

**Module: North Africa and Southwest Asia**  
**Topic Content: Major Countries of North Africa**

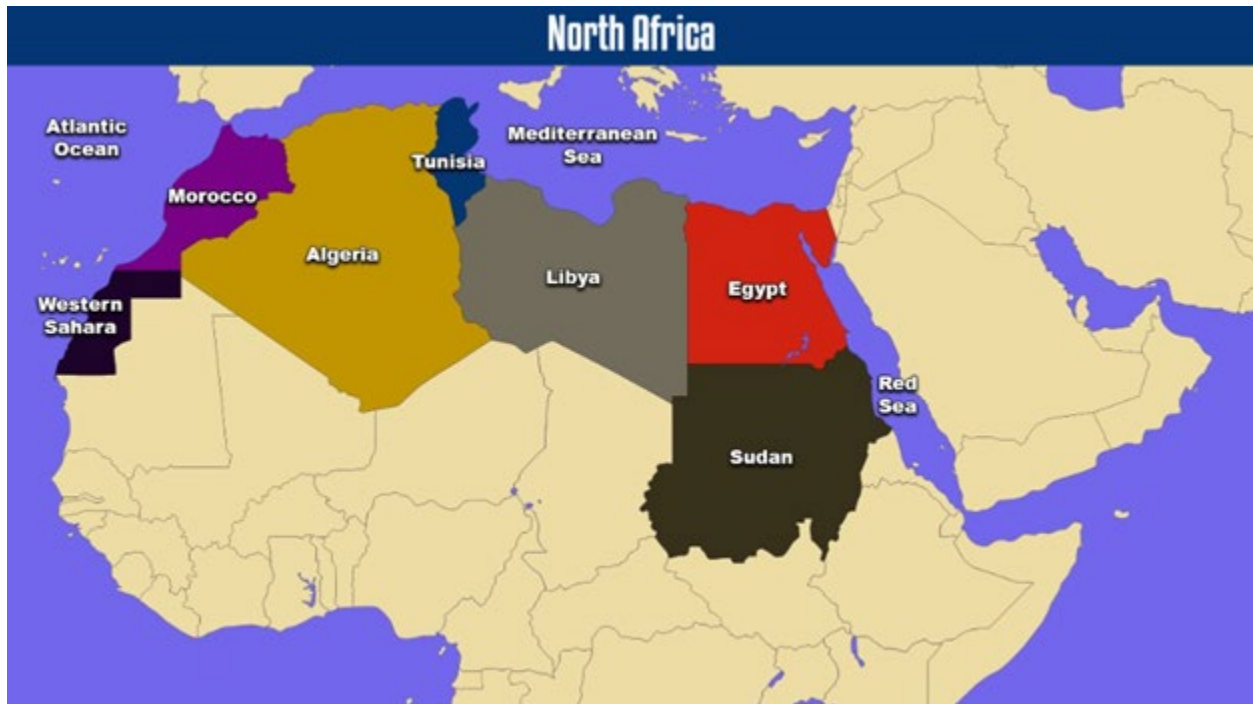
**Major Countries of North Africa**



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## Module: North Africa and Southwest Asia Topic Content: Major Countries of North Africa

### North Africa



North Africa spans the northern part of the African continent. It extends along the southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Red Sea in the east. There are six independent nations in North Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Sudan. There is also one disputed territory known as Western Sahara.

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## Module: North Africa and Southwest Asia

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#### Morocco



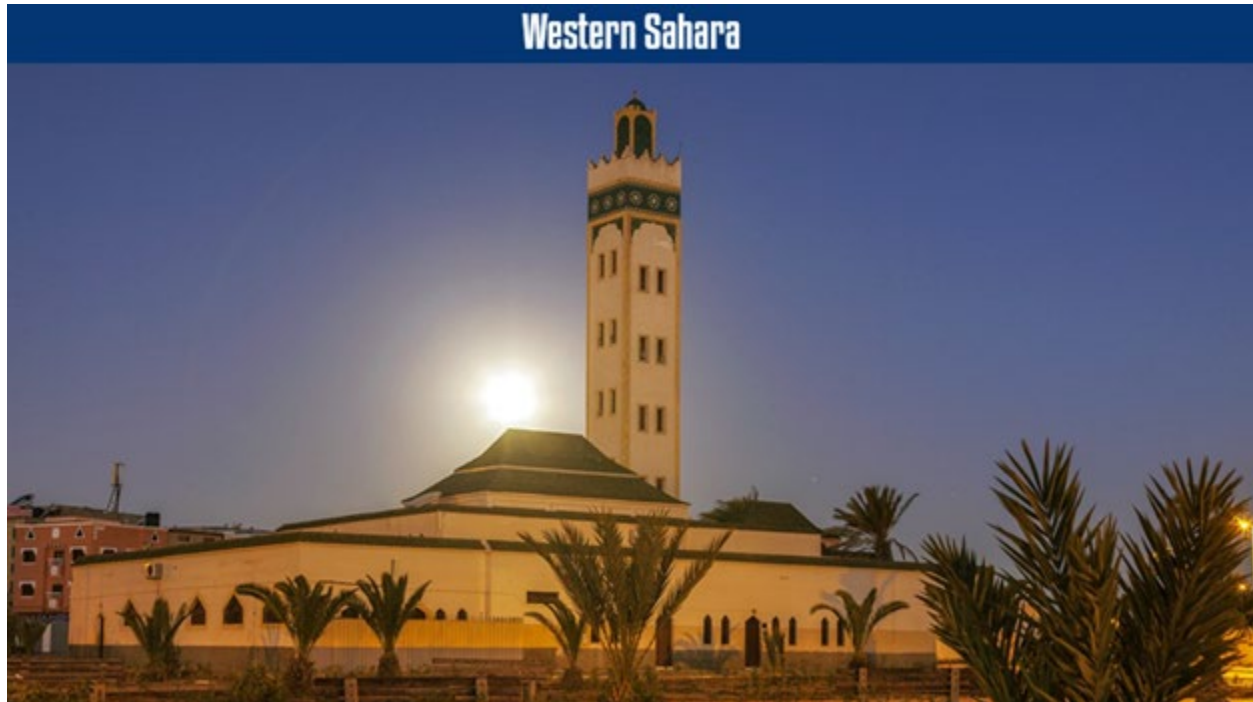
Morocco is located in northwest Africa. It is situated near the Strait of Gibraltar across from Spain. The first Moroccan state was established in the eighth century. Rabat is the capital of Morocco. The city is located in the northern part of the country on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. Rabat was originally established as a fortress. Defensive walls still surround the oldest part of the city. When the French invaded Morocco in 1912, the capital was moved to Rabat. In 1956, Morocco regained its independence and the capital remained in Rabat.

The Moroccan government is a constitutional monarchy. The country is ruled by a King and an elected parliament. The Moroccan economy is relatively diverse with industries in the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors. Major exports include agricultural goods, textiles, and automotive parts. Tourism is also an important part of the economy. There is a significant division between the urban and rural populations in Morocco. Cities are modernized and offer better access to jobs and education. Rural communities maintain a more traditional way of life.

Sunni Islam is Morocco's predominant religion. The country has two official languages: Arabic and Berber. Berber is spoken by the Berber people, who are an indigenous ethnic group from North Africa. Berber has many regional dialects.

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**Western Sahara**



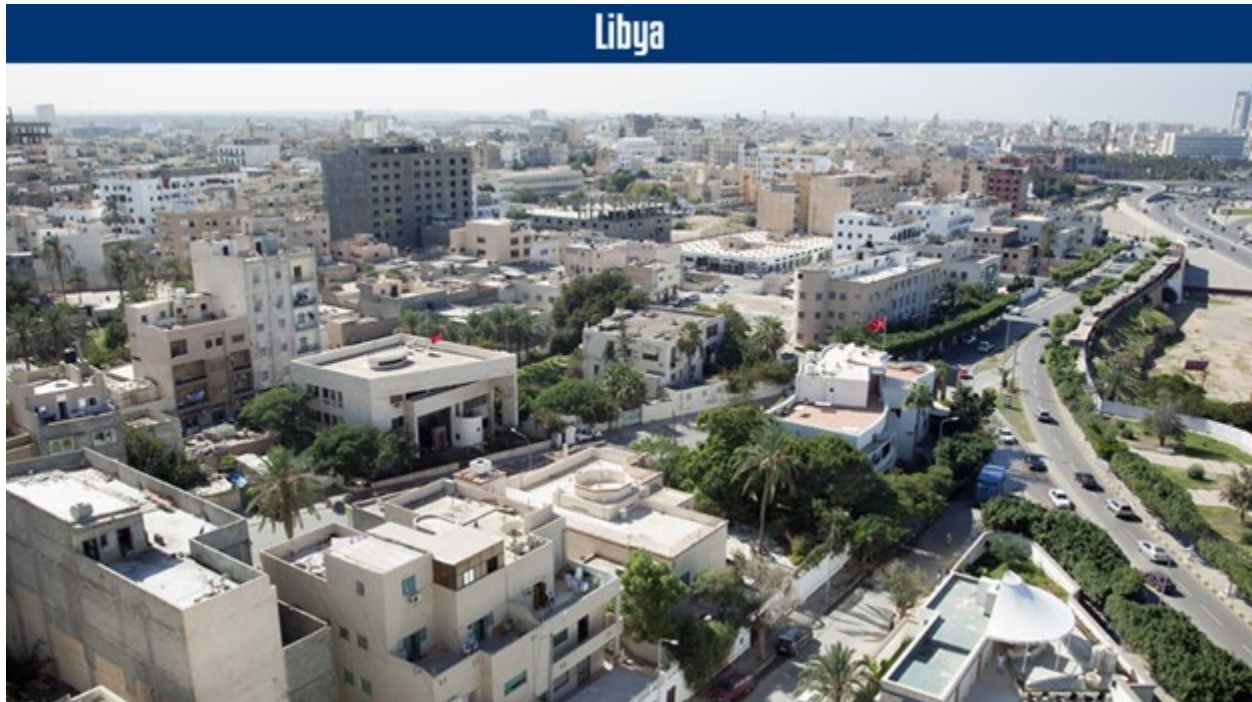
Western Sahara is located along the Atlantic coast of northwest Africa. It is southwest of Morocco. Western Sahara was once a Spanish colony. When Spain withdrew in the 1970s, Morocco claimed and occupied the territory.

Western Sahara has traditionally been inhabited by the Sahrawi people. The Sahrawi are a cultural group with Arab and Berber roots. Many of the Sahrawi lived as pastoral nomads until the twentieth century. The Sahrawi want to establish an independent country in Western Sahara. Morocco wants to control valuable mineral deposits located in the region. This has led to fighting between the Moroccan government and a revolutionary group called the Polisario Front. Although a ceasefire was signed in 1991, the conflict remains unresolved.

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#### Libya



Libya is located on the southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It is west of Egypt and east of Algeria and Tunisia. The Sahara dominates the terrain. Most of Libya is covered in desert. Because of this, the population is concentrated along the coast. The interior of the country is mostly uninhabited.

Libya was a part of the Ottoman Empire until it was conquered by Italy in 1911. Libya gained its independence after Italy was defeated in World War II. Petroleum reserves were discovered in Libya during the 1950s. In 1969, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi overthrew the government and established himself as a dictator. Under his rule, oil revenue was used to provide electricity, water, education, and healthcare to the population. However, Gaddafi also maintained absolute control of the government and suppressed political dissent.

In 2011, political protests in Libya were met with violence. The violence escalated into a civil war. By the end of the war, Gaddafi was dead and his government was overthrown. In 2014, another civil war broke out over control of the country and its oil. This conflict remains unsettled as of 2019.

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#### Egypt



Egypt is located in northeast Africa, where the African and Asian continents meet. Egypt also includes the Sinai Peninsula, which is a small piece of land located in Southwest Asia. The country is covered by desert, so the population mainly lives near the Nile River, the Nile Delta, and the Suez Canal. These areas provide access to water and fertile soil.

The city of Cairo is located near the Nile Delta. Cairo is the capital and most populous city in Egypt. It is also the most populous city in North Africa and Southwest Asia. Cairo has been an important center of culture and trade for thousands of years. The modern city was founded in 969 A.D. (C.E.). However, there are remnants of much older civilizations found in and around the city. This has created a unique landscape where modern buildings stand next to ancient ruins.

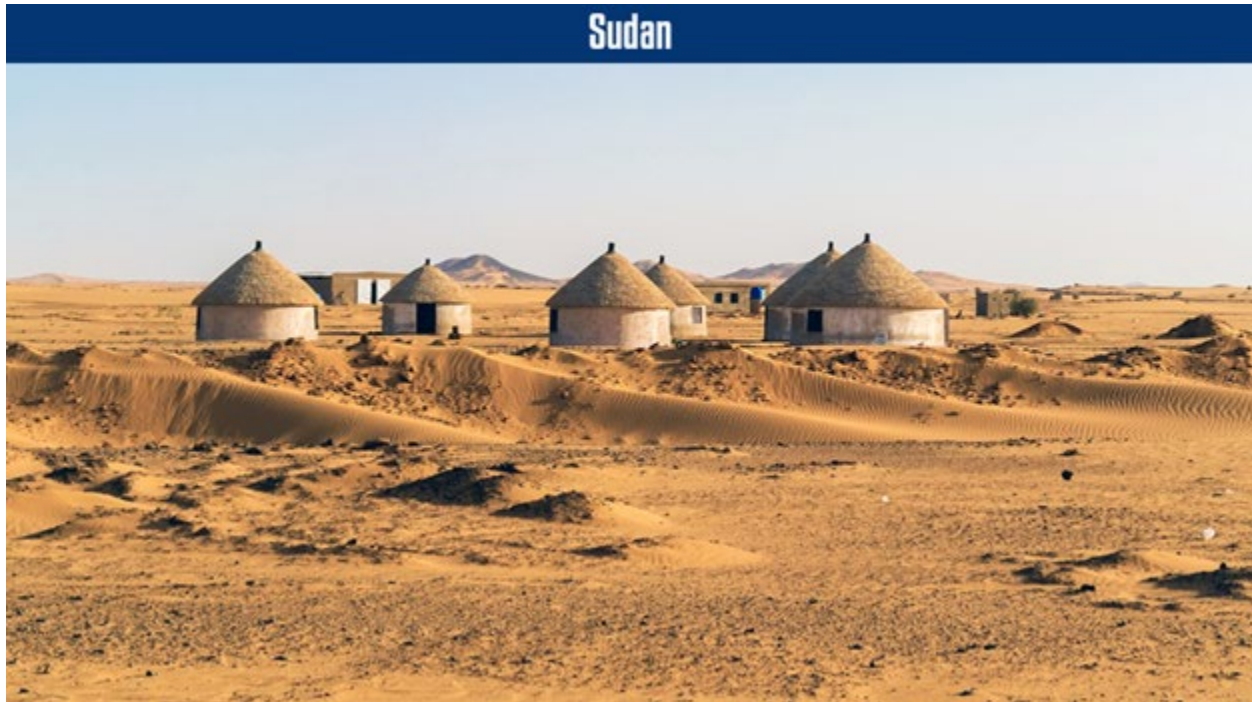
The Pyramids and Sphinx are the most famous landmarks in Egypt. They were constructed during the Old Kingdom of Ancient Egypt. Over time, Egypt was conquered and controlled by Ancient Persians, Greeks, Romans, and Byzantines. Arabs conquered the region in the seventh century and brought the Arabic language and the Islamic religion to the country. Arabic is still the official language today. About 90% of Egyptians are Sunni Muslims, and Christians make up about 10% of the population.

The modern state of Egypt gained independence from the British Empire in 1952. Like many other Arab nations, protests and revolution broke out in Egypt in 2011. Political unrest shook the region for a few years, but seems to be stabilizing. The country has drafted a new constitution. A new president and a new parliament have also been elected.

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#### Sudan



Sudan is located south of Egypt, on the western coast of the Red Sea. It used to be a larger country that included South Sudan, but these nations split in 2011. The Nile River flows through Sudan. The capital, Khartoum, is located at the confluence of the Nile's main tributaries: the Blue Nile and the White Nile. The country is mostly arid, but the rivers provide freshwater and fertile soil.

Sudan was once co-ruled by the United Kingdom and Egypt. During this time, Sudan and South Sudan were ruled as separate territories. In 1956, both territories were combined into a single nation and given independence. During the late twentieth century, the country was torn apart by conflict and civil war. The fighting largely stemmed from cultural differences between the two regions. Sudan is an Arab nation. South Sudan is not; it is culturally closer to other sub-Saharan African nations. The population of Sudan is predominantly Islamic. The population of South Sudan follows Christianity and traditional African religions. These cultural differences have fueled decades of violence in the region.

Millions of people have died throughout this conflict, and millions of refugees have been displaced. The Sudanese economy has struggled to recover from the destruction caused by years of fighting. Most of the population lives in poor rural communities. These people practice subsistence agriculture to survive.