



### Unrest in Morocco and the Stability of the Government

Since September, large-scale protests have emerged across Morocco seeking widespread government reform in areas such as public services, healthcare, education, and what are viewed as the country's misplaced development priorities. The youth-led movement has come to the surface as a result of discontent with the state of the economy, coupled with backlash regarding focused investment on infrastructure for international sporting events over improvements in government and public services. Frustrations have grown regarding degraded health and education services in the country while the government is deemed to instead be prioritizing upgrading its sports infrastructure ahead of its 2030 FIFA World Cup joint hosting duties with Spain and Portugal. Seemingly taking inspiration from recent Gen Z protests in countries like Nepal and Indonesia, young Moroccans have been coordinating many of the demonstrations and are demanding that authorities act with the same urgency to address issues impacting ordinary citizens as they have towards co-hosting the 2030 FIFA World Cup. All told, the protests are the largest that Morocco has seen since the 2011 Arab Spring, which ultimately led to constitutional reforms limiting the power of the monarchy and providing more authority to the country's executive and legislative branches.

Organized by anonymous collectives known as GenZ 212, the group was first founded on the online platform Discord in mid-September, with members calling for protests at the end of that month. The movement was originally triggered by outrage over what has been called "the hospital of death" in the coastal Moroccan city of Agadir – the Hassan II Hospital. Demonstrations had already been taking place around the hospital for several weeks due to allegations of patient mistreatment, medical negligence, lack of hygiene, and an array of patient deaths. After gaining momentum online, the GenZ 212 Discord server put out a poll that led to the first protests in late September. The group has explicitly called for non-violent protests and has publicly disavowed any association with acts of violence or vandalism. GenZ 212 has also been operating in a manner which has seen it regularly hold discussions on Discord that conclude with votes on different actions to take next.

The emergence of the youth-led protest movement in Morocco came as a surprise to many as a result of its speed of mobilization, rapidness, and wide reach. It has grown to attract hundreds of thousands of Moroccans – both on the streets and online. Additionally, analysts and regional experts point to how the youth have often been perceived as disengaged and thus the movement has countered this narrative by demonstrating a strong sense of social and political awareness among younger citizens. Much of GenZ 212's discontent has been directed at current Moroccan Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch, who has been scrutinized for potential conflicts of interest between his personal business dealings and state projects. In recent days, the movement has begun calling for a boycott of all companies associated with Akhannouch, in addition to his resignation.

Public figures and other citizens are urging Moroccan King Mohammed VI to respond to the social movement by initiating in-depth reforms. Signatories to an open letter on Wednesday including journalists, activists, and human rights defenders have called for the launch of a process of constitutional reform. They have also implored the state to make healthcare, education, and employment its top priorities. Protesters themselves sent a letter directly to the palace, seeking a dismissal of the prime minister, the release of political detainees, and the creation of a forum to hold corrupt officials accountable. Given the complex nature of the constitutional monarchy governmental

system in Morocco, King Mohammed VI is relied upon to enact important reforms in order to address societal grievances. Back in 2011, the king responded positively to Arab Spring demonstrations, paving the way for Moroccan society to experience what observers referred to as “an evolution rather than a revolution.” Due to this however, the reforms initiated in 2011 make it difficult for King Mohammed VI to simply dissolve the government, and therefore, a wider consensus is required consisting of action from the country’s parliament. Moroccan King Mohammed VI was slated to address parliament today.

Ultimately, experts have forecasted that the ongoing youth-led movement will reshape the political climate in Morocco and help crystalize the government’s priorities ahead of general elections next year. With the country’s track record of effectively managing crises though, it is unlikely that the movement will evolve into a more transformative revolution and instead, may result in some concessions from the government on specific social and economic issues.