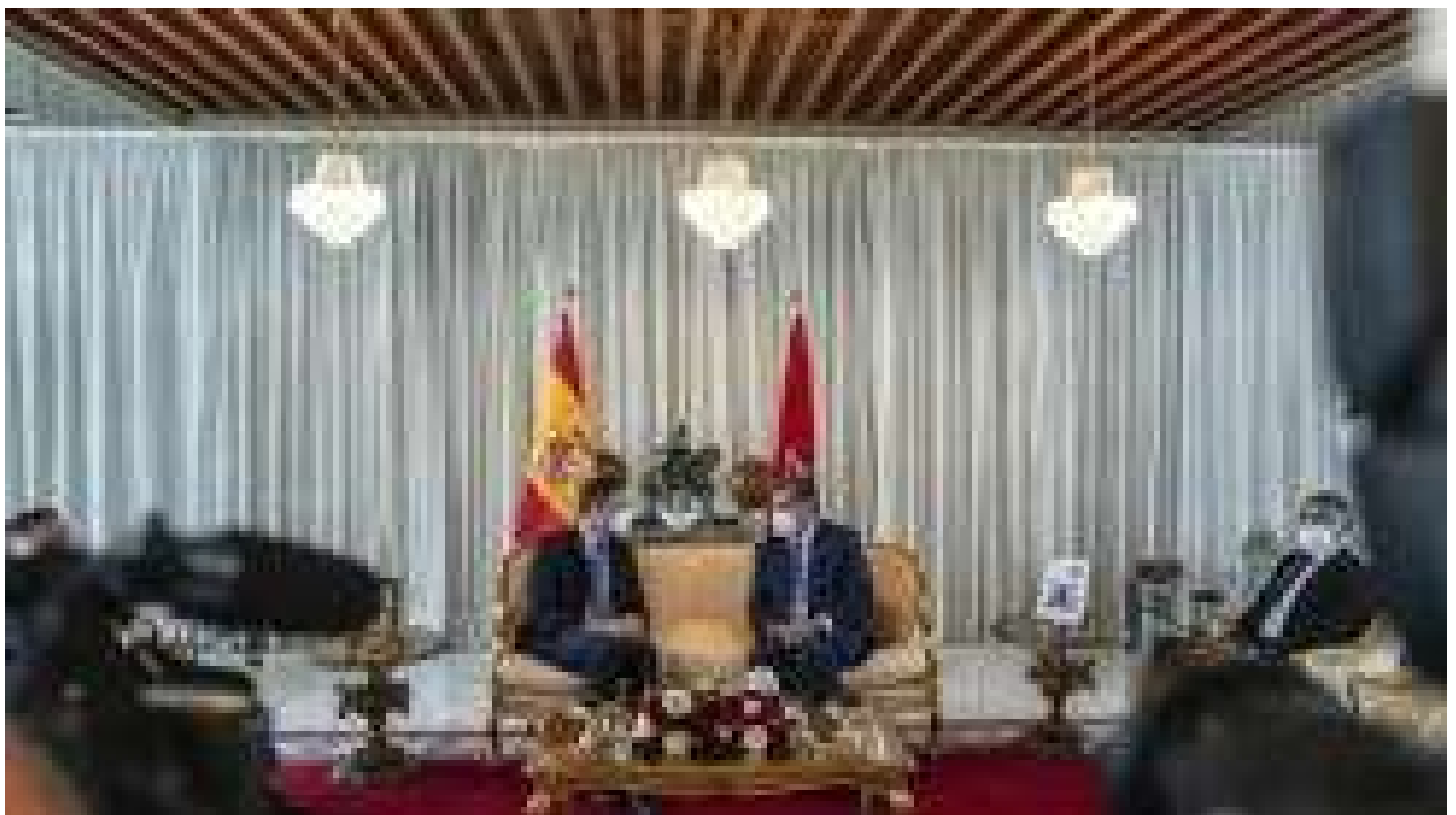


# Western Sahara: Madrid's diplomatic reversal undermines its relations with Algiers

The announcement of the suspension of all contact by the Polisario Front with the Spanish government comes less than a month after a historic turn taken by Spain on the highly sensitive issue of Western Sahara. Madrid, which has until now displayed its neutrality, is aligning itself with the Moroccan position after publicly announcing its support for the Moroccan autonomy plan. A shift that provokes numerous reactions nationally and internationally, particularly with Algeria.

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Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez during his meeting with Moroccan Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch in Rabat on April 7, 2022. AP - Mosa'ab Elshamy

By : **RFI** Follow

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This is a snub for the head of government, Pedro Sanchez. The Spanish Congress of Deputies voted with a large majority to align with United Nations resolutions and distance themselves from the autonomy plan proposed by Morocco to resolve the Western Sahara conflict.

A majority of political parties are taking a stand against this historic turnaround by the Spanish government and there are numerous criticisms from civil society, but Pedro Sanchez stays the course and decides to go it alone.

## **New crisis with Algiers**

From a diplomatic point of view, if Spain ends a crisis with Morocco, it begins another with Algeria.

Algiers has already taken sanctions against Madrid. The government has suspended the repatriation of irregular immigrants on Algerian territory, recently reduced the frequency of flights of the airline Iberia for flights between Madrid and Algiers, recalled its ambassador and **plans to increase the prices of gas delivered to Spain** .

Relations between the two countries therefore suddenly deteriorated. But from the Spanish point of view, the Algerian power of nuisance is less

compared to that which the Shereef kingdom can have.

## Two Moroccan airstrikes

Two Moroccan airstrikes also hit civilian vehicles in Western Sahara this Friday. The Polisario Front, the Sahrawi independence movement, announced it this weekend through its press agency.

According to a Mauritanian security source, the first strike took place around twenty kilometers from the Mauritanian border, towards Aïn Ben Tili. Two Algerian trucks were targeted. There were no casualties. The drivers recovered by the Mauritanian army were brought back to Algeria. The second strike targeted a convoy of cars. At least three Sahrawi civilians were killed and the survivors were able to reach Aïn Ben Tili in the evening

*Spain wanted to put an end to the crisis with Morocco which had started 15 months ago and which was complicating its life, particularly in terms of migration in the cities of Ceuta and Melilla and especially in the Canaries.*