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Paper Title: The New Moroccan Family Code: Promise Versus Practice

Abstract: In 2004, Morocco made extensive reforms to its Shari'a derived Family Code. These reforms were intended to protect women and grant them more rights within society, but information on how they have actually affected the lives of women is scarce.

Our research indicated that the reforms have had only a limited impact. Human Rights Watch and the United States embassy both emphasized that many citizens, especially in rural areas, lack the education to understand their rights under the new code, if they are even aware that the code has been reformed at all. They also pointed out that corruption and bribery are rampant in the judicial system and that even the honest judges and police lack the training to implement the reforms. Islamist and women's rights activist Nadia Yassine added that there is a lack of funding to fix the systemic problems of implementation and that the King given only token support for it. She called for a republic to better respond to the people. However, one university professor indicated that the reforms have had a strong psychological impact in terms of making women feel that they do have a place in society.

The Family Code has had even less impact on non-Muslims. Moroccan Jews have their own courts and judges for family issues, where issues are decided according to Talmudic law. Christianity and other religions, on the other hand, are not officially recognized in Morocco and thus must seek alternative means, such as marrying outside the country.