

Monday, 22 June 2009

## Mansouri is the second female mayor in Morocco Morocco's Marrakech elects first woman mayor



A woman voting in Rabat, Morocco on June 12.

### Marrakech, MOROCCO (Al Arabiya)

A 33-year-old lawyer on Monday became the first woman to be elected mayor of Marrakech, one of Morocco's biggest cities and a key tourist destination.

Fatima Zahra Mansouri outpolled veteran outgoing Mayor Omar Jazouli by 54 votes to 35 in Monday's municipal council vote, becoming the second woman to take a mayoral position in Morocco after Asmaa Chaâbi, mayor of Essaouira.

"I am honored to lead Marrakech city hall," Mansouri said. "I hope to be able to measure up to this new challenge."

Mansouri studied law in France, and is a daughter of a former assistant to the local authority chief in Marrakech, which has a population of more than one million.

"Her election reflects the image of a modern Morocco," said the secretary general of her Party for Authenticity and Modernity (PAM) Sheikh Muhammad Biyadillah.

Following the June 12 local elections, PAM won 43 seats in Marrakech second to al-Ittihad al-Doustouri party, which won 50 seats.

PAM, despite ranking second, managed to ally with a number of parties and form a majority coalition of 62 members to support Mansouri.

### Disputed candidacy

Prior to Mansouri's election a number of Moroccan newspapers reported that parties allied with PAM

refused to endorse Mansouri and had threatened to break away from the party if it continued pushing for Mansouri's candidacy.

PAM's coalition parties said Mansouri lacked sufficient public management experience and could fail to resolve major issues the city council may encounter, such as al-Maghribia and al-Marrakchia newspapers reported Monday.

The newspapers reported today that undisclosed political bargaining led the endorsement of Mansouri by PAM's allies.

PAM was the biggest winner in June 12 municipal elections, taking 21 percent of the votes, edging out the Istiqlal party of Prime Minister Abbas al-Fassi.

The polls were a first electoral test for the PAM, a coalition of five small parties formed in 2008 by former interior minister Fouad Ali al-Himma, a friend of King Mohammed VI of Morocco.

(With AFP)