

# Algeria, Morocco spar over Western Sahara at UN



## ALGERIA

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**Moroccan and Algerian representatives to the United Nations sparred over the fate of Western Sahara on Tuesday, with Algiers calling for the revival of a long-stalled referendum on the fate of the former Spanish colony.**

"We Algerians have chosen the camp of justice, decolonization, freedom, self-determination and human rights," said Algerian Ambassador Amar Bendjama.

"This commitment applies to the cause of the Sahrawi people, who have been waiting for nearly half a century for the UN to do them justice."

Considered by the United Nations to be a "non-self-governing territory," 80 percent of Western Sahara is controlled by Morocco, which envisions autonomy for the region, though with it ultimately remaining under Rabat's control.

Algeria meanwhile has long supported the Polisario Front, an independence movement led by the region's Indigenous Sahrawi population.

A UN mission has been deployed in Western Sahara since 1991, tasked with organizing a referendum on the territory's future.

The referendum has never taken place, and in late 2020 the Polisario announced it was resuming fighting after a long cease-fire.

"If the Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara had really turned it into a paradise, with or without the granting of autonomy, why is this referendum being prevented?" Bendjama said, while also conveying his country's condolences to Morocco, in the wake of the country's deadly earthquake earlier this month.

"You can't shed crocodile tears and at the same time attack a country that is still living through a tragedy," Moroccan Ambassador Omar Hilale shot back.

Hilale also reiterated Rabat's stance on Western Sahara, calling for the respect of "Morocco's national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

"Morocco is in (the) Sahara and will remain so until the end of time," he said.

Emboldened by US recognition of Morocco's claims over Western Sahara in 2020, in return for Rabat's rapprochement with Israel, the kingdom has since deployed

increasingly offensive diplomacy to rally other countries around its position.

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