

MOROCCO

Collapse of the Minaret of the Bab Berdieyinne Mosque

The outstanding cultural heritage of Morocco is characterised by the earthen architecture of its cultural landscapes and the historic urban ensembles. Both require constant maintenance with traditional materials and techniques. In the country there are many cases of heritage at risk – an enormous challenge for conservationists. In one of the following issues of *Heritage at Risk* ICOMOS Morocco should highlight the most urgent cases. The royal city of Meknes, inscribed in the World Heritage List in 1996, was founded in the

11th century by the Almoravids as a military settlement. Later, under Sultan Moulay Ismaïl (1672–1727), the founder of the Alawite dynasty, Meknes became the capital city surrounded by massive walls and gates. On 19 February 2010, the minaret of the Bab Berdieyinne mosque in the old part of town suddenly collapsed. The disaster, with many people dead or injured, happened during Friday prayers and destroyed large parts of the 18th-century mosque made of rammed earth. The collapse followed several days of heavy rain, which has been blamed for weakening the minaret. The Moroccan King Mohammed VI ordered to rebuild the minaret “to its original form”. Apparently, experts will now check the safety of the country’s historic mosques.

(For reports see for instance *Kuwait Times*, 21 February 2010 and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 22 February 2010.)



Workers removing the rubble inside the mosque



View of Meknes with the Bab Berdieyinne Mosque on the left