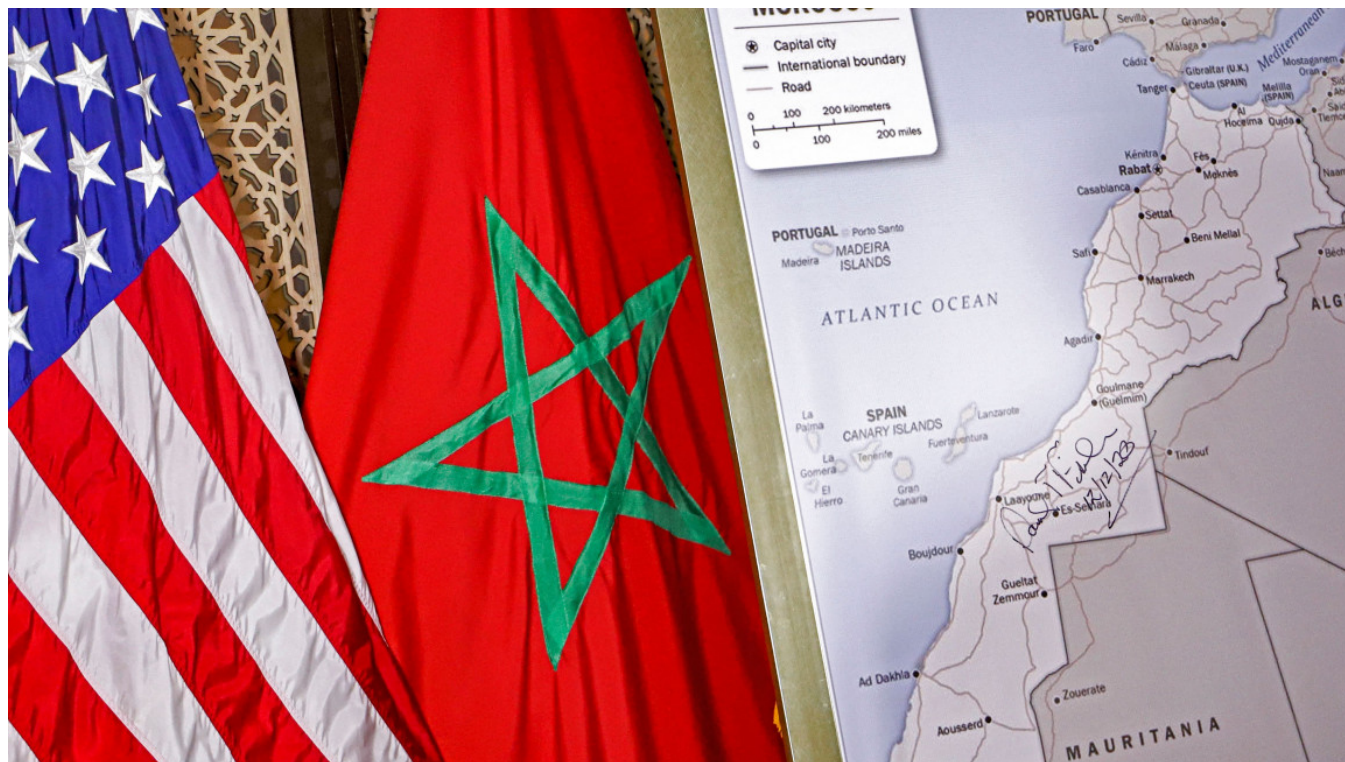


US diplomat in Morocco for Western Sahara autonomy talks

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[Morocco](#)'s foreign minister Nasser Bourita will meet with US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for North African Affairs Joshua Harris on Monday for fresh discussions on [Western Sahara](#).

Harris arrived in Morocco on Sunday, where he is due to reaffirm US support for a [Moroccan plan for the "autonomy" of Western Sahara](#), the US State Department said in a statement.

His arrival in Morocco follows [a visit to Algeria earlier this month](#), where he underlined US support for the plan for Western Sahara which would keep the disputed territory under Moroccan sovereignty.

"The United States views Morocco's Autonomy Proposal as serious, credible, and realistic, and one potential approach to satisfy the

aspirations for the people of Western Sahara," Harris [said](#) during his visit to Algeria.

"So, we are focused on doing all we can including with our Algerian friends and partners to allow the UN process to succeed."

Morocco and Algeria have for decades been at loggerheads over Western Sahara.

Algeria has long supported and hosted the Polisario Front, a group fighting for Western Sahara's independence.

Morocco controls most of Western Sahara and sees the former Spanish colony as its sovereign territory. The Polisario Front controls some 20 percent of the territory.

The Moroccan plan for Western Sahara, announced in 2006, would allow Sahrawis to run their affairs "democratically" through legislative, executive, and judicial bodies while Rabat retains control over defence and foreign affairs.

Harris [visited Algeria and Morocco](#) as well as Western Sahara in September. Violence has resurged in the disputed territory, with [multiple blasts happening last October](#).

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The US agreed to recognise Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara in exchange for Rabat's normalisation of ties with Israel, through the Abraham Accords. Rabat signed the deal, which was orchestrated by the Trump administration, in 2020. Current US President Joe Biden has not

shown any inclination to change the deal.

However, Washington has been wary of angering Algeria on the issue, as ties between Algeria and Russia appear to deepen.

Algeria has also abstained from condemning Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, which began in February 2022.

Last month, Algeria and Russia held their [first joint military exercise](#) on Algerian soil, and the two countries [held joint naval exercises](#) in the western Mediterranean on 8 December.

Algerian and US officials had only a few days earlier [discussed defence cooperation](#).