

# Powerful earthquake kills 'at least' 296 in Morocco

View of rubble from the earthquake in Marrakech, Morocco September 9, 2023. Al Oula TV/Handout via REUTERS

**A powerful earthquake struck Morocco's High Atlas mountains late on Friday, killing at least 296 people, destroying buildings and sending residents of major cities rushing from their homes.**

The Interior Ministry said the number constituted a preliminary death toll and that 153 people had been injured. A local official said most deaths were in mountain areas that were hard to reach.

[For all latest news, follow The Daily Star's Google News channel.](#)

Residents of Marrakech, the nearest big city to the epicentre, said some buildings had collapsed in the old city, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and local television showed pictures of a fallen mosque minaret with rubble lying on smashed cars.

Pan-Arab al-Arabiya news channel reported that five people were killed from one family, citing unnamed local sources.

Montasir Itri, a resident of the mountain village of Asni near the epicentre, said most houses there were damaged. "Our neighbours are under the rubble and people are working hard to rescue them using available means in the village," he said.

A car is covered in dust in the aftermath of the earthquake in Marrakech, Morocco September 9, 2023 in this screen grab taken from a video. Al Oula TV/Handout via REUTERS

Further west, near Taroudant, teacher Hamid Afkar said he had fled his home and there had been aftershocks following the initial quake.

"The earth shook for about 20 seconds. Doors opened and shut by themselves as I rushed downstairs from the second floor," he said.

Morocco's geophysical centre said the quake struck in the Ighil area of the High Atlas with a magnitude of 7.2. The U.S. Geological Survey put the quake's magnitude at 6.8 and said it was at a relatively shallow depth of 18.5 km (11.5 miles).

Ighil, a mountainous area with small farming villages, is about 70 km (40 miles) southwest of Marrakech. The quake struck just after 11 p.m. (2200 GMT).

## **MARRAKECH DAMAGE**

In Marrakech, some houses in the tightly packed old city had collapsed and people were working hard by hand to remove debris while they waited for heavy equipment, said resident Id Waaziz Hassan.

Footage of the medieval city wall showed big cracks in one section and parts that had fallen, with rubble lying on the street.

Another Marrakech resident, Brahim Himmi, said he saw ambulances coming out of the old town and many building facades damaged. He said people were frightened and were staying outside in case of another quake.