

**SOLIDARITY CENTER**  
**GENERAL INFORMATION BRIEFING**



**THIRD GLOBAL CONFERENCE**  
**CASABLANCA, MOROCCO**  
**9 to 11 October, 2024**

**COUNTRY OVERVIEW**

Bordered by Algeria to the east, Spain in the north (via the small, Spanish-controlled exclaves of Ceuta, Melilla), and Mauritania to the south, Morocco is a north African country of approximately 38 million people, surrounded predominantly by the Atlantic and Mediterranean coastlines. Morocco is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy, whereby the Prime Minister of Morocco is the head a multi-party system. The bicameral parliament shares legislative power between the Assembly of Representatives of Morocco and the Assembly of Councilors.

**Note on Moroccan Sensitivity Regarding Western Sahara:** The topic of Western Sahara is a sensitive issue in Morocco. We kindly ask all participants to refrain from entering into discussions or debates on this subject to maintain a respectful and neutral environment during the event.

## TRIP LOGISTICS

The following note is to provide you with a brief explanation of the program logistics, relevant in-country information and important locations and contacts as pertaining to your trip.

### **Flight Itinerary and Travel Documents**

Please keep a copy of your flight itinerary with you. It is also advisable to carry two photocopies of your passport in case of emergency, in addition to one scanned copy on your cell phone/computer.

### **Currency**

The currency for Morocco is the Moroccan dirham (MAD/DH). The exchange rate is approximately USD 1:00 = 10 MAD. ATMs are widely available in Moroccan cities, but most banks only allow 2000-3000DH withdrawal at a time. Additionally, the use of credit cards\* can be limited, even in some urban areas. **It is advisable to plan to use cash for all transactions. Cash can be exchanged at the airport exchange counter.**

\*If you plan to use your credit card during the program, make sure to contact your credit card company prior to traveling to alert them of your overseas trip. Otherwise, you may face a block on your international charges in Morocco.

### **Meals and Per Diem Allowance**

Breakfast and lunch will be provided at the hotel, and one group dinner will be provided during the days of the conference as indicated in the financial information document that all participants have received.

### **Arrival in Casablanca, Morocco**

Please list Hind Cherrouk and Monika Mehta as your point of contact and the hotel as your place of stay (contact details provided below) if asked at the Morocco port of entry or passport control.

After you collect your luggage and clear customs, for those receiving a full subsidy a driver will meet you outside the airport in terminal as listed on your itinerary (non-passengers are no longer allowed inside the airport for security reasons). In the unlikely event that no one is waiting for you at the terminal listed on your itinerary, please check the other terminal exit, which is just a few meters away. The driver will be holding a sign with ILAW Conference on it. Regardless if your flight is delayed upon entering Morocco, the driver will pick you up. In the unlikely event, there is no one waiting for you at the gate, please contact:

**Monika Mehta: +001 202 894 3067**

**Hind Cherrouk : +212 662 66 64 63**

For those who have a partial subsidy or no subsidy, there are taxis outside the airport that you can take to your hotel. There are “grand white taxis” at a taxi stand at the exit of the terminal that you can request a taxi. There is also a train that you can take from the airport into the city center.

### **Important Addresses:**

Please note that participants of the ILAW Conference will be staying at two separate hotels. One of the hotels is the venue for the conference, while the second hotel is just a 10-minute walk away. Your hotel assignment and contact details have been provided in your itinerary for your convenience.

### **Hotel in Casablanca and Conference Venue Details:**

#### *Hotel Barcelo Anfa (Conference Venue)*

44 Boulevard d Anfa. 20000 Casablanca Morocco (30.8 km/20 Miles away Mohamed VI International Airport)

#### *Hotel Barcelo Casablanca*

139, Boulevard d' Anfa, Casablanca 20 000, Casablanca 20000, Morocco).

### **Weather and Clothing**

Casablanca is typically warm in October. Maximum temperatures go down compared to the previous month from +79°F to +75°F. The minimum temperature also goes down from +68°F to +63°F. It's generally warm, but pack a long-sleeve shirt for evenings.

The dress code in Casablanca, Morocco, is generally relaxed, especially in urban and coastal areas like Casablanca, which is more cosmopolitan. However, it's important to remain respectful of the local culture, which is influenced by Islam. Here are some guidelines:

#### **1. For Women:**

- Casual clothing is acceptable, but modesty is appreciated. Consider wearing clothing that covers your knees, and both your shoulders and knees when visiting religious sites or more conservative areas.

#### **2. For Men:**

- Casual attire like jeans, t-shirts, and button-up shirts are common. Shorts are acceptable in most settings, but long pants are recommended for more formal or conservative environments.

The dress code for the ILAW Conference is business casual.

Here are some helpful cultural etiquette tips for Casablanca, which reflect broader Moroccan customs and social norms:

### **Greetings:**

When greetings Moroccans, a handshake is common, but close acquaintances may greet with a light kiss on the cheek. When greeting, it is polite to wait before extending your hand for a handshake. If the other person does not offer their hand, simply nod your head as a respectful greeting.

#### **1. Public Displays of Affection:**

Public displays of affection, such as kissing or hugging, are frowned upon in Morocco, especially in more conservative areas. It's best to reserve such gestures for private settings.

#### **2. Tipping:**

Tipping is a common practice in Morocco. In restaurants, cafés, and for services such

as taxi rides, it's customary to leave a small tip. Even small gestures, such as giving porters or hotel staff a few dirhams, are appreciated.

3. **Photography:**

Always ask permission before taking photos of people, especially women and children. In some cases, people may request payment for being photographed. Avoid photographing government buildings and military sites.

4. **Bargaining:**

In local markets (souks), bargaining is part of the shopping experience. It's expected and can be done politely with a smile. However, once a price is agreed upon, it's important to follow through with the purchase. While most street vendors are honest, some may overcharge tourists, so it's best to politely decline if you're not interested in purchasing something.

### **Transportation**

Once you have arrived at the hotel, you may choose to use a red "petit taxi" for additional travelling around the city. Before you enter a taxi, ensure that your cab driver has a functioning "counter" that he is willing to turn on during your ride. Otherwise, cab drivers may attempt to overcharge your ride. Expect to pay between 10-50 DH for most trips. In Morocco, petit taxis can carry up to 3 people at once, and people typically share rides. Your driver will likely pick up two more passengers en route to your destination. Please feel free to ask the hotel about average prices for cab rides between various attractions or neighborhoods.

Casablanca is home to a modern tramway system, providing an efficient and convenient way to navigate the city. The tram connects major districts and landmarks, making it an excellent option for getting around. In addition to being affordable, the tramway is a great way to avoid traffic congestion and experience the city from a local perspective. Tickets can easily be purchased at tram stops, and the system operates frequently throughout the day.

### **Translation**

Although Arabic is the official language of Morocco, Amazighe (Berber) languages also carry official status and remain the dominant *lingua franca* in many southern, mountainous, and northern regions of Morocco. Additionally, nearly all urban citizens and some of their rural peers are able to communicate in French (or Spanish in the northern areas previously colonized by Spain). English is also increasingly spoken, especially in urban areas and among youth. In Casablanca, most people speak French and basic English. As an aside, Moroccan Arabic is a specialized dialect for communication and not as closely linked to Modern Standard Arabic as other regional dialects. Though Moroccans typically understand Egyptian, Lebanese, and Standard Arabic, native Arabic speakers from outside the Maghreb region may encounter difficulties with comprehension.

### **Telephone and Internet**

In order to call Morocco from abroad, use the following sequence + 212 + ## + ## ## ##. Internet access is available within hotels and many cafes; however, it can be slow and may cut out, especially in cafes.

### **Electricity**

Morocco uses F-Style (and therefore, C & E-style plugs as well) with their current being 230V/50Hz



C-Style/E-Style  
F-Style



(aka Euro plug)  
(aka “Schuko”)

### **Travel health notice**

Health officials have reported increased measles activity in Morocco, with an additional 1,130 cases reported between Aug. 16 and Sept. 8, bringing the total case count to 11,334 (4,091 confirmed) since Jan. 1. Please check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and your embassy websites for the latest travel health notice.

### **Useful telephone numbers**

Morocco, including Casablanca, is generally a safe destination for travelers, though it's always important to exercise caution. Avoid walking alone in isolated or unfamiliar areas, especially at night, and stick to well-lit, populated streets. Petty crimes like pickpocketing can occur in crowded places such as markets and tourist spots. To safeguard your belongings, use a secure bag with zippers and avoid carrying large amounts of cash or valuable items on your person. Traveling in groups can provide additional safety, particularly when exploring new neighborhoods or going out at night. Solo travelers should stick to central, well-known areas of the city. Remain cautious of anyone offering unsolicited assistance. Keep local emergency contacts, including the nearest embassy or consulate, readily accessible, and don't hesitate to reach out if you encounter any issues during your stay.

Below is a collection of useful information

*Ambulance: 150*

*Fire brigade: 15*

*SOS Medecins 24/24: 05 22 98 98 98*

*Anti-poison centre: 081 00 01 80 (for any exposure to poison such as snake or scorpion bites)*  
*www.capm.ma*

*Pasteur Institute for vaccinations: 05 22 26 20 26 [www.pasteur.ma](http://www.pasteur.ma)*

*Mondial Assistance: 05 22 97 47 47 (international travel insurance)*

*Train station info: 08 90 20 30 40 [www.oncf.ma](http://www.oncf.ma)*

*National airport office: 05 22 53 90 40 / 05 22 53 91 40 [www.onda.ma/onda/an](http://www.onda.ma/onda/an)*

### **ILAW Contact Information**

If you have any questions or need assistance while you are traveling, please do not hesitate to contact your ILAW Regional Coordinators or the ILAW Network team

## **Moroccan cuisine**

Moroccan cuisine is a vibrant blend of Arab, Berber, Andalusian, and Mediterranean influences, known for its rich, aromatic flavors and diverse ingredients. Spices like cumin, saffron, ginger, and cinnamon are used generously to create dishes that are both bold and comforting. Meals often begin with a selection of salads, followed by main dishes like couscous or tagine. Couscous is typically served with a flavorful broth, vegetables such as carrots and zucchini, and tender meat, but there are also delicious vegetarian versions available. Tagines are slow-cooked stews that bring together meat or vegetables with a fragrant mix of spices, and common variations include lamb with prunes or chicken with preserved lemons. Vegetarian tagines are equally popular, featuring ingredients like root vegetables, olives, and chickpeas. Harira, a traditional soup made with tomatoes, lentils, and chickpeas, is a popular choice during Ramadan but can be enjoyed year-round.

For those with dietary restrictions, Moroccan cuisine offers a range of vegetarian options, and dishes can easily be adapted to accommodate preferences for vegan, gluten-free, or other special diets. Meals are often concluded with sweet pastries, accompanied by refreshing mint tea, a signature element of Moroccan hospitality.



We hope you have a productive and enjoyable conference. Please let us know if there is anything that we can do to clarify your arrangements or provide you with additional information. Thank you.