

# The Making of Morocco's Gen Z Protest

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# **The Making of Morocco's Gen Z Protest**

*MEA Institute for Strategic Studies*

North Africa Desk

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# Executive Summary

Report by: North Africa Desk

Morocco enters a period of acute domestic tension as it prepares to host the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) and co-host the 2030 FIFA World Cup. Against this backdrop, the GenZ 212 protests, a youth-led mobilisation that swept Moroccan cities from late September to October 2025, have exposed the growing gap between state prestige projects and public welfare. The demonstrations, sparked by hospital deaths and anger over billions spent on stadiums amid crumbling social services, evolved into a nationwide challenge to government legitimacy and elite privilege.

This report examines how Morocco's simultaneous pursuit of global visibility and domestic control is reshaping its political economy and social contract. The report explores how mega-event investments, digital activism and generational disillusionment interact to redefine Morocco's political stability and governance legitimacy in 2025.

The report also demonstrates how Morocco's stability narrative, long anchored in the monarchy's decentralised authority and managed reform, is facing its sharpest generational test since the 2011 Arab Spring. The GenZ 212 movement reflects a digitally native, leaderless and horizontally organised protest ecology. The social media platform Discord enabled rapid coordination, anonymity, and nationwide mobilisation, transforming grievances about healthcare and inequality into a moral critique of state priorities.

At the economic level Morocco's World Cup investment, equivalent to more than half of annual health expenditure, underscores deep fiscal trade-offs. While officials frame these projects as engines of growth and regional prestige, protesters view them as symbols of injustice in a country where youth unemployment hovers near forty percent. The resulting legitimacy crisis has forced the monarchy to balance repression and reform, tightening control over digital space while promising increased social spending.

Regionally, Morocco's image as a model of African stability and reform is now entangled with the visibility of youth dissent. The protests reveal a broader generational realignment across the world; from Nepal to Madagascar to Morocco, Gen Z movements privilege fairness and accountability over ideology, relying on digital tools to bypass party politics.

Taken together, these developments depict a state caught between soft-power projection and social discontent. Morocco remains a pivotal regional actor and a symbol of ambition in African sport diplomacy, yet its domestic landscape shows that modernisation without inclusion carries mounting political costs. Whether the kingdom can transform its investments into social legitimacy, rather than further alienation, will define the trajectory of Moroccan governance well beyond AFCON 2025.

# Introduction

In late September and early October 2025, Morocco experienced widespread youth-led demonstrations, referred to as the “GenZ 212” protests.<sup>1</sup> Triggered by public outrage over hospital deaths and the chronic underfunding of healthcare and education, the protests rapidly escalated nationwide.<sup>2</sup> Coordinated through a public server on Discord with over 180,000 members,<sup>3</sup> demonstrators voiced anger at what they view as misplaced government spending priorities: billions invested in preparing for the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) and Morocco’s co-hosting of the 2030 FIFA World Cup, while basic social services remain inadequate.

The Moroccan government, led by Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch, has faced mounting criticism over corruption, inequality, and poor service delivery. Its heavy-handed security response to the protests, which included mass arrests and reported fatalities, has further undermined trust. The Gen Z 212 movement – referring to the generation born between 1996 and 2006 and Morocco’s telephone code – highlight a deeper legitimacy crisis: young Moroccans feel strong sense of injustice by policies that prioritise international prestige projects over delivery of basic services. The convergence of AFCON 2025 and World Cup 2030 preparations makes this moment particularly critical for assessing Morocco’s political stability, state- society relations, and the risks of unrest overshadowing major international events.

Concurrently, protests represent a marked shift in the role of football in Morocco. The locale of dissent in Morocco has transferred from the stadiums to the streets. Historically, a society that relied on the sport for political expression free from consequence, the commodification of football by the Moroccan government in recent years is central to Gen Z 212 grievances. No longer a vehicle for deliberation, football has become the object of dissent, and the mismanagement of football-derived profit by political elites is pushing the youth to boycott the game altogether.

Political scholars have traditionally considered Morocco a ‘decentralised autocracy’.<sup>4</sup> Morocco’s political structure follows a hybrid arrangement where King Mohammed VI perpetuates supreme, yet distant, power of Moroccan political order and its religious sphere,<sup>5</sup> while regional and local elites deal with the intricacies of day-to-day affairs.<sup>6</sup> The King relies on the makhzen, a ‘self-enforcing network of power-holding elites drawn from state, military and businesses’ to preserve the hegemony of the throne.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gen Z protests across Morocco over World Cup spending and reforms.” *Al Jazeera*, 30 Sept. 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/video/newsfeed/2025/9/30/gen-z-protests-across-morocco-over-world-cup-spending-and-reforms>.

<sup>2</sup> Caolán Magee and AFP, “Gen Z Protests Across Morocco Over World Cup Spending and Reforms,” *Al Jazeera*, September 30, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/video/newsfeed/2025/9/30/gen-z-protests-across-morocco-over-world-cup-spending-and-reforms>

<sup>3</sup> Kabbadj, Omar. “Hospitals versus stadiums.” *Africa Is a Country*, October 23, 2025. <https://africasacountry.com/2025/10/hospitals-versus-stadiums>

<sup>4</sup> Lynch, Marc, Jillian Schwedler, and Sean Yom, eds. *The Political Science of the Middle East: Theory and Research Since the Arab Uprisings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. Pg. 263

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 43

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*.

Unlike his father King Hassan II, Mohammed VI's implementation of his political authority has evolved towards a distant stewardship of the North African nation.<sup>8</sup> In turn, the King's approach has enabled Morocco to continue its reputation of having the longest history political decentralisation in the region. Counter-intuitively, political analysts argue this decentralised system has had a stabilising effect for the King's authority over the past 25 years.<sup>9</sup>

This paradoxical political system is a key explanation for how Morocco was able to avoid the revolutionary upheaval during the Arab Spring. Despite the series of organised protests between 2011 and 2012 known as the February 20 Movement,<sup>10</sup> King Mohammed VI was able to maintain control and preserve the 350- year rule of the Alawi Dynasty. By infusing religious and nationalistic narratives in his role as 'Commander of the Faithful', the King was able to exert his distinct moral authority, while the swift adoption of reforms created an illusion of state responsiveness without modifying power-sharing arrangements.<sup>11</sup> Crucially, Morocco was at the time an aid-dependent autocracy.<sup>12</sup> The North African country found itself in a unique position in the region as it profited from flows of external financing conditioned external strategic cooperation rather than the internal democratic reforms conditioned upon its neighbours such as Tunisia.<sup>13</sup> This external source of financing allowed the Moroccan state to underwrite most of the most expensive public commitments, including social spending,<sup>14</sup> without needing to comply with structural conditionalities.

However, a drastic reduction in international aid has severely weakened this mechanism over the past decade. A 68.3% decline<sup>15</sup> in official development assistance (ODA) between 2017 and 2023 has constrained the regime's capacity to sustainably fund many public services, social welfare programs, and development projects. This has exposed Morocco's hybrid political system. Fundamentally, these pressures underpin the frustrations that motivate the Gen-Z 212 movement. Fuelled by frustration over high unemployment, poor public services and government priorities skewed toward prestige projects like AFCON 2025 and the 2030 World Cup, the protests uncover the limitations of relying on repression and foreign financing to deliver basic public services.

## Methodology

This study follows a primarily qualitative and comparative research approach focusing on the political economy of major events in Morocco, with the aim of finding the interconnection between these events and the current youth mobilisation. The report primarily relies on qualitative

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid .

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, pg, 263

<sup>10</sup> BBC News. "Morocco protesters demand political change." BBC News, February 20, 2011. Accessed October 22, 2025. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12518116>.

<sup>11</sup> Duke II, David Michael. 2016. *Manufacturing Consent in the Maghreb: How Mohammed VI of Morocco Survived the Arab Spring*. Portland State University. [https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4436&context=open\\_access\\_etds](https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4436&context=open_access_etds).

<sup>12</sup> Lynch, Marc, Jillian Schwedler, and Sean Yom, eds. *The Political Science of the Middle East: Theory and Research Since the Arab Uprisings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid .

<sup>15</sup> World Bank. 2025. "Net Official Development Assistance and Official Aid Received (Constant 2022 US\$) — Morocco." World Development Indicators. Washington, DC: World Bank. Accessed October 21. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/DI.ODA.ALLD.CD?locations=MA>

content analysis of various primary and secondary sources. This includes national and international news outlets reports, official governmental statements, reports by non-governmental human organisations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. It also includes video documentation and the social media content on different platforms such as TikTok, Telegram and most importantly Discord.

Moreover, economic and financial data extracted from sources such as the IMF and the World Bank, which serve as an important tool to contextualise and highlight state spending priorities and its impact on debt levels.

It is important to note that the events were mainly mapped chronologically from late September to October 2025 to track down the development of the Gen Z 212 protests. In parallel, a comparative view was applied to earlier waves of mobilisation in the last two decades in Morocco, most notably the February 20 Movement in 2011 and the Hirak movement in the Rif in 2016. This comparative lens aims to highlight the shifts and continuous patterns in protest dynamics in the kingdom.

Furthermore, this report situates Morocco's mobilisation within the uprising trend of Gen Z activism and its global patterns, drawing similarities with other digital movements such as Nepal and Madagascar. The triangulation of different sources and the cross verification allowed to ensure analytical reliability by reconstructing protest narratives. Finally, the study recognises its limitations due to restricted access to on- ground interviews given the sensitivity of the protests.

## **Analysis: Youth Demands, State Spending Priorities and the Politics of Football Mega Events**

### **1. Genesis of the Gen Z 212 Protests**

Protests in Morocco were immediately triggered by outrage at the deaths of eight women after caesarean surgeries in Hassan II Hospital in Agadir towards the end of September 2025. The deaths represented long- standing grievances about the inefficiency of the public sector of public healthcare in one of the poorest areas of Morocco.<sup>16</sup> The tragedy occurred amid growing public disillusionment following the inauguration of the new Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium in Rabat on 4 September 2025. Workers originally assigned to the CHU Ibn Sina University Hospital were redirected to complete the stadium. This prompted criticism over government prioritisation of sports facility over essential healthcare infrastructure.<sup>17</sup> The ceremony coincided with a time when, three years after the 8 September 2023 Al Haouz earthquake, many affected communities still lived in precarious conditions, and much of the damaged infrastructure

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<sup>16</sup> Sara Zouiten, "The death of eight women after cesarean surgeries in Agadir was the flashpoint." *Morocco World News*, October 6 2025, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2025/10/262289/health-ministry-refers-agadir-hospital-deaths-case-to-public-prosecutor-after-completing-investigation>.

<sup>17</sup> Faouzi, Amine. "Sports or Citizens' Health? CHU Ibn Sina Workers Shifted to Moulay Abdellah Stadium." *Morocco World News*, August 22 2025, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2025/08/249292/sports-or-citizens-health-chu-ibn-sina-workers-shifted-to-moulay-abdellah-stadium/>

remained unrepaired.<sup>18</sup> The disparity between government priorities and the hardships faced by the population reinforced a rising sense of injustice. The hospital incident fuelled popular indignation, triggering a mass mobilization led predominantly by Moroccan youth on platforms like Discord, TikTok, and Instagram. Discord's membership rose from 3,000 to over 15,000 within a week, as the movement spread across the country and demonstrations reached the major cities: Rabat, Marrakech, Tangier, and Oujda.<sup>19</sup>

The movement upsurge was a result of broader dissatisfaction with unfairness, bad public services, and unequal distribution of benefits from economic development. Demonstrators called for the resignation of government officials, including Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch, who were accused of corruption and embezzlement of public funds, which had contributed to the ineffectiveness of public services, and for the intervention of King Mohammed VI to restore order and curb corruption.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the rapid economic growth recorded in Morocco in recent years has done little to quell popular disaffection, particularly among young people facing insecurity and limited opportunities, with rural vulnerability and urban unemployment remaining high.<sup>21</sup> Two-thirds of jobs are informal, many young people work as unpaid family labourers in agriculture.<sup>22</sup> Among Moroccan youth, unemployment and healthcare are seen as the highest-priority issues for government action, with economic management and education coming next.<sup>23</sup>

What began as a movement focused on social justice and public health quickly evolved into broader political demands as repression, police brutality, and mass arrests escalated.<sup>24</sup> Protests turned violent in several cities, such as Ait Amira, Inezgane, Agadir, Tiznit and Oujda,<sup>25</sup> where health and education services already face some of the most severe challenges. In these areas, clashes between protesters and security forces, as well as acts of vandalism, were reported, with 260 members of the Moroccan security forces injured by October 1.<sup>26</sup> The situation worsened when a protester was fatally struck by a police vehicle in Oujda on 30 September, followed by the shooting of three demonstrators by the Gendarmerie in Lakliaa on 2 October.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Eljechtimi, Ahmed. "Morocco's Prime Minister Calls for Dialogue as Nightly Protests Grow More Violent." *Reuters*, October 2 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/morocco-prime-minister-calls-dialogue-nightly-protests-grow-more-violent-2025-10-02/>

<sup>19</sup> Amine Faouzi, "Survivors Still in Tents as Al Haouz Earthquake Recovery Stalls," *Hespress*, July 24, 2025, <https://en.hespress.com/116571-survivors-still-in-tents-as-al-haouz-earthquake-recovery-stalls.html> .

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid* .

<sup>21</sup> Yassine Bakass, "Youth's Poverty and Inequality of Opportunities: Empirical Evidence from Morocco", *Social Sciences*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12010028>

<sup>22</sup> "Morocco's job market, especially for young people, is becoming increasingly tough", *Hespress-EN*, 7 Oct. 2025, <https://en.hespress.com/122741-122741.html>

<sup>23</sup> "Unemployment, health, the economy, and education are top priorities of young Moroccans", *Afrobarometer* (News release, 14 Sept. 2023), <https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/News-release-Unemployment^J-health^J-and-economy-top-priorities-of-young-Moroccans-Afrobarometer-ma-bh-14sept23.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Human Rights Watch. "Morocco: Protests Met with Repression, Violence." *Human Rights Watch*, October 15, 2025. [https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/10/15/morocco-protests-met-with-repression-violence?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/10/15/morocco-protests-met-with-repression-violence?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid* .

<sup>26</sup> Eljechtimi, Ahmed. "260 Members of Moroccan Security Forces Reported Hurt as Youth Protests Turn Violent." *Reuters*, October 1, 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/260-members-moroccan-security-forces-reported-hurt-youth-protests-turn-violent-2025-10-01/>

<sup>27</sup> Carlos Mureithi. "Organisers Call for Sixth Night of Protest as Morocco Death Toll Rises to Three." *The Guardian*, October 2, 2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/oct/02/first-deaths-in-moroccos-youth-led-anti-government-protests-as-police-open-fire>.

The government response, directed at security measures, sought to keep down the protests but was generally condemned as being heavy-handed. Since the protests began on 27 September, at least 2,400 young protesters have been charged, with 1,470 still in custody awaiting trial by the end of October 2025.<sup>28</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, as the 15 arrested nearly 1,000 people and brought criminal cases against at least 270 protesters, including 39 children, some of whom remain detained.<sup>29</sup>

On 3 October, King Mohammed VI addressed Parliament, emphasising "social justice" and assistance to disadvantaged regions, but noticeably made no reference to the protests.<sup>30</sup> His silence was widely interpreted as a strategic distance from the crisis, and most citizens were doubtful of the government's desire for earnest reform and accountability.<sup>31</sup> Two weeks later, the royal cabinet announced that the health and education sectors would be allocated nearly \$15 billion in 2026, a 16 per cent increase from the previous year, and the creation of more than 27,000 jobs.<sup>32</sup> However, both experts and youth movement Gen Z 212 dismissed the pledge as not being sufficient, saying that it is rather a political gesture than an answer to structural problems.<sup>33</sup> The movement emphasised that such steps must be followed by tangible actions against corruption and conflict of interests, and that a great sum of money can be consumed by bureaucratic mechanisms rather than being channelled directly to citizens.<sup>34</sup>

Online platforms became central to coordination, mobilisation, and resilience during the protests. The youth-led movement initially organised through Discord, particularly the channel Gen Z 212, which quickly grew into a large space for discussion, decision-making, and action planning. The name is a reference to Generation Z, expressing the movement's youthfulness, and "212" is Morocco's international dialling code, suggesting a call for national unity and pride. In this way, Gen Z 212 was not only a practical means for decision-making and coordination but also a symbolic rallying point for young Moroccans expressing their social and political demands.

As police began intercepting protesters before gatherings, organisers shifted to Telegram for greater security, revealing protest locations only a few hours in advance to avoid pre-emptive crackdowns. Social media platforms, including Instagram, were also widely used to document events, share updates, and amplify the movement's messages. Videos and live streams showing police violence circulated widely, fuelling public outrage and reinforcing perceptions of government oppression. By controlling the narrative online, protesters were able to challenge official accounts, maintain momentum, and frame the youth mobilisation as a legitimate demand

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<sup>28</sup> Oubachir, Akram. "Morocco Charges More than 2,400 People over Gen Z Protests", *Associated Press*, October 29, 2025. <https://apnews.com/article/morocco-anti-government-protests-arrests-b8630037bc2f3c1fa05dd70f0d10c188>

<sup>29</sup> Human Rights Watch. "Morocco: Protests Met with Repression, Violence." Human Rights Watch, October 15, 2025. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/10/15/morocco-protests-met-with-repression-violence>.

<sup>30</sup> "Morocco's King Mohammed VI Addresses Social Injustices in Speech as Gen Z Protesters Demand Reforms." APNews, October 10, 2025. <https://apnews.com/article/1b926e98e14bf41dc293d1a316df3425>.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Eljehtimi, Ahmed. 2025. "Morocco to Boost Health, Education Spending to \$15 Billion in 2026." *Reuters*, October 19. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/morocco-boost-health-education-spending-15-bln-2026-2025-10-19/>

<sup>33</sup> "Morocco's \$15bn Promise Falls Short of GenZ 212 Demands for Real Change." *Middle East Eye*, October 23, 2025. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/moroccos-15bn-promise-falls-short-genz-212-demands-real-change>

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

for justice and accountability. Further, the rapid evolution and flexibility of the platforms allowed protesters to promptly respond to repression and police measures. When the security forces occupied key squares, demonstrators transited to smaller demonstrations in the working-class neighbourhoods. On 28 September, protestors went as far as to blockade a Casablanca highway, an extremely risky action under Moroccan law. This adaptability was facilitated through virtual organisation on Discord, Telegram, and Instagram, where protestors were able to have real-time conversations, plan their actions and rapidly exchange information.

## **2. Digital Mobilisation in Morocco and the New Protest Ecology**

The Gen Z 212 movement has built upon important lessons from previous movements, particularly the February 20 Movement of 2011 during the Arab Spring. These protests relied heavily on Facebook and maintained close links with political parties and organisations, which ultimately undermined its credibility and effectiveness.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, Gen Z activists have deliberately defined their current mobilisation as apolitical, a choice that has earned them the trust of many Moroccans who have joined without hesitation. This approach also reflects an awareness of the experience of Nasser Zefzafi, the leader of the Hirak Al-Rif, who was sentenced to twenty years in prison. To avoid similar repression, the new movement has consciously decided not to appoint official representatives.<sup>36</sup>

Unlike during the Arab Spring of 2011, when governments were unprepared for the influence of Facebook in shaping public opinion and subsequently tightened control over online information, the Gen Z 212 movement has adapted and chose to utilise Discord, a more private and decentralised platform. Despite increased censorship, young Moroccans have managed to organise effectively through the platform, using it as a secure digital space for collective action and civic expression.<sup>37</sup>

One of the Gen Z 212 movement's main defining features is its reliance on Discord, which was successfully used to organise youth mobilisation in Nepal earlier in September 2025. The platform originated as a tool for gaming and leisure, however its unique features lent itself to being used alternatively as a platform to discuss social issues and coordinate public uprisings.<sup>38</sup> Discord offers greater flexibility and accessibility compared with older social media platforms: it is not governed by algorithms and enables users to interact in organised "rooms" where they can share insights, plan protest strategies, and discuss safety measures, particularly in response to police violence. The platform supports text, audio, and video communication across different devices, making coordination more efficient. Moreover, Discord's structure allows organisation according to Morocco's various cities, enabling local groups to adapt their strategies to specific

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<sup>35</sup> Lenie Brouwer and Edien Bartels, "Arab Spring in Morocco: Social Media and the 20 February Movement," *Afrika Focus* 27, no. 2 (2014): 9–22. <https://openjournals.ugent.be/af/article/61189/view>

<sup>36</sup> "Morocco's February 20 movement: 'Demands still alive'," *Al Jazeera*, 22 Feb 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/2/22/moroccos-february-20-movement-demands-still-alive>

<sup>37</sup> "'This generation is defiant': Gen Z protests set to resume in Morocco despite deaths and arrests," *The Guardian*, 14 Oct 2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/oct/14/this-generation-is-defiant-gen-z-protests-set-to-resume-in-morocco-despite-deaths-and-arrests>

<sup>38</sup> "How GenZ212 Turned Discord into the Backbone of Moroccan Protest," *Middle East Eye*, 8 Oct 2025. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/how-genz-moroccans-turned-discord-backbone-their-protest-action>

contexts; for instance, in Marrakesh, demonstrations were deliberately held away from tourist areas.<sup>39</sup>

In response to the increasing digital mobilisation, the Moroccan government has sought to assert greater control over online spaces, for instance in May 2025, the Minister of Culture, Youth, and Communication, Mohamed Mehdi Bensaid, presented a proposal before the Chamber of Representatives for a new law aimed at regulating social media platforms. The measure was framed as an effort to reinforce Morocco's "digital sovereignty" and to prevent content deemed contrary to the nation's cultural or societal values. Alongside this proposal, the government introduced an expanded role for the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HACA), designating it as the primary watchdog responsible for monitoring activities and content across various social media platforms, a role which had upscaled since the beginnings of the protests.<sup>40</sup>

Importantly, the movement also extends beyond Morocco's borders, involving members of the Moroccan diaspora who play a crucial role in shaping global public opinion. By exposing the realities of Morocco's political situation, these expatriates counter the government's efforts to preserve a favourable image aimed at attracting Western investment and tourism. The Gen Z 212 movement in Morocco experienced rapid growth in its digital community, with the number of members on its Discord server soaring from approximately 2,000 to over 12,000 within only three days.<sup>41</sup> While Discord served as the central hub for coordination and strategic planning, other platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook were instrumental in expanding the movement's public reach. Through short videos, infographics, and multilingual manifestos, activists managed to engage diverse audiences across Morocco and abroad. In parallel, secure messaging applications such as Telegram were employed on the ground to ensure protected communication during demonstrations and to respond swiftly to police repression and dispersal tactics.

As the movement evolved, administrators increasingly shifted operations from Discord to Telegram after reports indicated that the police were arriving at protest sites even before demonstrators, suggesting possible monitoring or leaks.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, Discord remained an essential platform for community-building and knowledge-sharing. Daily evening debriefs were organised, allowing participants to exchange experiences, offer advice on protest conduct, and discuss methods of self-protection against police violence. Veterans of the February 20 Movement of 2011 frequently contributed to these discussions, providing valuable historical insight and practical guidance.

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<sup>39</sup> Julieta Heduva, "How Did Discord and Social Media Become the Public Square for Generation Z?" *Latinoamérica 21*, 2025. <https://www.latinoamerica21.com/en/how-did-discord-and-social-media-become-the-public-square-for-generation-z>

<sup>40</sup> "Morocco's New Social Media Law: HACA to Expand Authority Under Bensaid's Plan," *MoroccoWorldNews*, 16 May 2025. <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2025/05/200662/moroccos-new-social-media-law-haca-to-expand-authority-under-bensaid-s-plan>

<sup>41</sup> "Moroccan Diaspora in Amsterdam Joins GenZ212 Protests," *Morocco World News*, 4 Oct 2025. <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2025/10/261886/moroccan-diaspora-in-amsterdam-joins-genz212-protests>

<sup>42</sup> "Understanding Morocco's GenZ Uprising," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 24 Oct 2025. <https://carnegieendowment.org/middle-east/diwan/2025/10/moroccos-genz-uprising?lang=en>

The participation of human rights activists and lawyers within Discord channels further strengthened the movement's organisational capacity. Their expertise facilitated the preparation of educational materials and flyers outlining legal rights, basic first-aid responses to tear gas and contact information for pro bono legal support. The server's "Solidarity" channel became a vital space for sharing resources and moral support among protesters, while the "Suggestions" channel encouraged creativity and collective problem-solving. The continuous exchange of innovative ideas in these spaces significantly accelerated the community's learning curve, enabling Gen Z 212 to adapt swiftly to challenges on the ground and online alike.

### ***Algorithmic Visibility and Narrative Framing***

Despite Discord serving as the Gen Z movement's primary tool for coordination, other social media platforms remain the backbone and beating heart of their mobilisation on the ground. These platforms, especially TikTok and X, play a dual role. Firstly, they are used to shape the protestors' narrative by revealing what the "real Morocco" looks like: the deteriorating state of hospitals and schools, and the precarious living conditions in rural areas. This stands in stark contrast to the image promoted by the government, which seeks to present Morocco as a prosperous and modern nation capable of hosting two major football events: the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations and the 2030 FIFA World Cup.<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, these same digital spaces serve as emotional amplifiers, broadcasting short videos from protests and scenes of everyday struggle to audiences in Morocco and beyond. This circulation of visual testimony has made the movement both immediate and visceral, allowing Gen Z activists to document their reality in real time. Hashtags such as #JusticePourLes8, a reference to the eight pregnant women who died within 48 hours at Agadir Hospital, and #BoycottAkhannouch, targeting Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch, one of Morocco's wealthiest political figures, quickly went viral on TikTok and X.<sup>44</sup> These online campaigns resonated widely amongst Moroccans, generating solidarity across social networks.

Following this momentum, the collective launched a new campaign titled "Boycott économique pour la justice" ("Economic Boycott for Justice"), calling for a systematic boycott of companies linked to Akhannouch's business empire. These include Afriquia Gaz, Akwa Group, Oasis Café, Mini Brahim, Aspen, Oxygen, Yan&One, Aksal Group, Fairmont Hotel, Aujourd'hui Le Maroc, and La Vie Éco.<sup>45</sup> Gen Z activists have taken time to articulate the rationale behind this economic protest, referencing earlier successful boycotts, most notably the 2018 Afriquia boycott, and the Danone boycott, which emerged in solidarity with Gaza. These past campaigns are invoked as examples of how collective consumer action can achieve tangible social and political outcomes.<sup>46</sup> As one slogan circulating online put it: "If the state doesn't listen to our voices, it will hear our

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<sup>43</sup> "Morocco to Draft Law Regulating Digital Content Creation," *Maroc 24*, 12 Aug 2025. <https://morocco24.info/2025/08/12/morocco-to-draft-law-regulating-digital-content-creation-and-protecting-vulnerable-groups>

<sup>44</sup> *The Guardian*, 2025 (ibid.)

<sup>45</sup> "Boycott économique pour la justice – Morocco's GenZ212 Targets Akhannouch's Companies," *Middle East Eye*, 20 Oct 2025. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/morocco-genz-boycott-akhannouch-companies-economic-justice>

<sup>46</sup> "Morocco 2018 Boycott: Consumers Challenge Elites," *BBC News*, 8 June 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-44411847>

silence at the checkout.”

The demographic composition of the movement reinforces its digital nature: nearly 70 percent of Moroccans are under the age of 35, making social media a natural extension of public space.<sup>47</sup> Through short videos, memes, and live streams, protesters document not only demonstrations but also the daily hardships of Moroccan citizens, particularly within neglected hospitals and schools. In this context, the boundaries between journalism and activism blur, everyone becomes a witness and a recorder of events in real time.

These demonstrations have been amplified and sustained through the use of technology. The constant documentation and notarization of protest moments contribute to their longevity, creating a dual dynamic between digital coordination and street mobilisation. As digital tools continue to evolve, they will likely empower future generations to organise more effectively and address their social and political challenges with greater autonomy.<sup>48</sup>

### **3. Football Megaprojects as a Central Grievance**

Central to much of the discontent, broadcast online and in the streets by young Moroccans, is the exorbitant spending on football megaprojects by the government, despite severe levels of inequality, unemployment and illiteracy across the nation. The prioritisation of football to such a great extent runs contrary to much of Morocco’s own footballing history, which it shares with neighbouring Algeria and other North African countries. Where the game was once a tool of dissent, and the stadium a vehicle for political expression, football has grown into the object of popular dissent. What is more, the stadium now represents a stage for ‘performing Morocco’, which itself is far removed from the economic realities of the everyday, as well as a drain on essential services and resources.

#### ***A Brief Political History of Football in Morocco and North Africa***

Football in Morocco dates to the years of French and Spanish control (1912 – 1956), when many of today’s clubs emerged. Just as in neighbouring Algeria, ‘popular football clubs played a significant role in national liberation movements, becoming the voice of the people struggling against colonial rule.’<sup>49</sup> All football clubs in occupied Morocco were established by the French, bar one: Maghreb al Aksa, which was founded in 1919 in Tangiers and competed in the Spanish league, led by a group of Moroccan nationalists.<sup>50</sup> Maghreb al Aksa was a political party masquerading as a football club; once Morocco achieved national liberation, the club was disbanded, having achieved its singular goal.

Football during the colonial era offered the indigenous population reason to gather and converse, appropriating a colonial import and using it as a guise under which to make revolutionary plans.

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<sup>47</sup> “Morocco 2024 Demographics,” *World Bank Data*, 2024. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.0014.TO.ZS?locations=MA>

<sup>48</sup> “Understanding Morocco’s GenZ Uprising,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2025 (ibid.)

<sup>49</sup> Eman Demerdash, “The Role of Football in Preserving National Identity in the Arab World,” *Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS)*, n.d. (published 2023), accessed October 25, 2025, <https://pomeps.org/the-role-of-football-in-preserving-national-identity-in-the-arab-world>.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

In Algeria, too, a football team was assembled by the Front de Libération (FLN) in order to advocate for Algerian independence while competing internationally, and the football stadium itself was a key location in the organisation of the 1980 Algerian Berber Spring. ‘Football stadiums have, therefore, always been places of resistance, identity affirmation and truth-telling’ in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia,<sup>53</sup> ‘truth-telling’ referring to the heavily politicised football chants that North African football fans are known for.<sup>54</sup> Algerian football fans sang ‘La Casa del Mouradia’ in the stands, as a way to President Bouteflika’s bid for a fifth term and to voice grievances that could not safely be expressed in any other public space.<sup>55</sup>

Morocco’s first Ultras, the Raja Casablanca ‘Green Boys’, were formed in 2005, and have since composed and released several albums of socio-politically engaged songs, which fans chant in Moroccan stadiums as a message to the government. One of the first and most famous of these chants is entitled ‘Fbladi Dalmouni’ (In My Country They Oppress Me), which laments corruption, abandonment, and the lack of opportunities in Morocco. It resonated so deeply across the Maghreb that it was covered by Algerian Rai singer, Mohamed Benchenet, and then became emblematic of the 2019 Algerian Hirak movement.

*Oh, in my country they have oppressed me  
Oh, who can I complain to?  
To the lord most high; only he knows  
They’ve spent on Hachich; and abandoned us like orphans We’ll get our due  
in the afterlife; you’ve wasted talents With drugs, you’ve crushed them; is that  
not the truth? You’ve eaten the state’s money; given it to foreigners  
An entire generation’s been suppressed.*

Lyrics from Fbladi Dalmouni, translated by Maher Mezah <sup>56</sup>

These lyrics bear a notable resemblance to the grievances expressed by the Gen Z 212 protesters - corruption, abandonment, neglect of the youth - illustrating not only the slow gestation of the protests themselves, but their provenance within the football stadium that they seek to boycott.

After the end of the colonial era, football was largely directed by King Hassan II and his political elites at the Royal Moroccan Football Federation (FRMF). King Hassan II also created the Royal Armed Forces Sports Association club (ASFAR), which was nicknamed ‘the King’s team’, and received undue favours, lucrative contracts, and great disdain from other clubs which were

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<sup>51</sup> Eman Demerdash, “The Role of Football in Preserving National Identity in the Arab World,” *Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS)*, n.d. (published 2023), accessed October 25, 2025, <https://pomeps.org/the-role-of-football-in-preserving-national-identity-in-the-arab-world>.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> “North Africa: Football Fans Use Stadium Freedoms to Back Palestinians,” *France 24*, May 9, 2024, accessed October 25, 2025, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20240509-north-africa-football-fans-use-stadium-freedoms-to-back-palestinians>.

<sup>54</sup> Mezahi, Maher, ‘A Study of Football Chants as Political Expression in the Algerian Hirak’, in Abdullah Al-Arian (ed.), *Football in the Middle East: State, Society, and the Beautiful Game* (2022; online edn, Oxford Academic, 19 Jan. 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197659670.003.0004>, accessed 24 Oct. 2025.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

founded by the working class. On the pitch and in the stands, class battles played out between them and ‘the King’s team’, which represented the political elite at whom the first political football chants were directed. The football stadium became an arena for political performance, and a vehicle for political dissent, especially after the rise of Moroccan Ultras and their subsequent categorisation as political agents.

### ***Football as a Contemporary Political Outlet in Morocco***

The Green Boys of Raja Casablanca emerged in 2005, followed by the Wydad FC ‘Winners’, the ‘Helala Boys’ at Kenitra AC, the Ultras of Moghreb Tetouan and more, but none were respected as a political force until the popular uprisings of 2011, which marked a shift in political engagement across Morocco. Although they did not fight the military on the ground in the way that Egypt’s Al-Ahly Ultras did during the Arab Spring, Morocco’s Ultras have shown engagement in different ways. The Green Boys launched a campaign to make football stadiums safer for women, Chabab Rif Al-Hoceima took on leadership roles in mass protests of Hirak Al-Rif (2016-17), and Tetouan Ultras marched in black to their home stadium in protest of the murder of Hayat Belkacem while crossing the Ceuta border in 2018. Ultras are often heard addressing the government directly, as increasingly visible political actors. One famous chant from the Helala Boys begins:

*‘This message is for the police and the government, we are already fed up with its injustice [...] We hate you all.’<sup>57</sup>*

Thus Ultras themselves have, over the past two decades, ‘developed into quasi-social movements, facing off against authorities to demand greater economic opportunities and political inclusion’,<sup>58</sup> because the football stadium has remained, until now, one of the few public spaces ‘relatively free of state control where citizens feel they can express their grievances.’<sup>59</sup> Much of the youth in Morocco, amongst a very young population, perceive political parties to be corrupt and non-inclusive,<sup>60</sup> and as such youth voter registration and participation has been in steady decline over the past decade. Football clubs, though not on the ballot, receive a politically-engaged loyalty that parties do not. What is more, football clubs represent local focal points, as ‘auditoriums for community-specific matters’,<sup>61</sup> which exists in contrast to a feeling of distance and a lack of urgency that Moroccan partisan politics does little to remedy. Discontent with Morocco’s normalisation with Israel, and solidarity with Palestine, was demonstrated almost immediately in

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<sup>57</sup> Fans Chants, “*THE BEST CHANT OF THE WORLD (Kenitra AC – TODAY 13.12 AND FOREVER With Translation)*,” YouTube video, 1 March 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-OISOhkUZYY>

<sup>58</sup> Cox, Christopher J. “Morocco’s Marginalized Youth and the Rise of Football Ultras.” Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), November 15, 2022. Accessed October 19, 2025. <https://merip.org/2022/11/moroccos-marginalized-youth-and-the-rise-of-football-ultras/>.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

football stadiums on 8th October 2023,<sup>62</sup> with the resurrection of ‘Rajaoui Filistini’, an old chant and the subject of some viral videos from the Qatar World Cup in 2022.<sup>63</sup> The song laments the inaction of the Arab world against Israel and has become very famous across the region over the past two years, recently covered by Palestinian singer Zeyne, but it originated on a Raja Casablanca album by La Voce Della Magana.

*We won't forsake you, oh Gaza  
Even though we're far away  
Oh Rafah and Ramallah!  
Our ummah is sick  
They poisoned it with problems  
And governmental corruption  
The Arab is living in woe  
The future is dark  
Rajaoui are the voice of the oppressed people  
Who you do not hear*

Lyrics from Rajaoui Filistini by La Voce Della Magana, translated by Dounia El Barhdadi

### ***The Political Prioritisation of Football in Morocco***

Since Morocco's surprising victories at the 2022 Qatar World Cup, Morocco has commanded global respect within the football industry, yet its journey to success began long before 2022. Having failed to host the FIFA World Cup five times since 1994, Morocco was never taken seriously by the committee as a nation with neither the infrastructure to do so nor the sporting reputation. Morocco was, however, granted permission to host AFCON in 2015, but pulled out due to fears of the spread of the Ebola virus. This was met with disdain from neighbouring countries, and Morocco was not only fined EU 8 million, but the national team was banned from competing in the 2017 and 2019 AFCON tournaments in Gabon and Egypt.<sup>64</sup> The ban was later lifted by the court of arbitration for sport (CAS).<sup>65</sup> At the same time in July 2014, the Algerian national team was on its way to the quarter-finals of the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil, before getting knocked out by Germany after extra time. Algeria's impressive run elicited some jealousy from Moroccan football elites, who had not qualified for a FIFA World Cup since 1998, and not placed at AFCON since 1976.

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<sup>62</sup> *TikTok video by Middle East Eye*, “THE BEST CHANT OF THE WORLD (Kenitra AC – TODAY 13.12 AND FOREVER With Translation)”, TikTok video, length unknown, accessed October 31, 2025, <https://www.tiktok.com/@middleeasteye/video/7288313901861702944?lang=en-GB;> “Al Jazeera Spotlights Raja Casablanca Fans Emotional Chant for Palestine,” Morocco World News, October 2023, accessed October 31, 2025, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/10/27516/al-jazeera-spotlights-raja-casablanca-fans-emotional-chant-for-palestine/>.

<sup>63</sup> “Morocco's Ultras: It's 'Palestine First, Football Second',” *The New Arab*, accessed October 31, 2025, <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/moroccos-ultras-its-palestine-first-football-second#:~:text=One%20of%20his%20favourite%20chants,In-depth>.

<sup>64</sup> “Morocco World Cup Superpower?,” *The New York Times / The Athletic*, December 22, 2024, accessed October 25, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5989079/2024/12/22/morocco-world-cup-superpower/>.

<sup>65</sup> “Morocco's Ban from 2017 and 2019 Africa Cup of Nations Lifted by CAS.” *The Guardian*, April 2, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2015/apr/02/morocco-africa-cup-of-nations>

Therefore, what ensued was almost a decade of planning and spending on sporting infrastructure and making football a political priority, with Fouzi Lekjaa leading as President of the FRMF. A campaign to recruit diasporic talents from all over the world was launched, entitled ‘Bring Back Talents Belonging to the Soil’,<sup>66</sup> which yielded stars like Achraf Hakimi and Hakim Ziyech. Over USD 80 million was spent in the next two years, followed by USD 65 million on a state-of-the-art football academy just outside of Rabat, and then five more regional training centres before 2017,<sup>67</sup> well before the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. What is more, former President of the Confederation of African Football (CAF), Issa Hayatou, was ousted after 29 years due to a string of corruption allegations, replaced by Madagascar’s Ahmad Ahmad - later also ousted on charges of impropriety - and then followed by South Africa’s Patrice Motsepe. During the power struggle, Morocco offered to host CAF symposiums and other affiliated events, thus solidifying itself as a serious regional candidate. By 2022, Morocco had rehabilitated its image after the previous AFCON disappointment to such an extent that an entirely new, ‘underdog’ narrative was able to emerge in Qatar.

As the first Arab and African team to reach the World Cup Semi-Finals, Morocco’s success in 2022 marked a veritable shift in global perceptions of the nation. Their victories were even heralded as ‘a success against the ‘colonialists’’<sup>68</sup> which catalysed a brief era of ‘soft Arabism’,<sup>69</sup> whereby Arab solidarity flourished within the World Cup stadium despite conflicts between individual nations, like Yemen and Saudi Arabia, or Egypt and Algeria.

### ***Football as a Central Grievance of Gen Z 212***

By tracing its political legacy from the colonial era to Qatar in 2022, the significance of football in Moroccan culture and agency becomes evident, as does its provocative transformation from a sport of the people into a for-profit political tool, which operates at their expense.

While victims of the Al-Haouz earthquake in 2023 are still living in tents, living costs continue to rise, and youth unemployment reaches an unprecedented 39.5%,<sup>70</sup> the Moroccan government has spent over EU 900 million on six stadium renovations, and a further EU 470 million on the new Grande Stade de Casablanca.<sup>71</sup> Fouzi Lekjaa, mastermind behind Morocco’s rise to football fame, was elected to the FIFA council in 2021 and also appointed ‘Minister Delegate of the Budget’ by Prime Minister Akhannouch, ‘a role which essentially means he has the keys to the country’s safe’.<sup>72</sup> This appointment highlights the now-entrenched relationship between politics, economics

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<sup>66</sup> Mehmet Rakipoğlu and Ömer Ekrem Keçeci, “The Political Dimension of Morocco’s Success in the World Cup,” LSE Middle East Centre Blog, January 16, 2023, accessed October 25, 2025, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mec/2023/01/16/the-political-dimension-of-moroccos-success-in-the-world-cup/>.

<sup>67</sup> *The New York Times / The Athletic*, “Morocco World Cup Superpower?”

<sup>68</sup> Rakipoğlu and Keçeci, “Political Dimension of Morocco’s Success.”

<sup>69</sup> Khaled Hroub, “Why ‘Soft Arabism’ Is Thriving in Qatar’s World Cup,” *Middle East Eye*, December 2022, accessed October 25, 2025, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/qatar-world-cup-soft-arabism-thriving-why>.

<sup>70</sup> “Nizar Baraka: Youth Unemployment at 39.5% Shows Morocco’s Economic Crisis,” *Morocco World News*, January 2025, accessed October 25, 2025, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2025/01/165937/nizar-baraka-youth-unemployment-at-39-5-shows-moroccos-economic-crisis/>.

<sup>71</sup> Omar Kabbadj, “Hospitals versus Stadiums,” *Africa Is a Country*, October 2025, accessed October 25, 2025, <https://africasacountry.com/2025/10/hospitals-versus-stadiums>. Africa Is a Country

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

and football in Morocco today, given that Lekjaa has been deemed qualified to access the national budget based on nothing other than his role as the leader of the Moroccan football industry.

A deep sense of betrayal, therefore, underpins the Gen Z 212 movement, and is encapsulated by protestors' signs which read 'At least FIFA stadiums will have first aid kits—our hospitals don't' (Fig, 1) or 'Stadiums don't do surgery' (Fig, 2). Calls to boycott football games altogether, despite fraternal loyalty to the national team, also demonstrate a resentment and a desperation from the protestors which has been building for years, and which ultimately constitutes the poignant relocation of dissent from the football stadium to the streets.



Fig 1. BBC News, published 2 October 2025 (left)



Fig 2. @usualimages on Instagram, posted 4 October 2025 (right)

#### 4. The Politics of Spending

Morocco, the second African country to host the World Cup (WC), makes headlines in strategic investment in its national infrastructure and global sports development. Beyond prestige, it represents an opportunity to strengthen geopolitical ties, promote regional cooperation, and highlight Africa's growing role in global event management.<sup>73</sup> However, the event also reveals significant financial and developmental trade-offs. This section aims to answer the question: what is the financial scope of the WC investment, and what are its opportunity costs on essential social sectors amid fiscal reallocations?

The financial analysis provides an overview of Morocco's planned expenditure for co-hosting the 2030 FIFA World Cup. The investment is compared to key economic indicators, such as gross domestic product (GDP), public debt, and annual spending on health and education. These

<sup>73</sup> CAF Online, "Morocco confirmed as co-hosts of 2030 FIFA World Cup in historic move," December 11, 2024, <https://www.cafonline.com/fifa-world-cup/news/morocco-confirmed-as-co-hosts-of-2030-fifa-world-cup-in-historic-move>.

These numbers are sourced from the International Monetary Fund (IMF)<sup>74</sup> and the World Bank (WB).<sup>75</sup> Financial projections, including the world direct budget, public company contributions, and foreign loans are sourced from the Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis (MIPA).<sup>76</sup>

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Value (USD)</b>	<b>Source</b>
GDP (nominal), 2025 forecast	\$166.5 Billion	IMF (Oct'25 Report)
Total Project Cost	\$5.15 Billion	MIPA Institute
Direct Public Budget	\$2.48 Billion	MIPA Institute
Public Companies Contribution	\$1.68 Billion	MIPA Institute
Foreign Loans & Donations	\$0.99 Billion	MIPA Institute
Health Spending	5.7% of GDP	World Bank 2021
Education Spending	6.5% of GDP	World Bank 2022
Public Debt	68.7% of GDP	IMF (Oct'25 Report)

*Table 1 :Key Financial and Economic Data Inputs*

It is important to note that this data is compiled from various years based on availability; macroeconomic forecasts. Many of these figures are *estimates* and *projects* from external institutions (like the IMF, World Bank, and MIPA Institute) rather than final, audited figures from the government. They are the best available public data for modelling this future expenditure. To analyse the financial impact, it is important to establish the scale of Morocco's economy. This analysis uses the IMF's 2025 forecast, which projects a total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$166.5 billion. This frames the relative size of the WC investment. The total GDP figure does not define Morocco's development status. This context highlights that unlike high-income nations, Morocco is committing to a massive project while simultaneously managing its own financial and social demands.

In Table 1, Morocco's forecasted GDP of \$166.5 conveys it remains a developing, regional economy. The total project cost of \$5.15 billion represents the sum of all anticipated funding sources, including the direct public budget, contributions from public companies, and foreign loans and donations. Its public debt stands at 68.7% reflecting the pre-existing financial debt before calculating the impact of the WC expenditure. Moreover, table 1 highlights how the government dedicates over 6.5% and 5.7% of its GDP to education and health respectively. This is the central trade-off for Morocco: the government must fund a \$5.15 billion WC project while also managing high public debt and urgent demands for healthcare and education spending. In addition to these fiscal constraints, table 1 also highlights the complex strategy of funding the WC.

<sup>74</sup> International Monetary Fund, "Morocco - IMF DataMapper," accessed October 22, 2025, <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/profile/MAR>.

<sup>75</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), "Government expenditure on education, total (% of GDP) - Morocco," data on The World Bank Data, last updated September 2025, accessed October 22, 2025, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS?locations=MA>.

<sup>76</sup> MIPA Institute, "Economic Implications of Hosting the 2030 FIFA World Cup in Morocco," February 12, 2025, <https://mipa.institute/?p=11530&lang=en>.

Because it cannot fund the project entirely, Morocco is adopting a hybrid model by combining its public budget with public companies' contribution equating to \$2.48 billion and \$1.68 billion respectively. By leveraging public companies, the government can elevate the hardship off its national budget. Lastly, the almost \$1 billion foreign loans and donations increase the probability of currency and foreign debt.

<b>Calculated Metric</b>	<b>Result</b>
Total Project Cost as % of GDP	3.09%
Total Domestic Public Share as % of GDP	2.50%
Total Cost vs. Annual Health Spend	54.24%
Total Public Cost vs. Annual Ed. Spend	38.44%
Projected New Debt Ratio	71.20%

**Table 2:** Summary of Calculated Financial Impacts

In Table 2, it is evident that the total 2030 WC expenditure is equivalent to over 3% of Morocco's entire economic output for 2025. For a developing nation, 3% of its annual economic outcome is a strategic decision. It signals the WC as a central pillar to the national development strategy for the next decade. The strategy aligns with Amal El Fallah Seghrouchini, Morocco' Minister for Digital Transition and Administrative Reform's vision, who linked the WC investment to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The \$37 billion high-speed rail project and \$7.5 billion national port strategy highlight the focus on growth. While funded separately, these initiatives are projected to create thousands of construction jobs, enhance productivity and transportation, and improve trade and economic growth.<sup>77</sup> The improved infrastructure is expected to align with WC standards and help Morocco's recognition as an advanced digital and physical infrastructure. However, the table also reveals how the 2.5% domestic public share represents a direct fiscal trade-off. These funds could alternatively address pressing issues such as strengthening the healthcare system, reducing youth unemployment, or investing in rural development. This sense of scale is reinforced by comparing the investment to annual health spending. The magnitude of this investment is evident when compared to annual health spending, the WC budget exceeds half of Morocco's annual healthcare expenditure and nearly one-third of its education budget. Due to the unemployment rate of 22% in 2024,<sup>78</sup> raises questions of whether the same capital could yield greater long-term returns if invested in education and workforce youth development. Finally, the table showcases how Morocco's projected debt- to-GDP ratio is expected to rise from 68.7% to 71.2% of GDP, indicating a notable increase in national borrowing. The higher debt costs may constrain fiscal flexibility and pose challenges to achieving sustainable development and social equity goals as promised by the Minister of Digital Transition and Administrative Reform.<sup>79</sup>

### ***AFCON 2025 and World Cup 2030: Immediate versus Long-term Investments***

Hosting the FIFA World Cup is a considerable and complex undertaking. The demands imposed by the governing body FIFA extend well beyond the tournament itself, requiring a minimum

<sup>77</sup> Harry Clynch, "Morocco prepares for 2030 World Cup limelight," *African Business*, June 30, 2025, <https://african.business/2025/06/trade-investment/morocco-prepares-for-2030-world-cup-limelight>.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

number of stadiums (for past tournaments commonly seven or more) and significant infrastructure investment including transportation, hotels, fan areas, and conference facilities.<sup>80</sup>

Past tournaments demonstrate the varying fiscal and developmental impacts of such events. Germany's 2006 World Cup is often cited as a model of cost efficiency, largely because the country relied on pre-existing infrastructure, investing relatively little in new construction.<sup>81</sup> Many of the venues were simply renovated, allowing Germany to benefit from increased tourism and international visibility without accruing excessive debt.<sup>82</sup>

By contrast, South Africa's 2010 and Brazil's 2014 tournaments required extensive new building projects. South Africa spent an estimated R33 billion (\$4.3 billion),<sup>83</sup> much of it on stadium construction, yet several of these venues remain under-used.<sup>84</sup> Brazil's investment exceeded \$40 billion, and despite a surge in tourism during the event, the economic benefits proved fleeting; many facilities have since become financial burdens.<sup>85</sup> These examples underscore the importance of long-term planning and sustainable utilisation of infrastructure.

Learning from past experiences, FIFA's selection of Spain, Portugal, and Morocco as co-hosts for the 2030 World Cup represents a new model of shared responsibility. Spain plans to invest approximately €1.43 billion in renovating its stadiums and infrastructure, with an estimated €5 billion in projected revenue during the tournament period.<sup>86</sup> Portugal, benefiting from its prior investment for Euro 2004, intends to limit spending to renovation and modernisation, expecting an economic impact exceeding €800 million and a substantial increase in tourism.<sup>87</sup>

Morocco, however, faces a different situation. With fewer existing large-capacity stadiums, the country will invest heavily in new construction. Its projected expenditure stands at \$5–6 billion.<sup>88</sup> Morocco has framed its hosting of the 2030 World Cup as part of its broader national

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<sup>79</sup> Lehman, Jonathan. "Hosting the FIFA World Cup: An Economic Analysis of How the Tournament Places Demands on Infrastructure and Resources" (Master's thesis, University of Lynchburg, 2021), 12, <https://digitalshowcase.lynchburg.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1159&context=utpc>

<sup>81</sup> Gerd Ahlert, "Assessing the Impact of the FIFA World Cup Germany 2006™: Some Methodological and Empirical Reflections," Discussion Paper 2007/2 (Osnabrück: Gesellschaft für Wirtschaftliche Strukturforchung, 2007), <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/94418/1/gws-paper07-2.pdf>

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 5–6

<sup>83</sup> Seria, Nisreen and Cohen, Mike. "Soccer World Cup to Boost South African GDP by 0.5% in 2010", *Bloomberg*, February 17, 2020. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2010-02-17/soccer-world-cup-to-boost-south-african-gdp-by-0-5-in-2010?embedded-checkout=true>

<sup>84</sup> "From 1994 to 2020: the Economic Legacy of the World Cup," *World Finance*, last modified 2020, <https://www.worldfinance.com/strategy/from-1994-to-2020-the-economic-legacy-of-the-world-cup>

<sup>85</sup> Simon Chadwick, "The Economics of Hosting the World Cup and Why the U.S. Should Invest," *EcoDev Strategies*, 15 November 2021, <https://ecodevstrategies.com/2021/11/the-economics-of-hosting-the-world-cup-and-why-the-u-s-should-invest>

<sup>86</sup> Calmet, Alexandre, "The 2030 FIFA World Cup and Commercial Real Estate in Morocco, Spain and Portugal: Opportunities for Institutional Investors", DLA Piper, February 25, 2025. <https://www.dlapiper.com/en/insights/publications/real-estate-gazette/real-estate-gazette-the-2030-fifa-world-cup/the-2030-fifa-world-cup-and-commercial-real-estate-in-morocco-spain>

<sup>87</sup> The Portugal News, "2030 World Cup to Bring €800 Million to Portugal", December 14, 2024. <https://www.theportugalnews.com/news/2024-12-14/2030-world-cup-to-bring-800-million-to-portugal/94217>

<sup>88</sup> Faouzi, Adil, "2030 World Cup: Is Morocco's Economy Ready for a \$5 Billion Event?", *Morocco World News*, December 24, 2024.

development strategy, aiming for six percent economic growth by 2035, 26 million tourists by 2030, and a doubling of GDP to US\$260 billion by 2035.<sup>89</sup>

The centrepiece of Morocco's sporting infrastructure will be the new Grand Stade Hassan II in Benslimane, near Casablanca with a 115,000-seat stadium expected to cost around MAD 5 billion (approximately \$500 million).<sup>90</sup> Alongside this, five existing stadiums in Rabat, Tangier, Casablanca, Marrakech, and Fes are being renovated for both the 2025 AFCON and the 2030 World Cup.<sup>91</sup>

Transportation improvements are also integral to Morocco's preparations. Investments totalling MAD 12.5 billion (\$1.3 billion) are planned for highway expansion between 2025 and 2032, while upgrades to airports, notably in Casablanca and high-speed rail connections are intended to enhance inter-city mobility.<sup>92</sup>

The government's hotel modernisation programme provides loans of up to US\$10 million per establishment, covering interest payments through 2025, with a goal of renovating 25,000 rooms and attracting investments exceeding MAD 4 billion (US\$400 million).<sup>93</sup> Royal Air Maroc, the national carrier, has announced the expansion of its fleet from 50 to more than 200 aircraft to accommodate the expected increase in visitors.<sup>94</sup> In addition, major urban development projects, including new commercial centres, healthcare facilities, and public transport systems are under way in host cities.

According to government projections, each match could generate between \$25 million and \$37.5 million in economic activity, with a total direct benefit of \$1.2 billion.<sup>95</sup> The World Cup is expected to contribute between 0.6 percent and 0.9 percent to GDP growth during 2024–2030, create 200,000–250,000 direct and indirect jobs, and increase tourism revenues by up to 80 percent by 2030.<sup>96</sup> Morocco aims to ensure the longevity of these investments by integrating commercial and leisure facilities into stadium complexes, transforming them into community hubs

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> *Reuters*. "Morocco's Largest World Cup Stadium to Be Ready by 2027, Official Says", 22 January 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/sports/soccer/moroccos-largest-world-cup-stadium-be-ready-by-2027-official-says-2025-01-22/>

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> "Morocco Launches \$10 Billion Rail Expansion Plan," *Reuters*, 24 April 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/morocco-launches-10-billion-rail-expansion-plan-2025-04-24/>

<sup>93</sup> "Morocco allocates multi-billion dirham budget for 2030 World Cup infrastructure plan," *Hespress English*, 26 June 2024, <https://en.hespress.com/87048-morocco-allocates-multi-billion-dirham-budget-for-2030-world-cup-infrastructure-plan.html>

<sup>94</sup> *Bladi.net*. "Royal Air Maroc Soars: Massive Fleet Expansion Targets 200 Aircraft for World Cup 2030", August 29, 2025. <https://en.bladi.net/royal-air-maroc-soars-massive-fleet-expansion-targets-200-aircraft-world-cup,116557.html>

<sup>95</sup> Faouzi, Adil. "Report: 2030 World Cup Expected to Boost Morocco's Economy by \$1.2 Billion", *Morocco World News*, March 21, 2024. [https://www.morocroworldnews.com/2024/03/21790/report-2030-world-cup-expected-to-boost-moroccos-economy-by-1-2-billion/#:~:text=Report:%202030%20World%20Cup%20Expected%20to%20Boost%20Morocco's%20Economy%20by%20\\$1.2%20Billion](https://www.morocroworldnews.com/2024/03/21790/report-2030-world-cup-expected-to-boost-moroccos-economy-by-1-2-billion/#:~:text=Report:%202030%20World%20Cup%20Expected%20to%20Boost%20Morocco's%20Economy%20by%20$1.2%20Billion)

<sup>96</sup> "2030 World Cup: Is Morocco's Economy Ready for a \$5 Billion Event?", *Morocco World News*, 24 December 2024, <https://www.morocroworldnews.com/2024/12/166801/2030-world-cup-is-moroccos-economy-ready-for-a-5-billion-event/>

beyond the tournament. Morocco's anticipated \$5–6 billion budget will be financed through a combination of domestic and international sources. Approximately MAD 25 billion will come from the general state budget between 2024 and 2030, mainly for stadiums and training centres.<sup>97</sup> A further MAD 17 billion will be contributed by state-owned enterprises for infrastructure and transport projects, supported by loans and private-debt instruments facilitated through SEGMA (State-Owned Enterprises and Government-Managed Administrative Entities).<sup>98</sup> The remaining MAD 10 billion is expected to derive from concessional foreign loans, international grants, and financial aid from partner countries.<sup>99</sup>

The financial risks remain significant despite the potential economic gain for the country. The experiences of South Africa and Brazil highlight the dangers of over-building and under-utilisation. The success of Morocco's strategy will depend on rigorous project management, adherence to timelines, and the ability to ensure that new facilities are sustainably used after the event. If executed effectively, however, the 2030 World Cup could serve as a catalyst for national modernisation, tourism expansion, and urban renewal across the kingdom.

### ***How Timing of AFCON 2025 Amplified State Urgency***

Despite the fact that the Confederation of African Football (CAF) does not demand the same exceedingly high standards of stadiums and facilities as the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), Morocco's situation is markedly different. For the 2030 World Cup, which the country is set to co-host, where all the stadiums are currently under renovation in preparation for the upcoming Africa Cup of Nations 2025 (AFCON), which is set to begin in late December 2025.<sup>100</sup> This dual obligation has placed considerable pressure on both the government and local authorities to complete upgrades on time.

Morocco plans to use nine stadiums for AFCON 2025, including an expanded Grand Stade de Tanger, which will reach a capacity of 75,000 seats, and a renovated Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium in Rabat, seating 70,000 spectators.<sup>101</sup> Analysts have reported that the budget allocated for AFCON preparations has already been exceeded, highlighting both the financial strain and the ambitious scale of the undertaking.<sup>102</sup> These stadium upgrades are not merely technical necessities; they are tied to Morocco's broader ambition of presenting itself as a modern sporting nation on the continental and global stage.

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<sup>97</sup> "Economic Implications of Hosting the 2030 FIFA World Cup: Morocco's Share and Funding Sources," MIPA Institute, 12 February 2025, <https://mipa.institute/?lang=en&p=11530>

<sup>98</sup> "Morocco's World Cup Gamble: Will the 2030 Tournament Pay Off?," *The Africa Report*, 6 June 2025, <https://www.theafricareport.com/385580/moroccos-world-cup-gamble-will-the-2030-tournament-pay-off/>

<sup>99</sup> "Morocco's Mega-Event Strategy: A Winning Move or Risky Gamble?," *Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit*, 24 October 2024, <https://www.freiheit.org/fr/morocco/moroccos-mega-event-strategy-winning-move-or-risky-gamble>

<sup>100</sup> "2025 AFCON/2030 WC: Government, CDG Fund Sign Partnership Agreement to Upgrade Six Football Stadiums, Build New One," *Hespress EN*, 20 October 2023, <https://en.hespress.com/73097-2025-afcon-2030-wc-govt-cdg-sign-agreement-to-upgrade-6-football-stadiums-build-new-one.html>

<sup>101</sup> "Nine stadiums chosen for next Africa Cup of Nations finals in Morocco," *Reuters*, 27 January 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/sports/soccer/nine-stadiums-chosen-next-africa-cup-nations-finals-morocco-2025-01-27/>

<sup>102</sup> "Morocco's budget for AFCON 2025 exceeds projections," *Morocco World News*, 15 March 2025, <https://www.morocroworldnews.com/2025/03/191367/morocco-budget-afcon-2025-exceeds-projections/>

These preparations are unfolding against the backdrop of widespread social unrest. The GenZ 212 Movement has been calling attention to longstanding socio-economic grievances, and the timing of the AFCON has amplified their sense of urgency. In spite of CAF's assurance that the ongoing protests will not interfere with the tournament, demonstrators have called for a boycott of AFCON 2025. This call intensified following the King's recent address to Parliament, in which he emphasised national development and investment in various sectors, but did not reference the ongoing protests or the grievances raised by the youth.<sup>103</sup>

The protests have already drawn attention due to the combination of heavy-handed repression, deaths during demonstrations, and mass arrests, which has only strengthened the determination of the activists to link their movement to the tournament. The proximity of the AFCON, a highly visible international event provides a powerful symbolic platform, allowing the protesters to amplify their demands and draw international attention to their cause.<sup>104</sup> In this context, the upcoming tournament is not just a sporting event; it is also a political lens through which domestic frustrations are being highlighted and negotiated.

Morocco finds itself navigating a delicate balancing act: meeting the technical and financial demands of staging two major tournaments in rapid succession while managing an assertive youth movement demanding social and political reform. The tension between these imperatives underscores the wider challenge of hosting mega-events in a context of political unrest, where sporting glory and civic dissent coexist uneasily.

## **5. Implications for Governance and International Image**

The recent protests have emerged as a critical test for Morocco's domestic stability and its international posture. The Gen Z movement put to trial the boundaries of freedom of expression in the kingdom and its tolerance to dissent. The government initially opted for a heavy-handed approach to quickly repress the movement which has proven counterproductive. From bans on demonstrations to the use of force to disperse gatherings, the repressive actions have failed to deter protesters. The early handling of the protests alarmed human rights organisations that quickly condemned the use of excessive force and the arrests of minors for peaceful demonstrations. According to Human Rights Watch, figures indicated that nearly 1000 people were arrested during the first two weeks. At least 270 of them, including 39 minors, are facing criminal charges from the public prosecution. The unrest was exceptionally clear in underserved rural towns where frustrations ran deepest. For example, in the agricultural town of Ait Amira, protests took a violent turn. Long standing grievances in regions like the Rif resonate strongly with Gen Z 212 demands of social justice as these regions have suffered for decades from chronic underdevelopment to the point that the people of these provinces feel abandoned by the state. It is important to note that the use of the term "revolution" in the Moroccan context is not neutral,<sup>105</sup> as it carries considerable political weight. It represents an implicit challenge to the legitimacy of the monarchy, the central pillar of the Moroccan state and its national identity.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Sara Zouiten, "Moroccan Lawyers Club Files Complaint Against Nobel Laureate for Inciting Violence," *Morocco World News*, October 27, 2025, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2025/10/265354/moroccan-lawyers-club-files-complaint-against-nobel-laureate-for-inciting-violence/>

It also holds a symbolic value as the King holds the title of “Commander of the faithful”. Therefore, many Moroccans and particularly the pro-monarchy ones perceive the term as unsettling and provocative. A clear example of this sensitivity was the reaction to Tawakkol Karman’s Facebook post which said the following: “The protests in Morocco are approaching the palace. Glory to the revolutionary Moroccan people.”<sup>106</sup> Following the statement, the Club of Lawyers in Morocco filed a criminal complaint against the Yemeni activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner, accusing her of inciting violence and terrorism.<sup>107</sup> The incident highlights how narrow the boundaries of permissible dissent in Morocco are; any calls for systemic change or anti-royal movement are considered as a crossing to the red line.

Moreover, the protests exposed the serious disconnection between the youth and the government. No parties or unions were behind this movement, showing the lack of trust in traditional institutions and traditional channels of dialogue. The Gen Z 212 movement came in an unprecedented form of social mobilisation in Morocco challenging the government’s decision-making centres and disrupting the traditional patterns of political activism.<sup>108</sup> The political establishment is facing a legitimacy challenge from the younger citizens who see it as elitist and unrepresentative of the people and their ambitions. In other words, the young citizens of Morocco are reshaping a new form of activism in the nation, a form that is independent from ideologies and political parties, with concrete demands rooted in socioeconomic grievances. This represents a major shift in civic engagement and in Moroccan politics. In response and in the long run, the government needs to address this challenge by introducing new modes of youth engagement to bridge the gap. Any missed chance to do so might have strong consequences in the future, ranging from more intense protests to extensive migration.

While hosting such events is meant to showcase the country’s progress and stability internationally, the movement alters the narrative by highlighting the reality of the situation behind these events; a deep-seated inequality and dissent behind the shiny new stadiums. Negative press coverage could also overshadow Morocco’s posture and the fundamental message that was meant to be sent during the tournament. The protests also raised questions about the country’s readiness to host an important continental event such as the AFCON 2025 and whether the heated popular atmosphere would affect the course of the tournament. In international sporting circles, Moroccan and African officials have been keen to dispel any fears that the tournament will be affected by the protests. The president of the Confederation of African Football (CAF), Patrice Motsepe, has clearly stated that there’s absolutely zero chance to transfer the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations from Morocco despite the ongoing protests, asserting with confidence that “Morocco is plan A, Morocco is plan B, and Morocco is plan C.”<sup>109</sup> Despite the clear public support shown by

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<sup>106</sup> Sara Zouiten, “Moroccan Lawyers Club Files Complaint against Nobel Laureate for Inciting Violence,” Morocco World News, October 27, 2025, “Why is Nobel Peace Laureate Glorifying Unrest, Inciting Against the Monarchy?,” Morocco World News, October 8, 2025, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2025/10/262684/why-is-nobel-peace-laureate-glorifying-unrest-inciting-against-the-monarchy/>.

<sup>107</sup> Sara Zouiten, “Moroccan Lawyers Club Files Complaint against Nobel Laureate for Inciting Violence,” Morocco World News, October 27, 2025, “Moroccan Lawyers Club Files Complaint Against Nobel Laureate for Inciting Violence,” Morocco World News, October 27, 2025, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2025/10/265354/moroccan-lawyers-club-files-complaint-against-nobel-laureate-for-inciting-violence/>.

<sup>108</sup> Basma El Atti, “World Cup vs. Health: What Does Gen Z Want in Morocco Protests?,” *The New Arab*, September 30, 2025, <https://www.newarab.com/news/world-cup-vs-health-what-does-gen-z-want-morocco-protests>

<sup>109</sup> *France 24*, “African Football Boss Patrice Motsepe ‘Absolutely Confident’ 2025 AFCON Will Go Ahead in Morocco,” October 6, 2025, <https://www.france24.com/en/sport/20251006-african-football-afcon-2025-morocco24>

the officials, the fact that the highest football authorities were obliged to make these statements and answer these questions indicates that Morocco's reputation and ability to host major events became in question. The unrest also raises questions about stability and security during the course of the tournament. If protests continue into the AFCON, the authorities will be under heavy pressure to ensure the safety of visitors. Calls for tournament boycott could also hurt Morocco's public image. In contrast, a smooth peaceful tournament would bolster the image of Morocco as a host.

Additionally, global media coverage of the movement has highlighted the contrast between official narratives of progress and persistent social inequalities. The protests served as a wake-up call for the government and its development model usually praised for high growth; that is not evenly distributed.<sup>110</sup> In response, the government already signalled some shifts as officials have acknowledged the sincerity of protests' demands and vowed for social reforms.<sup>111</sup>

### ***Emerging Internet Narratives***

Global media coverage has exposed not only contrasts between state-sanctioned and popular narratives but also contrasts between diasporic internet narratives and those pushed by the protestors themselves. Several content creators with Moroccan heritage, most notably Ifri (@guerillacouscous), a TikToker who makes historio-political videos about the Maghreb, the Imazighen and colonialism - have voiced concerns of ulterior motives at play. Speaking mainly in Moroccan Darija, but occasionally in English to reach a wider audience, she has warned her followers about the dangers of potentially destabilising Morocco, and offered her thoughts on who would benefit for such an occurrence. She is not the only internet personality to express scepticism about the genesis of the protests, a scepticism which seems to be largely concerned with foreign Discord agents, Algerian or Western, attempting to stage a coup in Morocco.

She cites comments from bots on Instagram, TikTok and other social media platforms calling for a 'revolution', which is not a term being used in official 212 media, nor is it something which many in Morocco see as a solution to their grievances. Reform is the objective, rather than revolution; protestors seek to remove the Prime Minister, rather than the king. Across several videos, Ifri makes the argument that this 'poorly-executed Western coup' is an attempt to install foreign military bases in the Maghreb, and use escalating, violent protest as a justification for intervention. She goes on to explain potential motivations for interventions, some of which have gained traction online and caused concern, especially given the MENA region's difficult history with foreign intervention.

Global media's anarchist framing of the protests supports Ifri's hypothesis somewhat, as images of cars on fire and looted shops dominated the news, despite the riots being confined to Agadir and Oujda. News outlets outside of Morocco also declined to report on the massive clean-up marches mobilised by the Gen Z 212 organisers in order to maintain public respect and show good

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<sup>110</sup> Ahmed Eljehtimi and Alexander Dziadosz, "Youth-led unrest exposes cracks in Morocco's economic model," *Reuters*, October 6, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/youth-led-unrest-exposes-cracks-morocco-economic-model-2025-10-06/>

<sup>111</sup> *France 24*, "Morocco vows social reforms after youth-led protests shake government," October 19, 2025, <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20251019-morocco-social-reforms-protests-government>

faith.<sup>112</sup> Instead, in footage now removed from the Internet, one Spanish media outlet compared the riots in Agadir to the destruction in Gaza, pushing an ingovernable narrative, and a year-old video of a gas factory in Mohammedia exploding was presented as a video of rioters setting off bombs in Agadir.

On 4 September 2025, Business Insider Africa published an article detailing a large gold discovery in Morocco's southern region of Guelmim, declaring the discovery 'a decisive step towards joining Africa's leading gold producers.'<sup>113</sup> In the same month, multiple news outlets reported that China had invested USD 5.6 billion into a battery gigafactory in Kenitra, the first of its kind on the continent.<sup>114</sup> The factory will place Morocco at the forefront of the global race for clean energy, alleviate reliance on foreign energy imports, and provide a strategic bridge between China, Europe and Africa. What is more, the EU has announced plans to eliminate all Russian gas imports by 2026, as part of a sanctions package on President Putin for his full-scale invasion of Ukraine.<sup>115</sup> Taking into account that Morocco is home to 70% of the world's phosphate reserves,<sup>116</sup> some internet-users are convinced that the protests are a ploy to establish a foreign base in Morocco, access the gold deposits, sabotage the gigafactory, and profit from Algeria's oil just across the border. Some Algerians have even gone so far as to propose that the Moroccan protests were started just to spread them to Algeria, destabilise Algeria and take advantage of Sonatrach, Algeria's national oil company.

Comments like Fig. 3 and 4 were seen all over the comment sections of social media posts pertaining to the Gen Z protests in mid-October, though many have been deleted now. At first, they appeared sporting Moroccan flags, always beginning with a lament about the lack of bread and water or a 'glossy postcard' fantasy, and ending with a call to revolt. Within a week, the same comments filled any post hash-tagged #free\_koulchi, but referencing inequality and discontent in Algeria instead. This evolution supported some people's theory that the protests were meant for Algeria from the beginning, but some Moroccans claimed that actually the protests were begun by Algerians or members of the Polisario Front posing as Moroccans on Discord, intending to destabilise Morocco just ahead of the implementation of the Western Sahara Autonomy Plan, which is backed by powerful nations like France, the UK and the USA.

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<sup>112</sup> "GENZ212 Launches Civic Clean-Up Campaign after Riots Overlap with Peaceful Protest," *Morocco World News*, October 2025, accessed October 25, 2025, [https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2025/10/261514/genz212-launches-civic-clean-up-campaign-after-riots-overlap-with-peaceful-protest/#google\\_vignette](https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2025/10/261514/genz212-launches-civic-clean-up-campaign-after-riots-overlap-with-peaceful-protest/#google_vignette).

<sup>113</sup> Solomon Ekanem, "Morocco Breaks into Africa's Gold Powerhouses with Discovery of High-Grade Deposits," *Business Insider Africa*, September 4, 2025, accessed October 25, 2025, <https://africa.businessinsider.com/local/markets/morocco-breaks-into-africas-gold-powerhouses-with-discovery-of-high-grade-deposits/lpb09bp>.

<sup>114</sup> Basma El Atti, "China Bets on Morocco to Lead Africa's Energy Future," *The New Arab*, September 18, 2025, accessed October 25, 2025, <https://www.newarab.com/news/china-bets-morocco-lead-africas-energy-future>.

<sup>115</sup> Politico Europe, "EU Sanctions Russia: Gas, Banks, Crypto, LNG, US President Donald Trump, War," *Politico Europe*, (date), accessed October 25, 2025, <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-sanctions-russia-gas-banks-crypto-lng-us-president-donald-trump-war/>.

<sup>116</sup> OCP Group, "What Is Phosphate?" *OCP Group*, accessed October 31, 2025, <https://www.ocpgroup.ma/what-is-phosphate>.

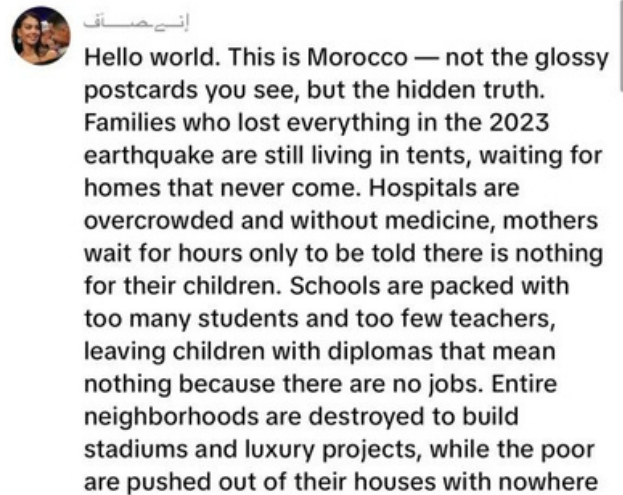


Fig. 3 and 4, from TikTok, screenshotted 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025

## 6. Reframing Youth Mobilisation: Global Patterns of Gen Z Protests and Demands

The Gen Z 212 protest wave in Morocco, while rooted in local grievances, falls within shifting global patterns of youth mobilisation and engagement with politics. Gen Z-led protests throughout the world have demonstrated that youth are largely moving beyond traditional political channels and ideologies, with high levels of distrust in political elites and parties and other traditional governmental institutions.<sup>117</sup> Rather than being guided by abstract political ideology, recent youth movements have mobilised around concrete and pragmatic demands such as improved service delivery and tangible steps to reduce socioeconomic inequality. In this pattern, Gen Z prioritises functional fairness, where issues such as healthcare, education, employment and dignity are prioritised over spectacle politics<sup>118</sup> and elite party competition.

Gen Z's political stance is reformist: they seek accountability and better delivery from within existing institutional frameworks, not necessarily through wholesale regime overthrow. The same shift is visible across the different contexts, where digitally networked youth evaluate governments by outcomes rather than rhetoric and prefer responsiveness over representation as a measure of legitimacy. These features link Morocco's movement to parallel youth-driven protests in other contexts such as Nepal and Madagascar where local triggers differ, but the underlying claims revolve around social justice and equality expressed through a shared digital culture.

### *Comparative Lens: Nepal and Madagascar*

Viewed comparatively, Morocco's GenZ 212 protests align closely with youth-led uprisings in Nepal and Madagascar, both in style and in substance. Each movement emerged from distinct domestic grievances: social-media censorship in Nepal, water and power outages in Madagascar,

<sup>117</sup> Medameek, جيل زد... نحو مسارات جديدة للتغيير الأفرريقي, October 9, 2025. <https://www.medameek.com/?p=185339>

<sup>118</sup> Zaaami, Sarah. "Bread and Circuses' no More: Morocco's Gen Z Rejects Spectacle Politics", *The Atlantic Council*, October 7, 2025. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/bread-and-circuses-no-more-moroccos-gen-z-rejects-spectacle-politics/>

and fiscal and health injustice in Morocco. Yet, they all converged around a shared generational ethic of social justice and equality.

In Nepal, the government's temporary social media ban served as an immediate trigger, but the protests quickly broadened into a moral indictment of corruption, generational exclusion from decision-making and income inequality. Young Nepalese, many of whom face chronic unemployment and rising living costs, viewed the ban as symbolic of an older elite silencing a young, digital generation. In Madagascar, youth anger focused on poor service delivery, mainly inconsistent provision of electricity and water. In this context as well, the poor provision of basic services stood as a symbol for larger systemic issues such as government corruption and poverty, with 75% of the country living in poverty.<sup>119</sup> Despite their different national contexts, protest movements in Morocco, Nepal and Madagascar share three thematic anchors:

- 1. Economic justice:** Widespread resentment at governments perceived to prioritise prestige or patronage projects over basic needs. Gen Z protestors often also widely criticise economic system that serve an elite upper class, which often is tied directly to the political class.
- 2. Equality and dignity:** insistence that citizenship must deliver fair access to opportunity and respect.
- 3. Moral legitimacy:** protest framed less as opposition politics than as an ethical correction to systems that have lost credibility.

### ***Distrust of Traditional Institutions***

Central to the ethos of protests in Morocco, and indeed many Gen Z protests throughout the world, is distrust of traditional political institutions and structures, closely connected to existing economic systems that Gen Z also view unfavourably as they increasingly criticise wealth gaps in their countries. In Morocco, several public opinion studies have documented a steady decline in trust in national political institutions amongst all age demographics, but at especially higher rates amongst youth demographics. The 2019 Arab Barometer found that 81% of Moroccans aged 18 to 29 believed there were significant levels of corruption within the government, while only 49% of Moroccans over the age of 60 believed the same.<sup>120</sup> The same survey found similar generational gaps in perceptions; only 17% of youth under 29 reported they trusted parliament, compared to 38% of Moroccans 60 and over.<sup>121</sup> Driven by dissatisfaction with state systems and poor economic outlook, 47% of youth under 29 reported considering leaving Morocco, compared to 29% of Moroccans 30 and over in 2024.<sup>122</sup>

A 2022 national survey in Nepal also observed similar findings. While data disaggregated by age is not available, the survey revealed that political parties, provincial governments and federal government were the three least trusted institutions in the country, with each institution trusted

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<sup>119</sup> *Swamp*. "Protests in Madagascar: A Struggle for Basic Services and Government Accountability", *Swamp*, October 25, 2025. <https://vocal.media/theSwamp/protests-in-madagascar-a-struggle-for-basic-services-and-government-accountability>

<sup>120</sup> Arab Barometer, "Morocco Country Report 2019", June 27, 2019. [https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABV\\_Morocco\\_Report\\_Public-Opinion\\_Arab-Barometer\\_2019.pdf](https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABV_Morocco_Report_Public-Opinion_Arab-Barometer_2019.pdf)

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>122</sup> Arab Barometer, "Morocco Country Report 2024", May 18, 2024. [https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABVII\\_Morocco\\_Report-ENG.pdf](https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABVII_Morocco_Report-ENG.pdf)

by 44%, 51.6% and 56.2% of Nepalese respondents respectively. Notably, levels of trust in these three institutions all decreased over multiple iterations of the survey since 2017. In contrast, 62.9% trusted social media, 69.3% trusted local community leaders and 71.7% trusted NGOs, all outside of the state structure.<sup>123</sup>

The aversion to traditional political structures strengthens the horizontal organisational structure of the Gen Z protests. Having a horizontal structure with no clear leaders is especially critical in states with high levels of online surveillance, which in turn drives further distrust in political establishments. As previously discussed, protestors in Morocco as well as Nepal leveraged Discord as the main social media platform for discussion and mobilisation. Discord's technical design, which provides higher levels of privacy in comparison to other platforms, lends itself to the formation of truly leaderless movements as users can engage in debates, voting and rapid mobilisation without constant fear of detection by governments.

While the Gen Z 212 movement and others benefit from the freedom that Discord features provide, these same features can also be exploited by spoilers as well as government actors attempting to infiltrate through posing as genuine protestors. Discord's high levels of anonymity make it difficult for genuine organisers to filter out noise and disinformation and thwart attempts at government surveillance. Given these challenges, attempts by some users to transform the movement into an official political party were met with suspicion by many, driven by an overall distrust of the political system as well as an awareness of potential attempts to subvert the movement. Many users rejected such attempts fearing co-optation and partisan labelling that may undermine the movement's apolitical nature.<sup>124</sup>

### ***Political Expression through Popular Culture and Memes***

A vivid emblem of the international Gen Z protests is the One Piece flag, an anime reference that has appeared in protests from Rabat to Kathmandu. The use of the One Piece flag in Morocco's protests is part of a wider generational phenomenon that extends across continents. From Asia to Africa, Gen Z demonstrators have adopted the skull-and-straw-hat Jolly Roger as a visual shorthand for defiance, moral clarity, and solidarity. What began as a beloved anime icon has evolved into a global symbol of youthful revolt. In Nepal and Madagascar the flag appeared on protest banners as an emblem of rebellion against corrupt elites and government hypocrisy, while in Morocco it became a moral mirror held up to power, demanding dignity, social justice, and accountability rather than spectacle and prestige politics.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Kathmandu University, Interdisciplinary Analysts and The Asia Foundation. "A Survey of the Nepali People in 2022: ational Brief", 2022. <https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/A-Survey-of-the-Nepali-People-2022.pdf>

<sup>124</sup> *Al Estiklal*. "From Gaming App to Youth Uprising: How Discord Became the Voice of Morocco's Gen Z", October 17, 2025. <https://www.alestiklal.net/en/article/from-gaming-app-to-youth-uprising-how-discord-became-the-voice-of-morocco-s-gen-z>

<sup>125</sup> France 24. "How the 'One Piece' Manga has Become a Global Symbol of Gen Z Revolt", October 6, 2025. <https://www.france24.com/en/asia-pacific/20251006-one-piece-manga-revolt-morocco-indonesia-nepal-madagascar>



Fig 5: Modified One Piece flag with green Moroccan star, originally found on Reddit, sourced through France 24.



Figure 6: Modified version of the flag appearing in protests in Madagascar, sourced through Indian Express.

The resonance of One Piece lies in its narrative ethos. Luffy, the anime’s protagonist, fights against the oppressive “World Government”, paralleling Gen Z’s own confrontation with entrenched power and inequality.<sup>126</sup> Protesters interpret his story not as fiction but as a moral allegory: pirates standing for truth against corrupt institutions. This reinterpretation reflects how Gen Z translates cultural familiarity into political language. For a generation raised in digital worlds, moral meaning is often conveyed through shared imagery and pop cultural references rather than ideology. The One Piece flag thus functions as an international symbol through which dispersed youth articulate common values of justice.

While earlier generations relied on symbols rooted in specific ideological or national contexts, the V for Vendetta mask during the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street, or the three-finger salute from The Hunger Games adopted by pro-democracy movements in

Thailand, Gen Z’s use of the One Piece flag reflects a shift toward borderless moral expression. The previous symbols were powerful precisely because they drew from clear political frameworks: opposition to authoritarianism, calls for democratic reform, or national self-determination. By contrast, the One Piece Jolly Roger has no fixed ideology or geography. It circulates freely across countries as a shared emblem of integrity, justice, and resistance to corruption. This evolution marks a broader generational transition, from protest imagery grounded in local political narratives to a new aesthetic of global solidarity and moral universality. The image’s migration from protests in Asia to global prominence reveals solidarity: an affirmation that young people across different systems are engaged in parallel struggles for fairness and integrity. Similar dynamics are visible elsewhere in Africa, where Gen Z-led protests in countries such as Senegal and Kenya have paired digital mobilisation with justice-based demands, echoing the same reformist and leaderless energy seen in Morocco.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>126</sup> The Guardian. “The Guardian View on Gen Z Protest: These Movements Share More Than an Interest in Anime”, October 12, 2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/oct/12/the-guardian-view-on-gen-z-protests-these-movements-share-more-than-an-interest-in-anime>

<sup>127</sup> Altawil, Amani, “جيل زد... نحو مسارات جديدة للتغيير الأفريقي” Medameek, October 9, 2025. <https://www.medameek.com/?p=185339>

The symbolic potency of *One Piece* is also grounded in emotion. It represents an ethical rebellion rooted in empathy and humour, rather than hostility. In this sense, the flag embodies a generation's redefinition of political engagement, less about seizing power than about reclaiming meaning. The pirates' camaraderie and moral conviction encapsulate the same collective identity that Morocco's youth express online through Discord and TikTok channels. This interplay between moral storytelling and digital community forms the cornerstone of Gen Z's political expression.

### ***Meme Culture as Political Expression***

Memes and short-form visual content have become the central medium through which Gen Z interprets and contests power. Like editorial cartoons in earlier eras, political memes now perform the dual role of critique and mobilisation, transforming satire into an accessible instrument of civic participation.<sup>128</sup> Their power lies in speed, humour, and participation: any user can remix a meme, infusing it with irony, frustration, or moral commentary. This participatory quality has turned meme production into a digital commons of resistance, where Gen Z bypasses traditional gatekeepers of opinion.

In Morocco, as in many parts of the world, this meme-based political expression has blurred the boundaries between culture and activism. On social media platforms, protest slogans, viral jokes, and anime references circulate simultaneously as entertainment and dissent. This reflects a broader psychological function, humour as both defiance and coping mechanism in the face of crisis. Political satire allows youth to assert agency and dignity under conditions of censorship or despair. As seen globally, from the "World War III" meme trend to the remixing of protest images into humorous formats, digital irony enables youth to critique authority without overt confrontation, turning laughter into a form of survival and connection.

Memes' virality, however, also exposes their fragility. Their immediacy and speed can dilute nuance, collapsing complex political grievances into fleeting symbols. Yet even within this volatility, Gen Z has harnessed the meme as a moral weapon: a tool that fuses critique with community. Within Morocco's Gen Z 212 movement, as in Nepal or Madagascar, memes and symbols create emotional coherence across diverse local struggles. They are not trivial distractions but extensions of political identity: a way to affirm that participation in the digital sphere is itself a form of citizenship.

Together, the *One Piece* flag and the wider use of memes show how Generation Z communicates political frustration and aspiration through the tools of its digital culture. Rather than relying on traditional slogans or ideological language, young people use familiar imagery and humour to express shared concerns about fairness, accountability, and the credibility of public institutions. This creative style of activism allows them to engage with serious issues in a form that feels accessible, relatable, and emotionally resonant.

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<sup>128</sup> Gharsan, Mohamed. الميمز...بوابة جيل زد لفهم السياسة. *Independent Arabia*, July 24, 2025.

## Policy Recommendations

The policy recommendations emerging from this report point to three interconnected priorities for Morocco's future: protecting civic freedoms in the digital sphere, ensuring that major international events such as the 2030 World Cup generate sustainable development rather than fiscal strain, and reinforcing financial transparency and accountability to build public trust. Together, these measures reflect the underlying message of the Gen Z 212 movement: that legitimacy today depends not only on state authority, but on the state's responsiveness, fairness, and openness in managing its social contract.

The increasing control over Morocco's digital sphere, including the proposed 2025 law on online content and the arrests of Gen Z 212 organisers, highlights a growing tension between state regulation and civic participation. Rather than treating digital space as a site of confrontation, this pillar encourages the institutionalisation of digital rights protection through cooperation between lawyers, human rights defenders, and civil society.

It is recommended that:

### *Pillar 1: Protecting Digital Rights and Civic Participation*

- **Legal experts and human rights defenders commit to sharing their expertise** in civil rights, including citizens' right to protest and express opinions in the cyber/virtual space, in accordance with international conventions and Morocco's own constitutional guarantees. This should not occur in isolation, but rather through partnerships with local NGOs and bar associations to ensure sustainability and outreach.
- **Digital security awareness and training** should be extended to protestors and young activists. This includes concrete steps such as adopting full-disk encryption, using strong passwords, enabling device auto-lock functions, and activating "Find My" options on mobile phones. These practical measures help mitigate risk without requiring confrontation.
- In terms of communication, the use of end-to-end encrypted platforms (E2EE), such as Signal or Session, should be encouraged. Protestors and digital activists should avoid using common applications known to be under surveillance, such as SMS, standard phone calls, or Meta-owned apps, and instead opt for secure channels that safeguard their identities and data.
- **Anonymity protocols and privacy measures** are equally critical. Users should connect to the internet through VPNs, use pseudonyms or non-identifiable usernames, and understand the principles of digital hygiene to reduce exposure to monitoring.
- **Lawyers and human rights organisations should train activists on documentation protocols**, teaching them how to safely record, store, and transfer footage or testimonies while ensuring compliance with legal and privacy standards.

These measures collectively aim to create a civic space that is both secure and lawful — protecting individuals' rights without undermining state stability. Such a framework would align Morocco's digital governance practices with international human rights standards while promoting responsible civic participation.

### ***Pillar 2: Ensuring Sustainable and Transparent Event Governance***

Morocco's co-hosting of the 2030 FIFA World Cup alongside Spain and Portugal presents both an opportunity and a challenge. While Spain and Portugal can rely on existing, recently renovated facilities, Morocco faces the cost of constructing new stadiums, notably the planned Benslimane stadium between Casablanca and Rabat, and upgrading six others. If not managed carefully, this could replicate the experience of Brazil (2014) and South Africa (2010), which are still grappling with the financial burdens of their hosting efforts.

This pillar therefore calls for governance mechanisms that ensure sustainability, transparency, and proportionality in the event's planning and legacy. The following measures are recommended:

- **FIFA should require clear, well-defined, and long-term sustainability plans** for all newly built stadiums and infrastructure projects. Each facility should have a post-event function, whether as a community sports hub, youth training centre, or public venue, to ensure continued public value beyond 2030.
- **The World Cup should be integrated into a comprehensive development strategy**, ensuring that infrastructure investments contribute to Morocco's wider economic and social objectives rather than existing as isolated prestige projects. This approach would link the event's preparation to tangible outcomes in employment, transport, and service delivery.
- **Fiscal transparency should be strengthened** by publicly releasing key financial data related to the event's organisation, including budgets, expenditures, and audits. This step, even without large-scale public consultations, would demonstrate commitment to accountability and could mitigate public frustration over resource allocation.
- **FIFA should promote equitable co-hosting arrangements** to prevent disproportionate burdens on developing partners. This includes aligning the number of matches and venues with each country's infrastructural readiness and financial capacity.

Taken together, these measures would help ensure that Morocco's World Cup participation becomes part of a long-term prosperity strategy rather than a short-term financial liability, and that it contributes to reinforcing trust between the state and its citizens.

### ***Pillar 3: Reinforcing Fiscal Responsibility and Social Return***

The third pillar centres on fiscal governance, ensuring that large-scale national investments, such as those for the World Cup, do not come at the expense of essential services or sustainable debt management. Morocco's projected \$5.15 billion investment can deliver social and developmental dividends if accompanied by prudent oversight and structural safeguards.

The recommendations proposed under this pillar include:

- **Establishing a non-partisan fiscal monitoring body** to review projected budgets, audit expenditures, and issue public reports every six months. This mechanism would serve as a neutral oversight structure, reducing cost inflation and maintaining accountability across ministries and agencies.

- **Implementing ring-fencing initiatives** to legally protect the budgets of key social sectors, particularly health and education, from diversion or “fiscal creep” caused by cost overruns in infrastructure projects. This would ensure that social welfare priorities remain insulated from short-term political pressures.<sup>129</sup>
- **Seeking concessional loans and grant-based financing** from international development institutions, such as the African Development Bank and European development banks. These instruments offer lower interest rates and longer repayment terms, reducing Morocco’s long-term debt burden and supporting a more sustainable debt ratio.
- **Pivoting the World Cup investment towards social benefit** by mandating that all new stadiums and facilities be designed for dual-use purposes after 2030. For instance, ancillary buildings can serve as university extensions, vocational training centres, or regional health clinics, thereby turning temporary event infrastructure into lasting public assets.
- **Embedding employment and capacity-building requirements** into all major contracts. Domestic and foreign construction firms should be obliged to include local apprenticeship quotas that prioritise youth employment, and the digital infrastructure built for the event can later be repurposed for digital-skills training initiatives aligned with Morocco’s Ministry of Digital Transition.<sup>130</sup>

By transforming short-term expenditure into long-term capacity, this approach would not only safeguard Morocco’s fiscal health but also address the structural grievances expressed by the Gen Z 212 movement regarding unequal opportunities and government accountability.

## Conclusion

The convergence of Morocco’s Gen Z protest movement with its preparations for AFCON 2025 and the 2030 World Cup reveals the growing intersection between domestic legitimacy and international ambition. The government’s massive investment in infrastructure, estimated at \$5.15 billion, equivalent to more than 3% of GDP, contrasts sharply with chronic underinvestment in public services such as healthcare and education. Against a backdrop of declining external assistance and rising public debt, these spending choices have become symbolic of a deeper generational grievance: the perception that development serves prestige more than equity.

The Gen Z 212 protests have therefore emerged not as an isolated wave of dissent, but as a broader commentary on representation, transparency, and fairness in public policy. Organised primarily through digital platforms such as Discord and Telegram, the movement reflects an apolitical but highly coordinated form of civic engagement that bypasses traditional party and union structures. Its rapid mobilisation underscores both the creativity and the frustration of a generation seeking new ways to be heard in a system they see as unresponsive.

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<sup>129</sup> Investopedia, "Ringfencing: What it is, How it Works, Examples," accessed October 30, 2025, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/r/ringfence.asp>.

<sup>130</sup> Issam Toutate, "Morocco Accelerates Digital Transformation of Public Services," *Morocco World News*, October 14, 2025, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2025/10/263428/morocco-accelerates-digital-transformation-of-public-services/>.

At the same time, the state's security-heavy response, with nearly a thousand arrests in two weeks, has deepened the perception of a legitimacy gap between citizens and institutions. High levels of youth distrust in institutions and widely held beliefs that corruption is widespread reinforce this sense of distance. If unaddressed, these tensions risk overshadowing Morocco's international image and its capacity to deliver on the very projects meant to project stability and progress.

Moving forward, Morocco's challenge is to balance prestige with participation, ensuring that the country's global ambitions do not come at the expense of domestic cohesion. Implementing reforms around digital rights protection, transparent event governance, and fiscal responsibility can help rebuild public trust and demonstrate that major national projects can also serve social inclusion. Doing so would not only strengthen Morocco's international credibility but also honour the aspirations of a generation whose demand is simple yet profound: a state that listens, protects and delivers.

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