

UN: 7,500 undocumented migrant children in Morocco schools

Some 7,500 undocumented migrant children are enrolled in Morocco's schooling system, according to a new report released by UNESCO.

The Global Education Monitoring report for 2019, entitled: "Migration, displacement and education: Building Bridges, Not Walls", found that a change in the law to accommodate immigrant children by lowering the standards of documentation required had resulted in thousands receiving access to education.

According to UNESCO, Morocco's 2011 constitution altered the Law No. 4, which had limited access to education to only Moroccan children, by stipulating that all minors in the country had a right to receive schooling.

The study hailed the efforts of the Ministry of Education to open access to education for children from sub-Saharan African countries in 2013, but added that some document requirements are still somewhat "difficult to meet".

It found that whilst 7,500 immigrant children were in Moroccan public schools, wide variations exist; in 2014, less than half of undocumented migrant children aged eight to 17 years old in Casablanca, Rabat and Tangier attended school.

"Providing education is not only a moral obligation of those in charge of it, but also is a practical solution to many of the ripples caused by moving populations," the report read, stressing the need for regional governments to improve provision.

Read: 16 Moroccan migrants die in the Mediterranean

According to the UN, half of the world's forcibly displaced people are under the age of 18, with a growing number of young people finding themselves in Morocco, as more migrants seek transit to Europe via the kingdom. Despite the threat of violence and expulsion, the country is a necessary stop to recover their strength and to save enough money before attempting to continue their journey northwards.

However the EU has placed pressure on North African countries to stem the flow of people leaving the continent, and in July, revealed that European leaders would seek to establish centres in the Middle East and Africa to host deported asylum seekers.

The plan was quickly rejected by Egypt, and the EU's "partner countries", including Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

Instead, Morocco has launched a crackdown against sub-Saharan migrants in the country since June, with hundreds facing arbitrary arrest, banishment to remote sections of the country and, lately, outright expulsion. Gadem, a human rights group based in the Moroccan capital of Rabat, estimates that about 6,500 migrants have been arrested and displaced since the crackdown began.

Despite the controversies over migrants' treatment, the North African state is hosting a major UN migration conference next month and is seeking to showcase its security record in particular.

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