Sub-Saharan Migrant and/or Refugee*: Migrants and refugees originating from sub-Saharan Africa, most prominently: Senegal, Congo, Cote D'Ivoire, and Nigeria though other countries may be included.
- *Syrian/Arab Migrant and/or Refugee*: Refugees from Syria and Yemen as well as economic migrants originating from the Maghreb, Levant, and Arabian Peninsula regions.

¹⁰⁹ Ba, Bassirou. "Dans la peau d'un noir au Maroc." *SlateAfrique*, Slate Afrique, Nov. 11 2012.

Aidi, Hisham "Morocco: Neither slave, nor negro." *Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera Media Network, Apr. 10 2016.

¹¹⁰ "What is a Refugee?" *The UN Refugee Agency*, USA for UNHCR, 2018.

Appendix 1

For my research I worked at *La Fondation Orient-Occident* (FOO) which is notably sponsored by the UNHCR and Habitat Africa. FOO provides educational opportunities, inter-cultural exchange programs, social groups,

and support networks for young--primarily sub-Saharan--migrants and refugees. The center is located at the far west end of Rabat and is easy to overlook from the street. Inside, however, it is a massive complex with a reception center, a socio-educational center, a listening center, a vocational/professional training center, a women's co-op, and a pre-school. I spent



Author at the FOO pre-school in Rabat

months attending classes and speaking with the migrants who frequented the center. No matter what time or day of the week I visited FOO, there were always dozens of women selling goods from their countries at the entryway and children running around playing in the grassy gathering area. The environment was always upbeat if not a bit chaotic and disorganized.

During my time at the center, I struggled at first to properly acclimate myself. I worried that my questions may trigger unpleasant memories for the migrants and refugees who had battled their way to Morocco. To avoid overstepping my boundaries, I spent the first few months simply volunteering. I taught classes, played with children at daycare, participated in hip hop dance lessons, and attempted to make my presence comfortable for the people around me. Over

time I began developing relationships with a few of the people who frequented the center. I ended up finding a few migrants who were willing to speak to me on or off the record. For the most part, I conducted the interviews in French to make it more natural for the interviewees. I was able to record some of the interviews with the interviewees consent. I later transcribed the interviews to English and those translations are present in this research attached to pseudonyms.

The results of my interviews do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of all sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco. I was only able to speak with individuals who lived in Rabat and frequented FOO. There are thousands of migrants and refugees dispersed throughout the country in different cities, camps, and rural areas who would likely have very different experiences. I used a few basic questions to guide the interviews which allowed them to expand upon their experiences. I slightly altered the questions depending on their age, occupation, and education level. A few examples of my research questions include:

1. Where are you from? What is your native language?
2. When/why did you migrate to Morocco?
3. Do you plan to stay in Morocco or continue on to another country?
4. Have you found it difficult to integrate into Moroccan society? What are the barriers?
5. What do you wish Moroccan people knew about migrants from sub-Saharan Africa?
6. What policy changes do you think need to be made in Morocco regarding migrants?
7. Is there anything you would like to add that I did not ask?

Through my time at FOO, the relationships I built while in the country, and the interviews I conducted I gained insight into the lives and stories of sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco. It wasn't until I returned the United States and continuing my research that I realized I had solely focused on the sub-Saharan experience despite the fact that the vast majority of refugees and migrants in Morocco are of Arab descent. Yet, I had not actively seen nor interacted with any Syrian, Yemini, or other refugees while I was in the country--apart from one experience

at a Syrian restaurant in Rabat. This realization made me wonder how I had overlooked such a huge portion of the refugee and migrant community. Is it because they visually blend in better? Are they better integrated? Do they receive better benefits so they didn't come to FOO for assistance? These questions guided my research to include a comparison of experiences between Syrian/Arab and sub-Saharan migrants/refugees in Morocco.

Upon redirecting my research to include Syrian, I reached out to my contacts in Morocco asking to be connected with an English-speaking Syrian. I was eventually able to Skype with Rahem Abadi, mentioned above, and get an inside look at the Syrian experience.¹¹¹ Her narrative also led me to several other sources and events about Syrians in Morocco. My questions to her differed from my questions to the sub-Saharan migrants. A few examples include:

- Tell me about migrating to Morocco.
 - When did you leave Syria?
 - How did you decide on Morocco?
 - How did you get to Morocco?
 - Tell me about your experience in Morocco:
 - Did you find Moroccan people welcoming?
 - Did UNHCR or any other organization provide assistance?
 - Have you been able to receive refugee status? Residency?
 - Are you able to work in Morocco?
 - How do you think your experience compares to a sub-Saharan African in Morocco?
- What do you think causes the difference?

Her interview and the connections she provided catalyzed the rest of my research on the project.

I focused on local newspaper articles, ethnographic studies, and read Moroccan policy to glean information about the treatment of refugees and migrants in Morocco.

¹¹¹ Interview with Abadi in Appendix 3

Appendix 2

At first glance, Aicha Walsh does not have the appearance of most Moroccan women. In high heels she stands shy of five feet tall. Her dark hair is shaved on the sides and grown long on the top. She twists the long portions of her hair into a braid pinned to the back of her head. Her skin is darker than that of other Moroccans sitting around us in Dar Lymon cafe in Diour Jamaa, Rabat. She has a huge smile that infects whoever she is speaking to and dresses in conspicuously western fashion. Walsh is 27 years old at the time of our interview and has lived in Rabat for her entire life. Her mother, Fatima Alaoui, was also born and raised in Rabat. Her father, Louis Edouard Walsh, was born and raised in Conakry, Guinea. Walsh has grown up in a biracial, bicultural family and has personally experienced many of the societal and political shortcomings of the current and past Moroccan regimes who have failed to inclusively modernize the country. She works as a cultural director at a refugee center in Rabat and as a radio host; both careers share the same aim of encouraging Moroccan society to embrace sub-Saharan African culture.

Walsh's parents met during the 1980's while they were both students at a university in Morocco. From the start, their relationship was tested by existing Moroccan norms. As a Christian migrant from sub-Saharan Africa, Walsh's father was not accepted by Alaoui's family nor the greater Moroccan society around them. At the time, Morocco did not recognize Christian marriages and did not facilitate mixed marriages between Muslim women and non-Muslim men. When Walsh's mother and father decided to get married, they faced two options: either her father could convert to Islam or the pair could leave the country for the wedding certificate and later return to Morocco. Foreseeing the future challenges of raising a family in a bi-religious household in a Muslim country, like many other sub-Saharan migrants, Walsh's father converted

to Islam before his wedding day. “It is impossible to be Christian here,” Walsh shrugged as she struggled to remember the locations of a few small churches that exist in Rabat. Moroccan officials proudly state that 100% of Moroccans are Sunni Muslim.¹¹² However, stories such as Walsh’s father reveal the minority populations that are purposefully overlooked by these statements.

Upon passing the baccalaureate exam after high school, Walsh’s family was unable to afford to send her to college so she began working at a call center in Rabat. She felt pressure to get married to improve her financial situation but resisted because she felt called to do more with her life. As she dreamed of becoming a radio host, Walsh spent nine years selling wifi at the call center. Meanwhile, two of her younger sisters got married and started families. At 26 years old, Walsh quit her job at the call center and decided to pursue her dream of becoming a radio host. She started her show called *Thé à la Menthe* a few months later. The show invites prominent sub-Saharan people to discuss their careers, music, ideas, etc. The goal is to “share values and change people’s perceptions of each other,” according to Walsh. She is dedicated to improving the lives of minorities in her society and challenging the mindset of the ethnic majorities. To further this aim, Walsh now works as a director of cultural affairs at *La Fondation Orient-Occident*, a refugee and migration center in Rabat. She creates workshops for both Moroccans and migrants to acclimate each to the other’s culture. In her experience, Moroccans often stereotype sub-Saharan migrants as “poor slaves” with no rules or culture. The sub-Saharans often view Moroccans as racists who devalue any foreign group of people. Walsh has noticed the lack of respect between racial groups and works in both her careers to remedy

¹¹² Power, Bridgette. *Muslim Madness and Other Religious Insanities: The Truth Behind the Lies*. N.p: Lulu.comm 2007.

that gap. Walsh recognizes that, in fact, not all Moroccans are Arab Sunni Muslim and that the face of Morocco is changing.

Walsh has found that language is the first obstacle that sub-Saharan migrants face upon arriving in Morocco. The Darija dialect of Arabic proves difficult to learn and even if a migrant already speaks French, their accents are deemed undesirable by Moroccans. Language has long been a dividing force in the country. French, Arabic, and Berber dialects have competed for decades to define *moroccan* culture.¹¹³ Beyond the language, there continues to be a struggle for outsiders to find meaningful work, access health care, and enrollment in the public education system. *La Fondation Orient-Occident* aims to “combat the exclusion of sub-Saharan Africans and integrate them into society” according to Walsh. However, she is adamant that it is not the responsibility of the government to facilitate their integration. She believes it is the individual migrant’s responsibility to make the best of their situation. Many of them, according to Walsh, see Morocco as a transitional home en route to Europe or North America. She knows stories of refugees who camp out in the forests of Tangier waiting for an opportunity to cross the Strait of Gibraltar for Spain. Walsh makes it clear she does not support any illicit intentions of migrants and dedicates her career to bettering their situations within the confines of the existing system. She wants Morocco to be a place that accepts diverse people by modernizing its mindset and institutions to be more inclusive.

As she sits in the café, sipping hot mint tea from a small glass cup, Walsh bounces back and forth between French and English. She says she learned English from watching Oprah and reciting motivational sayings to herself as she walks to work. She excitedly scrolls through

¹¹³ Errazzouki, Sami. “Complicity and Indifference: Racism in Morocco.” *Jadiyya*. Arab Studies Institute, 1 Aug. 2013. Web.

pictures on her iPhone of her sisters and nieces on to show me. Her life is a testament to the challenges that modernization presents to the Moroccan regime. As a progressive woman from a diverse background, she has struggled with the shifting Moroccan policy, religion, migration, and racism in her 27 years. Despite its challenges, Walsh loves Morocco and has committed her life to making it a better, more accepting society for migrants and refugees.

Appendix 3

Months after my return to the United States, on a Skype call from southern Turkey, Rahem Abadi tells me about her journey as a Syrian refugee. Abadi casually smokes a cigarette in the living room of her parents house as she discusses the social and political situation surrounding migrants in Morocco. Her dark features are typical of someone who originates from the Middle East. Her thick black hair is pulled into a ponytail which draws attention to the sharp details of her face. She was born in Syria to a devout Muslim family in the 1970s. When she was ten years old, her father moved their family to Morocco following an economic depression in Syria. They stayed in the country for several years; in fact Abadi's youngest sister, Amena, was born in Rabat. Despite living in Morocco for several years, Abadi's family was never awarded citizenship. They were granted legal residency which allowed them to stay in the country for an extended period of time. Abadi and her family moved back to Syria when she graduated high school so she could attend a public university in her home country.

For the next twenty years, Abadi made an annual trip to Morocco to keep her residency status active. This strategic decision gave her an advantage over many other refugees upon the outbreak of the Syrian civil war. Abadi was easily able to migrate to Morocco thanks to her residency card despite the crumbling diplomatic relations between Morocco and Syria. Her sister, Amena, did not maintain her residency status and, despite being born in Morocco, her visa was revoked upon the start of the war. Now, in 2018, Abadi's family is scattered across the globe. Her sister lives in Istanbul, her parents live in the south of Turkey, her brother lives in the United States, and she lives in Rabat, Morocco. The civil war in Syria created a massive refugee crisis and Abadi's family embodies the challenges faced by the Syrian diaspora.

Despite the trauma of fleeing her home country in September 2013, Abadi found her transition to life in Morocco relatively easy. After working with NGOs in Mauritania and Yemen for a few years, she decided to settle down in Rabat. In her experience, Moroccans have always been welcoming. She attributes their hospitality to her language proficiency in Arabic, adherence to Muslim traditions, and overall familiar culture. Her cultural, ethnic, and religious similarities made her integration into Moroccan society relatively smooth. She brought up an anecdote of when she first moved to Rabat that exemplifies the solidarity amongst Muslims in Morocco. Before they were introduced, Abadi's neighbors would call her *nasraniya*.¹¹⁴ She explained that *nasraniya* in Arabic literally means "Christian" but is often used as a general term to describe a foreigner. Once Abadi told her neighbors that she was Syrian and Muslim, she noticed they changed the way they treated her. They started inviting her over for couscous after Friday prayer, a weekly Moroccan tradition, and were generally more hospitable towards her.

Although Moroccans are hospitable to Syrians, the barriers for Syria to enter Morocco are high. In fact, Morocco was among the first countries to close the Syrian embassy once the war started. Abadi says most of her Syrian friends came to Morocco with nothing but a few friends or familial connections. She has noticed that the Syrians in Morocco are quite entrepreneurial and hardworking. They open businesses rather than assuming traditional employment. The Syrian community in Morocco is known for its success in the food and restaurant businesses. Large communities of Syrians in Casablanca and Tangier assist newcomers with startup costs and have created an "ecosystem" which fosters solidarity amongst group members. Abadi reasserts that Syrian integration into Moroccan society would not exist

without the Moroccan people's love for and acceptance of Syrian refugees. Syrians rarely require the services of refugee and migration organizations such as *La Fondation Orient Occident* in Rabat. They do benefit from some UNHCR programs but mostly rely on the in-group network to start their new lives in Morocco.

In addition to English, Abadi speaks Turkish and both the Darija and Levantine dialects of Arabic. She speaks in clear English as she calmly describes the work she does for an NGO which seeks justice for detainees in Syria. She works remotely in Morocco until it is possible for her to return to her home. Abadi says she's in the process of applying for Turkish citizenship because, using her Syrian passport, her international movements are heavily restricted. A Turkish passport would allow her to visit her brother in the United States and travel to other countries where her NGO works. Abadi is passionate about improving the infrastructures for refugees worldwide and recognizes the different obstacles faced by various groups of refugees. In her life as a refugee and her work with human rights organizations, Abadi strives to make the most of challenging situations which threaten vulnerable populations.

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