



Religious Moderates Are Keeping Extremism At Bay

(NAPSA)—A moderate version of Islam is proving to be a key element of a successful approach to keeping religious extremism in check.

That's the word from Morocco, a country that has had success in containing religious extremism by addressing the underlying causes of radicalization and by expanding and strengthening its own open, more moderate form of Islam.

The rise of religious extremism is an important issue in the aftermath of the political and social changes that have come to be known as the Arab Spring.

Recently, King Mohammed VI was asked by the leaders of several African countries to provide training in Morocco for hundreds of religious leaders (imams) and preachers (morchidines and morchidates) from Mali, Libya, Tunisia, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, the Maldives and Nigeria.

In May, a key step in establishing this program was taken when the King launched the Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams, Morchidines, and Morchidates in Rabat, welcoming students from Morocco, Africa and the Middle East to promote religious moderation and tolerance in the region, and instill a culture of understanding and dialogue across faiths.

As early as 2006, as part of a comprehensive "counter-radicalization" strategy following the 2003 Casablanca bombings, Morocco began to train morchidates, or female preachers. In addition to counseling against extremism through religion itself, the objective of the strategy was to provide



Morocco's King Mohammed VI meets with a number of preachers who have been trained to counter the appeal of religious extremism.

more empowerment and economic opportunities, including for youth.

The morchidates are trained to work with imams in mosques and communities across Morocco, providing counsel and "spiritual security" to counter the potential appeal of extremism. The program was recognized as "pioneering" by the U.S. State Department's 2009 report on terrorism.

During his visit to Morocco last April, Secretary of State John Kerry praised King Mohammed VI and Morocco for "playing an essential leadership role" in the region, noting that Morocco "plays a very important role in facing extremism, and it also disseminates cooperation with African countries in the religious domain at a moment where Africa needs this spiritual support to face terrorism based on these values, the values of tolerance."

This information is conveyed by Beckerman on behalf of the Government of Morocco. Further information is available at the U.S. Department of Justice.