

Democratic Elections Are a Worn-Out Formula—A Distraction and a Sedative for the Public—That Will Do Nothing to Improve Their Living Conditions

(Translated)

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The state in Morocco, along with the political parties and bodies affiliated with it, is spearheading a campaign to urge the public to participate in the legislative elections scheduled for 23 September 2026. Voter turnout is generally viewed as a barometer of public confidence in the regime's institutions and its overall legitimacy. Consequently, regimes strive to maintain high turnout figures to convince both domestic and international audiences of their stability and resilience, aiming to portray public opposition—however intense it may occasionally become—as directed merely at specific individuals or parties rather than at the foundations of the regime itself. Observers of voter turnout across most Arab states can clearly see these rates declining cycle after cycle.

In Morocco, for instance, the regime employs tactics to mask this reality, manipulating calculation methods to soften the impact; it measures participation solely against the pool of registered voters, ignoring those eligible to vote who never registered in the first place. In the 2021 elections, for example, the registration rate stood at 69% of eligible voters—down from 86% in 1991—meaning that one-third of the eligible population boycotted the registration process from the outset. Given that turnout among registered voters was 50.35%, the actual participation rate relative to the total eligible electorate was 50.35% of 69%, or approximately 34.5%. This implies that two-thirds of eligible citizens boycotted the electoral process. Furthermore, when accounting for the 13.6% of votes cast that were declared invalid, the proportion of valid, counted votes drops to no more than 30.1%. The same applies to Algeria, where the proportion of the voting-age population casting a valid vote dropped from approximately 70.7% in 1991 to just 16% in 2021, and 17% in the 2026 elections.

The situation is even worse in Tunisia, where participation rates have plummeted rapidly: falling from 67.7% in 2014 to 41.7% in 2019, and then to 11.2% in 2022.

In essence, the general public does not recognize these elections nor view them as having any impact on their circumstances; consequently, they have no interest in participating. As for those who urge people to participate—and who criticize those who abstain or boycott—their arguments are based on several ideas, including:

1- Refraining from voting amounts to withdrawing from public affairs and the work of necessary change—behavior unbecoming of someone concerned with the people's interests.

2- Legislative elections are the sole avenue for participating in public affairs, as they determine who will lead the country in the coming period.

3- Abstaining—and thereby forfeiting the right to choose the most competent and suitable candidate—opens the door for corrupt individuals and opportunists to take power, which will only worsen the situation.

4- Legislative elections offer an opportunity and a window for reform; while they may not be the ideal or most effective solution, there is no harm in utilizing them to secure some benefits for the people—after all, one should not abandon the whole simply because the entirety cannot be achieved.

The response to these points is as follows:

1- In practice, elections are merely one of several styles for achieving change; choosing not to pursue one path does not preclude pursuing another.

2- Engaging in public affairs, championing the people's interests, and advocating for their rights is a continuous, daily endeavor—not a seasonal activity that occupies people only once every few years.

3- Engagement in public affairs begins with understanding people's problems, distinguishing between their root causes and their symptoms, identifying those responsible, and examining

sound alternatives. It requires devising effective solutions rather than resorting to superficial, stopgap measures, and guarding against the pressure of reality that might compel one to accept proposed solutions, regardless of their actual efficacy.

4- The real deceiver and charlatan is the one who convinces people that casting a single ballot every few years absolves one of the Shariah obligation to look after the public interest; it is not the person who urges citizens to critically examine their situation and avoid being led blindly.

5- The electoral process has been tested time and again—not only in Morocco but in many other states—yet what has it yielded? Where is the civilizational progress? Where is the accountability? Has corruption been curtailed? Has any official ever been removed from office as a result of accountability? Have regimes truly responded to the pulse of the street and public opinion? Or has the outcome, season after season, been nothing but disappointment, the entrenchment and unchecked growth of corruption, and the enactment of unjust, oppressive laws? How do these elections differ from those that came before? The shallowness remains the same, the triviality persists, and the pre-orchestrated control—whether from behind the curtain or right out in the open—remains unchanged. Repeating the same experiment with the same inputs while expecting different results is sheer folly.

6- The dire state of affairs stems not merely from the corruption of individuals—though that certainly plays a role—but primarily from the corruption of the system itself and the foundations upon which it rests. These foundational elements are not open to debate, nor do they fall within the purview of the government or elected officials. Consequently, elections and their outcomes will change nothing. One might ask: what is the benefit of appointing an honest manager to an interest-based bank, a bar, or a brothel? Placing upright individuals at the helm of corrupt institutions—while curtailing their authority and preventing them from addressing the actual sources and ringleaders of corruption—serves only to prolong the life of those institutions and pacify the public with false doses of hope.

7- Legislative elections serve to select individuals who act as representatives for their constituents in enacting laws contrary to what Allah (swt) has revealed; therefore, they are forbidden (حرام Haraam) in Shariah. What is forbidden for the representative is forbidden for the individual appointing the representative, and acting as an agent in a forbidden act is itself forbidden.

8- Whoever wishes to engage in guardianship of the affairs of the people and reform the people's condition must realize that their affairs can only be set right through the methodology of the Lord of the Worlds, Allah (swt); for He who created them knows best what rectifies them and what benefits or harms them. Whoever seeks to work according to this methodology must search for sincere, enlightened individuals who strive earnestly to reform the people's condition. He should remain steadfast with them and board their ship—even if it currently rests on dry land—for therein lies salvation when the waves of injustice and darkness crash down.

Finally, we say to the people: if these elections were truly a means to reclaim your rights from the pockets of those who steal your children's sustenance, they would never have been organized, nor would you have been invited to participate. Instead, it is merely a round where you cast a slip of paper into a prepared box and return home empty-handed. Meanwhile, they use those slips to usher their chosen candidates into government, keeping the country as a rich, satisfying feast for themselves. You, however, toil ceaselessly for five years; when they have had their fill and the next season arrives, you are invited once more. You hear the promises and aspirations you long for, cast another slip of paper, and the cycle repeats—consuming your lives, your livelihoods, your efforts, and the efforts of your descendants.

The path to change is clear and well-known to those who truly desire it. While the paths opened up to you may seem easy and cost-free, they lead to no good. So, make your choice: an easy path that leads nowhere, or a path that inevitably leads to the goal—guided by the Lord of Might, Allah (swt)—offering abundant goodness, worldly honor, and success in the Hereafter? It is true that it may entail hardship, but every hardship within it is rewarded; indeed, the reward is commensurate with the hardship.