

The International Program – Morocco



Tom Fitton, the president of Judicial Watch, met with the Moroccan delegate and staffer to the President of the Human Rights Consultative Council on January 8, 2009, at its headquarters in Washington, D.C. Mr. Fitton was asked to discuss Judicial Watch's mission and activities as a nonpartisan and nonprofit watchdog group and the impact it has had on the promotion of good governance.

As set forth in its [Mission Statement](#), "through its educational endeavors, Judicial Watch advocates high standards of ethics and morality in our nation's public life and seeks to ensure that political and judicial officials do not abuse the powers entrusted to them by the American people. Judicial Watch fulfills its educational mission through litigation, investigations, and public outreach." [The International Program](#) is an integral part of its educational program.

The U.S. Department of State's [country study](#) reports that U.S.-Moroccan relations are characterized by "mutual respect and friendship." Morocco was "the first country to seek diplomatic relations with the Government of the United States in 1777, and remains one of our oldest and closest allies in the region." A formal Treaty of Peace and Friendship was entered into in 1787 and renegotiated in 1836, which is still in force "constituting the longest unbroken treaty relationship in U.S. history." Accordingly, the U.S. has provided more than \$2 billion in aid to Morocco since 1953 to meet strategic objectives most recently identified as "creating more opportunities for trade and investment, basic education and workforce training, and government responsiveness to citizen needs."

The U.S. acknowledges the many benefits it has realized from maintaining good diplomatic relations with Morocco, not the least of which is the moderating force Morocco has been in the Middle East. Most notably, it was the second Arab country to host an Israeli leader; the first Arab state to condemn Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in

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1990; and the first to denounce the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States.

Through the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), other country's citizen leaders—those most likely to have an impact on their government's future policies and programs—are invited to the United States to meet personally with and observe “a variety of NGOs, advocacy groups, and grassroots organizations that promote civic engagement and interaction with government.”

The Moroccan delegates with whom Mr. Fitton met have long been active in politics and were keenly interested in learning about the tools used by Judicial Watch to hold government and elected officials accountable: open records and open meetings laws. Mr. Fitton discussed the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) that operates on the federal level and its limitations with respect to Congress and the courts, as well as the Sunshine Laws that operate at the state and local levels of government.

As an educational foundation, Mr. Fitton informed the guests that Judicial Watch makes available to the public on its Internet site the services it offers as part of its [Open Records Project](#) in the fight against government secrecy. And he noted the uniqueness of Judicial Watch's mission in that when an agency fails or refuses to produce the lawfully requested documents, it pursues those documents in a court of law by filing suit against the offending agency. And all documents—beginning with the FOIA request to the final release of documents—are posted to Judicial Watch's Internet site for public viewing.