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The *Mudawana* through *Zanka Contact*: The Real-Life Implications of the Exclusion of Unmarried Women and the Criminalization of Extramarital Affairs

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This paper analyzes how the *Mudawana* (the laws governing family code) and the 2004 reforms to it have been beneficial, or detrimental, to marginalized women through Ismael El-Iraki's film *Zanka Contact* (2020), also known as *Burning Casablanca*. I argue that the film illustrates real-world implications due to the exclusion of unmarried women or women without male relations, criminalization of extramarital relations, and the lack of work and educational opportunities for women. Morocco has been hailed as an international example of modern women's rights due to the 2004 reforms to the *Mudawana*, which gave women more access to legal services, healthcare, and labor markets. However, as the *Mudawana* is one of the few Moroccan laws that relies primarily on Islamic sources, those who do not follow the Islamic framework are often excluded. Also, despite the increasing number of women in the workforce, women are still facing prejudice that prevents them from attaining justice and have suffered more from the reforms. The main character, Rajae, is a sex worker whose family abandoned her after she was raped. A local pimp finds her and takes her in. We meet Rajae at a turning point in her life when she is resolved to leave this lifestyle. However, she faces obstacles that prevent her from moving on. She cannot rely on government support as one of her clients is an official and when she attempts to run away, he hunts her down. To go to law enforcement would also mean turning herself in due to the criminalization of extramarital relations. She must navigate life with only the support of a musician with a drug addiction.

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