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# The Instability of Moroccan Jewry and the Moroccan Press in the First Decade after Independence

Michael M. Laskier

## On the Eve of Independence

The end of the French Protectorate (1912—1956) inaugurated a period of uncertainty for the 240,000 Jews of Morocco. Eight years before independence, on June 7, 1948, a pogrom in Oujda and Djerada near the Algerian border resulted in the deaths of forty-three Jews.<sup>1</sup> On August 3, 1954, in the town of Petitjean, seven Jews were massacred. Nevertheless, apart from these incidents, until the summer of 1954, the economic and social unrest which began in the early 1950s and which led to a general economic, political and social breakdown, had not affected the Jews as a whole. They had not been singled out, nor had there been any actions of a specifically anti-Jewish character on a countrywide level. Moreover the terrorist organizations seemed anxious to avoid maltreating Jews, and only on rare occasions were Jews victimized by terrorist acts.<sup>2</sup>

In 1955, however, during the months of July and August, Moroccan terrorists — directing their ire against the French after the exile of the Sultan Muḥammad V to Madagascar because of his popularity and the support he enjoyed among nationalists, and following his replacement by a member of the royal family, Mawlay ben-Arafa, known for his docility and pro-French attitudes — incited large-scale riots. In these riots, the Jews, like the Europeans, were not spared. Serious incidents took place in the mellah of Casablanca resulting in the injury of over 1000 Jews, and it was generally believed that a mass attack on the Jewish

quarter of Casablanca would have taken place had it not been for the protection given by the French authorities. Subsequently there were attacks, harassments and damage to property in the Jewish sections of Safi, Boujad, Ouezzan, and Mazagan. In some cases, these attacks showed signs of being deliberate and premeditated.<sup>3</sup>

For all that, and highlighting the instability and fluidity of the times, when Muḥammad V returned triumphantly on the eve of independence, the *Istiqlāl* (Independence) party and the *Parti démocrate d'indépendance* (PDI), the two main political parties at the time, invited the Jews to demonstrate together with them. There was an exchange of receptions and speeches, and the Jews were addressed as Moroccan brothers and called upon to build the new Morocco together with the Muslims. In several cities, Jewish leaders were invited by either the *Istiqlāl* or the PDI officially to join their ranks.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, however, the Jewish position late in 1955 was far from uniform throughout the country. In Azemmour, where the governor was an Arafist, the Jews were fearful. In Safi and Mazagan, during the month of August, Jews were subjected to harassments and property damage. Anxiety was also great in Taroudant and Tiznit of the Ante Atlas. As many as 350 Jews left Taroudant in 1954–1955. Muslim competition there was very strong, and the Jews were constantly pushed out of their professions and no longer welcome in the *souks*, where both Muslims and Jews had traditionally come to peddle their wares. Still, there were also places like Agadir, where the socio-economic situation of the Jews was relatively stable. Nevertheless, on the whole the Jews felt that the Muslims would treat them well only so long as their services were needed, and consequently they were suspicious of the nationalist declarations of equal rights, fearing that instead there would be a full return to traditional *dhimmi* status. They did believe in the sincerity of Muḥammad V, yet they were also certain that hostile Arab attitudes would in the long run prevail to their detriment.<sup>5</sup>

For these reasons, as late as 1955 some Jews hoped the French would not go, even though under the French the Jews had achieved actually little more than the abolition of certain degrading measures. They had not received equality, nor had their constitutional status been carefully defined. They also had few prospects of requiring French citizenship.<sup>6</sup>

The full implications of Jewish fears in 1955 become especially clear when looking at their deteriorating economic conditions. The economy of Mazagan, for example, was based on agriculture, the sale of eggs, the manufacture of cloth, wool, and machine embroidery, and the local trade in textiles. Jewish involvement in the first and last of these sectors had always been minimal. Jews had engaged in packing eggs, but Muslim entrepreneurs were slowly pushing them out of the business. They had also worked in the cloth mills, but here too French and Muslim employers were gradually dismissing their Jewish workers on the pretext that the Jews, especially after the events of August 20, were preparing for emigration to Israel.

The most important occupations of Mazagan Jews, apart from few large-scale grain dealers who had connections with large Jewish firms in Casablanca, had been in services such as barbering, shoemaking, and tailoring. There were also some Jewish grocers, but by 1955 many of them had emigrated to Israel, and those who remained had to cope with Muslim competition. This competition took the form of price undercutting, making life hard for the Jews, who had on the whole always enjoyed a higher standard of living than their Arab counterparts, and now had to reduce their living standard along with their prices.

This situation deteriorated even further after independence. Many of the grocers had specialized in the sale of imported foodstuffs from Europe. The clientele for these imported foods had now returned to the French mainland. The return to the mainland was itself a symptom of many French firms having closed their doors. This too created problems, for the Jewish employees of these firms now lost their jobs.<sup>7</sup>

## The Position of the Jews in Independent Morocco

Politically, the situation of the Jews improved in the years 1956—1958. Jews were granted Moroccan citizenship, and the fears of harassment and pogroms failed to materialize. A Jew was appointed as Minister of Posts and Telegraphs,<sup>8</sup> and there were other Jews who secured high government positions. Educated Jews, among them ardent integrationists like Marc Sabbah, Joe Ohana and Albert Aflalo, were even able to join with Muslim intellectuals in creating the *Al-Wifāq* movement for entente and rapprochement between Muslims and Jews within the *Istiqlāl*.<sup>9</sup>

This situation did not last. In 1958, the left wing of the *Istiqlāl*, under Abd Allah Ibrahim, formed a new government. Already prior to its tenure, Morocco joined the Arab League (October 1958) and actively participated in its affairs. The government, in a move that was potentially disadvantageous to Jews, also began playing a more active role in the economy through state intervention in numerous enterprises. Particularly trying for the Jews, however, was the requirement that all Jewish organizations (the Alliance, ORT, HIAS, the Joint Distribution Committee, the Lubavitcher, etc.) had to register their statutes with the authorities, subject to their approval — which was not always granted. Yet, this was of little concern compared to the hardening of official policy on Jewish emigration that included the establishment in 1959 of a special Emigration Section of the police and resulted in numerous arrests of Jews suspected of planning immigration. All of this was accompanied by severe expressions of anti-Zionist sentiment emanating from the political parties and the press. More and more, these expressions of anti-Zionism failed to distinguish between Zionism, Israel and local Jews. Finally, all postal communication with Israel was suspended.<sup>10</sup>

The Jews were thus becoming isolated from Moroccan society at various levels. Even the labor unions shunned the Jews because of their pro-French sympathies in the period before independence. Jews often felt themselves forcibly estranged from the vital areas of Moroccan life. The *Al-Wifāq*, with its hopes of entente and integration, had disappeared by 1960, and its founders, especially Marc Sabbah, were beginning to think in other directions. Integrationism had become a dead letter among many Jewish strata. The one hope that the Jews still maintained was in the Sultan Muḥammad V, if only as a last resort in preventing the total deterioration of their civil status.

In May of 1960, the Palace, fearful of its left wing tendencies, dismissed the Ibrahim government and replaced it with a government headed by king Muḥammad V. Plans were announced for a constitutional monarchy to take effect in 1962. This change in the political wind brought temporary relief to the Jews. In the elections of May 1960, they were able to vote and even managed to elect ten Jews to positions in regional councils, as well as to offices in various chambers of trade — although, in fact, they were still highly under-represented.<sup>11</sup> However, in January 1961 the respite ended. In response to the serious state of affairs in the Congo, Muḥammad V hosted the Casablanca conference, at which Morocco, Egypt (U.A.R.), the Algerian FLN, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Libya, and Ceylon participated. For the Jews of Morocco, the conference was a nightmare,<sup>12</sup> serving as a pretext for numerous arrests and unwarranted beatings administered by the police. Tensions were then brought to a boiling point with the *Pisces* tragedy. On the night of January 10—11 the *Pisces*, a sixty-five-foot boat carrying forty-four Jewish passengers from the Gulf of Alhucemas to Gibraltar, foundered in bad weather and all of the Jews aboard were drowned. These Jews were being smuggled out of Morocco as part of an Israeli-directed underground emigration effort in which Israeli agents operating in Morocco had worked closely with Moroccan Jewish Zionists. When this became known, the news was followed by accusations and counter-accusations, arrests, and general havoc among the Moroccan Jews.<sup>13</sup>

Still, on February 15, only one month after the affair began, the Minister of the interior, Si Bekkái', summoned Jewish dignitaries, among them Meir Ovadiah, the President of the Jewish community of Casablanca, David Amar, the Secretary General of the Council of Communities, and Dr. Léon Benzaquen, the former Minister of Posts and Telegraphs. In their presence, Bekkai announced that henceforth all Jews seeking passports and the right to leave the country would have their requests granted. Three days later, this message was reconfirmed by Muḥammad V himself. Addressing the same delegation, he stressed the unconditional nature of the right of the Jews to emigrate and emphasized that this new policy had come about at his own initiative. He added that he had not known of the arrests and beatings that had accompanied both the Casablanca conference and the *Pisces* affair, and that had he known he would have halted them forthwith. He closed by indicating severely that it was not Nasser, whose presence at the Casablanca conference had been the spark that set off the violence, but the king and his government that determined Morocco's internal affairs.<sup>14</sup>

One reason for this about-face in policy was the adverse reaction of the world press to the violence, especially that following the sinking of the *Pisces*. Morocco had been placed in an extremely negative light. No less important, however, was Muḥammad V's desire to halt the influence of Nasser in Moroccan affairs. It was known that the police, who had beaten up Jews in Casablanca, Fez and elsewhere, harbored pro-Nasser sentiments; and it was no secret that in Morocco and Tunisia of the late 1950s and early 1960s pro-Nasser elements were both organized and vocal.<sup>15</sup> When the king indicated to the Jewish delegation that one of his motives was to counter Nasser's influence, he had meant it. Furthermore, it seems that even before the sinking of the *Pisces*, the government had considered changing direction on the question of Jewish emigration and had sent out questionnaires to regional governors in order to poll their opinions. Compared to the major problems the country faced, this was merely an issue of secondary importance.<sup>16</sup>

The sudden death of Muḥammad V on February 26 prevented the immediate implementation of the new emigration policy. Nonetheless, Prince Hassan, now King, did see to its implementation, and over 70,000 Jews left for Israel in the years 1961–1963.<sup>17</sup>

## The Press, the Jews, and Zionism

The question of emigration and Zionism had not arisen directly out of the events surrounding independence. Zionist activity in Morocco had gathered momentum since the 1930s, and immigration on a significant scale had taken place in the fifties, especially in the years immediately preceding independence, 1955–1956. However, in the years immediately succeeding independence, the Zionist question took on additional dimensions, symbolizing the broader issue of the role and future of the Jews in the new Moroccan society. No longer *dhimmi*, was it possible for Jews to be fully integrated, and what implications would their integration have for Morocco's predominately Muslim society? The Zionist issue reflected this question, and provided a focus for those feelings which had expressed themselves in the form of economic restrictions and physical harassment and influenced government policy to create an atmosphere of uncertainty and instability for Moroccan Jewry. Nowhere was this heightened significance of the Zionist issue and its exploitation more in evidence, or the extent of Jewish insecurity more clearly conveyed, than in the Moroccan press.

The Journals which carried most of the nationalist opposition to Zionist activity were *Al-'Alam* (*The Banner*), the daily of the *Istiqlāl*; *Al-Taḥrīr*, (*Liberation*), the daily of the UNFP; *Al-fajr* (*The Dawn*), a daily with a circulation of 2000 to 3000; *Akhbār al-Dunyā* (*World News*), a weekly which reached a circulation of 30,000 to 35,000 during the early 1960s, and *Al-Kifāḥ al-Waṭani* (*The National struggle*), the

organ of the Moroccan Communist Party. Muṣṭafā Alwai, the editor of *Akḥbār al-Dunyā*, had edited *Al-Fajr* until it closed down in the first half of 1961.

Much of the criticism in these journals was focused on the World Jewish Congress, its president Nahum Goldmann and its North African delegate stationed in French Algeria, Jacques Lazarus. Lazarus also served as the editor of *Information Juive*, then the most popular journal of North African Jewry. It is known that from the late 1940s until July 1959 the WJC maintained regional sections in the major cities of Morocco. Its activists in that country included prominent Jews like J.R. Toledano, Vitalis Altun, Meyer Toledano, a well-known integrationist, and Zeidē Schulmann, an illustrious Eastern European Jew who had settled in Casablanca in 1913 after first living in Palestine for a number of years. Other leading personalities of the WJC, such as Alexander L. Easterman, visited Morocco on several occasions during the middle and late 1950s in an effort to convince the authorities to liberalize emigration policies. As the French Protectorate drew to a close, the WJC also established contacts with Moroccan nationalists. According to Joe Gouldin (Golan), a WJC representative in Europe:

Il y a trois ans, nous nous sommes mis en contact avec les leaders, des représentants des partis politiques clandestines du Maroc. Nous avons dit: Messieurs, si dans votre bataille vous défendez la dignité humaine, si vous amenez les gens à la liberté, nous sommes vos frères. Là, ont commencé des relations extrêmement profondes. Nous avons expliqué à ces hommes de bonne volonté pourquoi nous les aidons, nous l'avons fait plus d'une fois, et dans des moments de crise dans les pensées ils sont venus vers nous avec leurs propres problèmes et aujourd'hui ce n'est plus un secret pour personne ces paroles de [Mehdi] Ben Barka: notre amitié pour le Congrès Juif Mondial est une amitié pour une équipe d'hommes que défendent une cause qui nous est sacrée....<sup>18</sup>

Yet, despite Ben Barka's assertion of support to WJC officials before 1956, not only were WJC sections closed down in 1959, when Ben Barka was still in the country, but any Jew in Morocco who had direct or indirect ties with the WJC was exposed to relentless attacks in the nationalist press. On August 30, 1961, an editorial in *Al-'Alam* focused criticism on three Jewish leaders: Marc Sabbah, David Azoulay, and David Amar. The paper castigated them for having attended the twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations and meeting of the WJC in Geneva on August 20–23. This meeting, stated *Al-'Alam*, did not limit its program merely to the study of the social conditions of Jews around the World; but under the chairmanship of that “avowed Zionist,” Dr. Nahum Goldmann, delegates and guests were urged to support Israel and defend its existence against external and internal dangers. By their very presence at the meeting, Sabbah, Azoulay and Amar had manifested support for the WJC program for Israel. And, since Morocco did not recognize the existence of Israel and the WJC meeting was Zionist inspired, sanctions had to be imposed on those who turned against state policy, which was to uphold political and moral obligations toward the Arab World and specifically Palestine: “soil usurped by the Zionists.” The editorial added that the Jews had placed a barrier between themselves and all other



Moroccans through their Zionism, and that, furthermore, they were guilty of making no sacrifices since 1956 for the sake of Moroccan growth and development.<sup>19</sup>

*Al-Tahrīr* made similar observations regarding Sabbah, Azoulay and Amar in connection with the WJC meeting. It suggested that, with few exceptions, the Jews of Morocco had not tried to integrate into the Muslim majority. In view of the emigration to Israel, it was clear that Zionism in Morocco was active and well financed — even though Morocco was a prominent member of the Arab league. The Jews could not be citizens of two countries at the same time, particularly when Morocco considered the foreign policy of Israel to be in total contradiction to its own. It was thus essential for the Moroccan authorities to observe closely activities undertaken by Jewish communal leaders.<sup>20</sup>

The Moroccan Communist Party organ stated that it was pointless to debate whether Jews attended the Geneva Meeting as delegates or observers. The mere fact that they *attended* a pro-Zionist meeting was bad enough. The editorial attributed the creation of Israel to the WJC, and accused the organization of supporting the combined Israeli, British and French attack on Egypt in October and November of 1956.<sup>21</sup>

The press campaign against the WJC and Jewish leaders placed Sabbah and Azoulay on the defensive. Upon their return from Geneva, they responded to the accusations in a letter to *Al-'Alam*, emphasizing that they had participated in the meeting as observers only; that David Amar had not attended the meeting, contrary to press reports; and that their presence in Geneva was vital, for they had worked hard to ensure that only accurate information about the political system, policies, and developments within the Jewish communities of Morocco was disseminated. Sabbah and Azoulay also wrote that during their meetings with delegates from twenty-six nations, they had corrected misconceptions about Moroccan Jewry and supported the progressive regime of the “beloved” King Ḥassan II.<sup>22</sup> More significantly, Sabbah and Azoulay argued that the Jews of Morocco could not remain indifferent and abstain from meetings organized by international Jewish organizations. No nation, regardless of its regime, could compel the Jews to remain closed within its physical borders, and deprive them of spiritual and cultural contacts with their brethren.<sup>23</sup>

*Al-'Alam* responded swiftly in an editorial stressing the inevitability of Jews manifesting solidarity with their coreligionists. It was nevertheless irksome that Sabbah and Azoulay had participated in a meeting at which Dr. Goldmann had declared that Moroccan Jews were facing difficult times and the violation of their human rights. Why, moreover, had the meeting not adopted a single motion on behalf of the struggle of the Algerian People for independence? Why had it remained silent about North African interests in general? Indeed, apart from Sabbah and Azoulay, Joseph Bitton and Jacques Lazarus of the Algerian Jewish community were also present at Geneva.<sup>24</sup> However the bitterest pill for Sabbah and Azoulay, both formerly zealous supporters of *Al-Wifāq*, was the following statement:



When we review the names of those thrown into jails [during the Protectorate era], the heroes of Morocco's struggle for independence... we cannot find a single Jewish name. Even though seven years have passed since the inception of the Algerian Revolution ... the World Jewish Congress did not publish a single motion revealing sympathy [for that struggle]. On the contrary President Goldmann declared that certain Algerian Jews sought to preserve their French citizenship, and this at a time when the FLN had declared that the Jews were members of the Algerian nation ....<sup>25</sup>

The nationalist press directed its attacks at Zionist forces working underground in Morocco. While it is not certain that the Moroccan authorities, police, and press had known that the "Israeli volunteers" in Morocco were associated (in part) with the *Mossad*, it does appear that they suspected some sort of Israeli activity and certainly suspected the existence of underground Zionist networks. Commenting on the arrest of the Spanish captain of the *Pisces*, Francesco Morrilla, who survived the tragedy, and on the revelations concerning the clandestine emigration to Israel, *Al-Fajr* expressed indignation that the Spanish authorities at Ceuta and Melilla allowed "Zionist agents" to use these regions as bases for smuggling Jews out of Morocco. How could this be done, in view of the friendship demonstrated by the Franco regime for the Arabs?<sup>26</sup> The editorial also protested that large-scale clandestine emigration had been organized by agents who had entered Morocco on the pretext of encouraging commerce and trade. Coming from countries friendly to Morocco and carrying their passports, these agents had not even been required to obtain visas from Moroccan consulates.<sup>27</sup>

*Al-Tahrir* focused on the *Pisces* affair and on a tract published by underground Zionists on February 9, 1961 encouraging Jews, in the wake of the affair, to emigrate and struggle for their dignity.<sup>28</sup> Instead of publishing a direct blast, however, the paper also sought to stir up internal dissension by reprinting a devastating communique, written and signed by thirty Jewish supporters of the UNFP and the Moroccan Communist Party, attacking Zionism and clandestine emigration. These thirty Jews represented a cross section of intellectuals and professionals: *Lycée* educators, lawyers, engineers, physicians, and administrators. Most notable among them were Abraham Sarfati, an engineer and opponent of the Monarchy (for which he is currently serving a long prison sentence), and vocal critic of Israel; Roger Cohen, a distinguished official of Morocco's National Bank; Ralph Benarrosh, an influential lawyer; and René Ohana and Simon Lévy, left-wing supporters of the Moroccan struggle for independence:

Numerous leaflets [they wrote] have been distributed [on February 9] whose language contains an all out attack on Morocco. The purpose of this provocation is to increase the restlessness caused by the activity of the clandestine Zionist organizations and then heightened by the racist offensive recently undertaken by newspapers like *Al-Fajr* and the reckless actions of the police against Moroccan Jews.

Therefore, we the undersigned Jews, who are completely aware of our duty to serve the supreme interests of Morocco..., hereby denounce Zionist propaganda,

which is an instrument in the hands of colonialism and separatism used against the people of Morocco. We protest against the policies of the Zionist troublemakers, who exploit the emotions of Moroccan Jews and their wish for a happy and secure life, and who incite them to emigrate to Israel. We, Muslims and Jews, must unite in our common effort to create the proper conditions for a happy life, to ensure our democratic institutions, prosperity and security for all citizens. Inasmuch as our first and foremost concern is to defend Morocco against slander, we denounce the full-scale campaign launched by colonialists against Morocco, for their purpose is to stir up an atmosphere of racial discrimination, to lower the reputation of our nation, and to sow discord between Jewish and Muslim communities.

Our attitude is not meant to be in harmony with that of any one person or group, nor is it presented as a challenge. It stems from our feeling as loyal citizens who recognize Morocco as their only home. . . that is why we also consider it our duty actively to be opposed to every anti-Jewish demonstration . . .<sup>29</sup>

The position taken here certainly did not reflect the feelings of the majority of the Jews, including the integrationists. In addition, it is clear that in disassociating themselves from Zionism, Moroccan intellectuals were also motivated by a desire to protect their own interests and privileged social status. They doubtlessly felt that large-scale Jewish emigration would render them even more vulnerable and powerless than they had already become.

In addition to attacking the attitudes and activities of Moroccan Jews, the Moroccan press was also hostile toward Israel and its officials. In September 1961, for instance, *Al-'Alam* reported that the Israeli consul to Gibraltar had visited northern Morocco (Tetouan Larache, Nador) to transmit information and instructions to the leaders of Zionist networks.<sup>30</sup> The role of Israel in promoting clandestine operations inside Morocco was thus an open and, in the opinion of *Al-'Alam*, an irritating page. Moreover, in the aftermath of the *Pisces* affair, Israeli Foreign Minister, Golda Meir, had publicly denounced the Moroccan government for curbing Jewish freedoms and held it responsible for the tragedy. On January 19, 1961, Mrs. Meir declared in the Knesset that "the Jews are driven into the corner of despair, given the discriminatory atmosphere and persecution which presently reigns in Morocco."<sup>31</sup>

The Moroccan press counterattacked. *Al-Fajr* accused Golda Meir of making slanderous comments and of misrepresenting the facts, and it denied her claims that Jews were exposed to constant terror, detentions, and the nationalization of their schools. It even suggested that Moroccan Jews live in a healthier atmosphere in Morocco than do their counterparts who emigrated and settled in Israel (see document 2 in the Appendix).<sup>32</sup>

During the second half of 1961, when rumors circulated concerning the decision of the authorities to relax emigration restrictions, the UNFP's *Al-Tahrir*, which was disliked by both the Palace and the *Istiqlāl*, was especially vehement on the subject of emigration. The UNFP, which did not participate in the government formed by King Hassan II in the summer of 1961, seized upon the emigration

issue in particular to discredit the new regime and its supporters. In a major editorial on December 16, 1961, the paper reproached the government for authorizing emigration to Israel, and pointed to stories revealing large exodus by ship and plane. In Casablanca, Meknes, Essaouira (Mogador), and El-Jadida (Mazagan), Jews were selling their belongings and planning their exit to Israel, a development that would inevitably reinforce the Zionist state and further weaken the position of the Palestinian Arabs. The editorial wondered whether the Moroccan government had modified its position on the Palestinian question.<sup>33</sup>

Virtually accusing the government of treason against the state, *Al-Tahrīr* suggested that new policies on emigration were a direct consequence of American, European and Israeli Pressure. If this were so, then the government was engaging in a criminal act surpassing the crimes of the French Protectorate. For the French had not permitted Jewish emigration to Israel to assume a public character.<sup>34</sup>

On December 20, 1961, *Al-Tahrīr* once again attacked the government. Emigration, it declared, had become a mass exodus, and was being approved by the authorities. How, the paper asked, were the Jews from humble socio-economic strata able to leave, and who was financing their passage? Only powerful well-organized Zionist organization *within* Morocco could have been responsible for this. Likewise, without governmental support, emigration would not be taking place, as indeed it is, in broad daylight.<sup>35</sup>

The era immediately following Moroccan independence was thus a difficult one for the Jews. True, the situation was better than in contemporary Egypt, Syria and Yemen, where Jews were either being expelled gradually or humiliated and pushed into the fringes of society. Despite numerous restrictions imposed upon them between 1956 and 1961, the Jews of Morocco were still able to witness the appointment of Léon Benzaquen as Minister of Posts and Telegraphs in the first independent government, and they did participate in elections. So, too, despite the partial nationalization of their institutions, most Jewish schools continued to function normally, and Hebrew and Jewish studies were tolerated. And although the statutes of the WJC and other lesser bodies were not approved, the Joint Distribution Committee, the Alliance, and various religious groups like the Lubavitch were not prevented from providing services. For all that, Morocco was no haven for Jews. Had the Ibrahim government continued in office much longer, it is likely that the situation of the Jews would have deteriorated considerably.

The major crisis faced by Moroccan Jews was one of confidence. Not all politicians criticized the Jews, but many did. Muḥammad V may have opposed unlawful detentions and beatings, but the police still abused Jews on many occasions. There was clearly good reason for Moroccan Jews to be anxious, and the government was unable to allay their fears. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the case of the Moroccan press. The government simply took no steps to stop the spate of editorials attacking Zionism, Israel, and emigration in frankly hostile tones. This was not simply an isolated example of unacceptable behavior;

nor did it originate among groups or classes whose actions might be explained away as those of the rougher elements in society. The thrust of the editorials, moreover, was to question the integrity and loyalty of Jews as Moroccan citizens; in other words to question their ability to blend fully into Moroccan society. As in other cases of governmental indecisiveness and inaction, but perhaps even more so, these editorials and the events surrounding them did much to convince the majority of Moroccan Jews in the years following independence that they had no choice other than to depart.

## APPENDIX

The two following editorials reveal the continuity of suspicions and distrust in the press from 1956 to 1961. It is necessary, of course, to read between the lines: Jews have full rights even though they did not all participate in the independence struggle; and a Zionist Jew is an enemy of the state.

Document 1: “Cadima”, *Al-Ra’y al-‘Āmm* (February 22, 1956), weekly of the *Parti démocrate d’indépendance*. What follows is a translation from Arabic. The journal, though moderate in its views compared to the organs of other movements, frequently attacked the *Cadima* operation sponsored by the Jewish Agency. This unsigned editorial appeared several days before Morocco became formally independent. The attack was directed at Amos Rabl, who directed *aliyah* operations for the Jewish Agency during the years 1954–1956.

“It is known that every Moroccan aims at building up and strengthening democracy in his country. By contrast, French colonialism came to this country with the aim of deceit and of destroying this ideal. Recently it was decided to give the Jewish religious minority of Morocco the possibility of living a free Moroccan life, as is the case with all Moroccan subjects within the new regime.

“The world press wanted to present the national struggle for the independence of Morocco as a religious war. So it brainwashed the Jews here into believing they were exposed to a great danger. In America, too, people think that the Moroccan regime endangered the life of the Jews in this state. However, in spite of the opinion of the world press, the truth is that the Arab nation does not want to discriminate against race and creed. Eloquent proof of this is the fact that a Jew has been appointed as a Minister<sup>1</sup> in the first Moroccan government.<sup>2</sup> Therefore the Moroccan Jews should not flee to other countries in fear. This fear stems from a misconception on the part of the Moroccan Jew, who thinks that his future in this country will not be safe.

“Although the Jews did not participate actively in the struggle for independence, Morocco was ready to grant them full rights, equal to those of all its citizens. The Arab Moroccan nation has always guaranteed full rights to all its residents.

“In spite of this, Zionism came and established itself in Morocco with the aim of transporting the Jews to Israel and training them there for war against Islam. The Zionist Israeli state prepares the Jews here, confuses and entices them to go to Israel.

“There is an institution in Morocco named *Cadima*, established in Casablanca at rue Yves Gay. This is the central institution [of the Zionists] and its head is Mr. [Amos] Rabl. There is also a big transit camp at kilometer 26 of the Mazagan road

1. The reference here is to Dr. Léon Benzaquen, Minister of Post and Telegraphs in the first government after independence formed by Si Bekkai.
2. Although Morocco became formally independent in March 1956, the first government of independent Morocco was formed toward the end of 1955.

from which the emigrants are smuggled out. Nobody goes there, and its activities are kept secret.

"Only Rabl and a very few others can give permission to enter this camp. They allow local Jewish families to visit the camp, but in general entry is denied to journalists and strangers. There was a journalist here from France, one Michel Auder, who came to write an article on the camp on behalf of *Paris-Match*; he was not allowed to enter. The camp has an area of fifty hectares and houses 2,500—3,000 people. The monthly emigration rate is 3,000.

"The [French] Residency considered Rabl's refusal of entry to Auder an improper act, particularly in the light of the current situation in Morocco.

"Monsieur Longin, the governor of the Chaouia district near Casablanca, was asked about the matter and he expressed the view that it was not worth while for journalists to visit the camp. He was then asked whether entry could be refused to representatives of the Moroccan government. To this he answered that of course the government could visit. When Mr. Rabl was questioned on the subject, he responded that the right to refuse entry into the camp had been given him by the French Residency.

"The man in charge of security in the camp is named Bensimon. He informed journalists that emigration would not stop even though there was a Jewish Minister in the Moroccan government. Mr. Rabl did not prevent the publication of information from time to time regarding Israeli emigration, i.e. transportation of emigrants from the camp to Marseille and from Marseille to Tel-Aviv, but he saw to it that the Moroccans knew nothing about what was going on in the camp.

"It is the duty of the press to publish all this and to make public what is going on, the secrets, the lies, etc., so that the Moroccan people are informed and capable of reacting.

"The people of this [Zionist] institution and their directors should be considered enemies of Morocco; and it is the duty of Moroccan Jewry to energetically demand the closure of these institutions and the expulsion of all [foreigners in the camps] back to their country of origin.<sup>3</sup> It is our duty to announce this demand from the columns of this paper."

Document 2: Editorial by Mustafā Alawi, editor of the independent *Al-Fajr*, in response to the attacks by Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir against the Moroccan Government following the *Pisces* affair. The editorial, "Golda Meir Speaks with Malice," was written on January 20, 1961. The translation is from Arabic.

"The Foreign Minister of Israel, the self-styled Zionist state, had raised the case of the *Pisces*, which sunk while carrying 44 Moroccan Jewish emigrants, before the Israeli Parliament. On this occasion Golda Meir allowed herself to attack Morocco in a speech that was all lies, falsehood and slander.

3. The *Cadima* and the Jewish Agency's emissaries were still active in Morocco in the Summer of 1956. By September of that year they were no longer in the country.

“It is amusing that the Jewish Minister resorted to misrepresenting the facts concerning the shipwreck. She did not attribute it to a storm and heavy seas, but blamed it on Morocco, saying ‘The Moroccan authorities bear a major and grave responsibility for this catastrophe’. Golda Meir then rehashed Zionist propaganda, claiming for example that Jewish schools in Morocco are constantly exposed to seizure and confiscation, and that ‘Jewish families live in a state of continuous terror due to reckless detentions, abductions, and tyranny.’ Indeed!

“Although these unfounded allegations deserve no comment whatsoever, it must be noted that the Zionist lady-minister forgot, or chose to forget, the humane posture taken by His Majesty the King<sup>1</sup> toward the Jews when they were menaced by extermination during the Second World War by refusing to apply the discriminatory laws decreed by the French, who had themselves yielded under the weight of the Third Reich. In fact, the Jews of Morocco enjoy a happier life than many of the Jews living under the ‘protection’ of her ladyship the speechmaker.

“The most amazing part of this is that Golda Meir went so far as to say that ‘Israel had resolved to extend assistance to the Jews of Morocco’ in what she called ‘the struggle they are waging for the recognition of their most elementary rights.’ She also entreated the countries of the world to support her claims, and strive to ‘open the doors of Morocco for all those who desire to leave this country’.

“The truth is that the Israeli Minister deliberately overlooked the fact that our legal position, founded on our existence as a sovereign and independent state, does not permit us to become entangled in such adventures, particularly with regard to an artificial self-styled state, whose existence we do not recognize.”

1. Reference is to Muḥammad V who supposedly sided with the Jews during Vichy control of Morocco and protected them. There are those today who challenge the authenticity of the Sultan’s benevolence during that period.



## NOTES

1. Samuel L. Haber, "Report on Morocco," *American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Country Directors Conference* (Paris, October 1956), pp. 8–9; "The Conditions of the Jews in French North Africa," a report submitted to the Jewish Agency by a delegate of the *Mossad le-Aliyah* (Tel-Aviv, February 3, 1949) in Hebrew; André Chouraqui, *Between East and West: A History of the Jews of North Africa* (New York, 1973), pp. 181–82.
2. Samuel L. Haber, "Report on Morocco," *American Jewish Joint Committee Country Directors Conference* (Paris, October 1955), p. 16; *idem*, "Report on Morocco," *American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Country Directors Conference* (Paris, October 1956), p. 9; Michael M. Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862–1962* (Albany, 1983), p. 215; *idem*, "The Jewish Agency and the Jews of Morocco and Tunisia," *The Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem, forthcoming).
3. Haber, "Report on Morocco," *American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Country Directors Conference* (Paris, October 1955), p. 16; Joseph B. Schechtman, *On Wings of Eagles: The Plight, Exodus and Homecoming of Oriental Jewry* (New York, 1961), pp. 292–93.
4. Hal Lehrmann, "L'El-Wifaq chez les Juifs marocains: Entente cordiale ou collaboration," *L'Arche* 20–21 (août-septembre 1958): 32–36.
5. Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle*, pp. 277–78.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 163–71, 183–87, 210, 220, 335–40; see the treatment of the political status of the Jews in French Morocco, in André Chouraqui, *La condition juridique de L'Israélite marocain* (Paris, 1950), *passim*.
7. "Report on Morocco," *American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Country Directors Conference* (Paris, October 1957), p. 31.
8. Dr. Léon Benzaquen (d. 1977), a physician with strong ties to the Sultan Muḥammad V and a political moderate who strove cautiously toward Judeo-Muslim entente and won the confidence and support of Jewish leaders in the West.
9. They were supplemented by other integrationists such as Meir Ovadiah, David Azoulay, and Armand Asoulin. Of these, it is known that by 1958 Marc Sabbah had changed some of his positions and expressed disappointment at the attempts to curtail the freedom of movement of Jews. Joe Ohana, for example, continued to be directly or indirectly involved in Moroccan politics and, in 1985, was elected to the Moroccan Assembly. His views then and now remain largely unchanged. He continues to consider himself as a Moroccan first and a Jew second, and fully identifies with the causes of the Palestinian Arabs against Israel. On this subject, see Joe Ohana, "Un communiqué du mouvement national marocain," *Maroc-Presse* (Janvier 29, 1956); "Motions sur les Israélites marocains: Le congrès extraordinaire du parti de L'Istiqlāl réuni en séance plénière," *Al-Istiqlāl* (13 Juillet 1956); Schechtman, *On Wings of Eagles*, pp. 286–88; Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco*, pp. 335–40.
10. On this subject see Laskier, "Zionism and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1956–1962," *Studies in Zionism*, 11 (Spring 1985): 124–33.
11. "Morocco," *American Jewish Year Book* 63 (1962), p. 354; John Waterbury, *The Commander of the Faithful: The Moroccan Political Elite* (New York, 1970), p. 219; Laskier, "Zionism and the Jewish Communities of Morocco", p. 131.
12. On January 3, 1961, the Casablanca Conference debated a wide variety of topics pertaining to the Third World, Israel, and Imperialism. Its aims were to voice support for the Algerian struggle for independence from the French and to foster Arab-African unity.
13. See Laskier, "Zionism and the Jewish Communities of Morocco," 134–35; Samuel Segev, *Operation Yakhin* (Tel-Aviv, 1984), pp. 192–96; Louis Gravier, "Le ministre chérifien de l'information rejette sur les organisations sionistes la responsabilité du naufrage du *Pisces*," *Le Monde* (25 Janvier 1961); André Scemama, "Au Maroc les juifs sont acculés au désespoir," *Le Monde* (20 janvier 1961).
14. Laskier, "Zionism", pp. 135–36; see also, "Morocco", *American-Jewish Year Book* 63 (1962), p. 441.

15. For example, 'Alāl al-Fāsi, one of Morocco's most prominent nationalists since the early 1930s, who had been exiled by the French in 1937 and returned only during the 1950s, had contacts while in Cairo with the army officers who overthrew the monarchy in 1952. He adopted the Nasserist predilection for movements of armed liberation, and in 1953 appealed for terrorist activities against the French in Morocco. For a discussion about others like him and about this topic in general, see Waterbury, *The Commander of the Faithful: The Moroccan Political Elite* (London, 1970), pp. 173–74.
16. "Morocco," *American Jewish Year Book* 63 (1962), pp. 441–43.
17. Segev, *Operation Yakhin*, pp. 234–50. King Ḥassan granted the United HIAS Service (UHS) permission to organize emigration, so long as it was carried out with utmost discretion. Despite occasional interruptions as a result of pressures brought to bear by nationalist groups, the UHS with the assistance of Israeli volunteers and others, and the support of the Jewish Agency, was able to bring 70,000 Jews to Israel by the end of 1963.
18. Assemblée générale du comité central marocain du congrès juif mondial, Casablanca, 15 avril 1956, (Arch. CJM Lazarus 5/5603 Maroc).
19. "The Danger of Zionism" (Arabic), *Al-'Alam* (August 30, 1961).
20. Abd al-Salam Al-Hijji, "The Problem of the Jewish Minority" (Arabic), *Al-Taḥrīr* (September 15, 1961).
21. "In the Aftermath of the World Jewish Congress Reunion" (Arabic), *Al-Kifāh al-Waṭani* (September 24, 1961).
22. Marc Sabbah and David Azoulay, "Regarding the World Jewish Congress Reunion" (Arabic), *Al-'Alam* (September 15, 1961).
23. *Ibid.*
24. K. H., "The World Jewish Congress and the Jewish Communities of Morocco" (Arabic), *Al-'Alam* (September 17–18, 1961).
25. *Ibid.* Goldmann argued in Geneva that Algerian Jews, who for the most part had been French citizens since 1870, be given the opportunity to choose between Algerian and French citizenship; see, *Le Monde* (25 août 1961).
26. Abd al-Rahman Saih, "Spanish Aid to Zionism" (Arabic), *Al-Fajr* (January 13, 1961).
27. *Ibid.*
28. On the tract see Laskier, "Zionism and the Jewish Communities of Morocco", p. 134.
29. "Communiqué by Patriotic Jews" (Arabic), *Al-Taḥrīr* (February 17, 1961).
30. "The Israeli Consul in Gibraltar Visits the Northern Region of the Country" (Arabic), *Al-'Alam* (September 6, 1961).
31. André Scemama, "Au Maroc les juifs sont acculés au désespoir," *Le Monde* (20 Janvier 1961).
32. Mustafā Alawī, "Golda Meir Speaks with Malice" (Arabic), *Al-Fajr* (January 20, 1961).
33. "Exodus of Jews to Palestine" (Arabic), *Al-Taḥrīr* (December 16, 1961). Since 1959 *Al-Taḥrīr* had been closed down by the authorities on at least one occasion, and its editors were arrested.
34. *Ibid.*
35. See *Al-Taḥrīr* (December 20, 1961).