

Recognition of Israel on the sovereignty of Western Sahara: reactions flood in Morocco

Reactions followed one another on Tuesday July 18 in Morocco, after Monday's announcement of Israel's recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. This Israeli recognition comes after a long negotiation process during which many voices were raised in Morocco to denounce the rapprochement with the Jewish state, and the abandonment of the Palestinian cause in Rabat.

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Israeli and Moroccan flags fly side by side during a ceremony in Tel Aviv, Israel, in September 2022. © JACK GUEZ / AFP

By : **RFI** Follow

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Morocco celebrates what it considers a diplomatic victory. Israel has indeed just **recognized its sovereignty** over the disputed territory of Western Sahara, a territory that the United Nations considers “non-autonomous” but which Morocco occupies and administers as an integral part of its kingdom.

While Moroccan King Mohammed VI is president of the Al Quds committee, one of the committees of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), for the preservation of the heritage of Jerusalem, a holy city for Islam, many did not understand the decision of the sovereign to get closer to the Hebrew State.

But Hicham Ait Menna, member of the ruling majority assures him, this does not change anything in Morocco's commitment. “ *Morocco always supports the demands of the brotherly Palestinian people, but Morocco has always maintained that the settlement of the conflict must be done within a framework of peace* ,” he said on the microphone of our correspondent in Rabat, **Victor Mauriat** .

Mixed reactions

In the rest of the political class, comments are still divided but the most vocal voices against Israel such as the Islamists of the Justice and Development Party have for the moment refused to comment on the news.

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Those who agreed to speak welcomed the announcement with enthusiasm, like Driss Sentissi, leader of the Haraki opposition group. “ *We are very satisfied. I think we have taken the necessary time to convince that the Moroccan Sahara is Moroccan and has never been anything other than Moroccan* ,” he said.

This recognition will further strengthen the **links between Rabat and Tel Aviv** . An embassy should soon see the light of day in the Moroccan capital. Israel even announced this Monday the appointment of the first military attaché to Morocco in the history of the two countries.

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Reactions from the Moroccan political class

Victor Mauriat

An Israeli position “ *reflected in all actions* ”

Newsletter

In a letter addressed to the Moroccan sovereign, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu specifies that his country's position will be “ *reflected in all relevant acts and documents of the Israeli government* ”. It will be “ *transmitted to the United Nations, regional and international organizations of which Israel is a member, as well as to all countries with which Israel maintains diplomatic relations* .”

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According to the Moroccan Youssef Chihab, professor at the Sorbonne and specialist in geopolitical issues in the Maghreb, Rabat is betting on the “Israeli lobby” in the world. He calls on the Sahrawi separatists of the **Polisario Front** to accept negotiations, on the basis of the Moroccan initiative for a status of autonomy for the Sahara :

“ *There can only be peace in this region when this solution is valid and validated by the United Nations. But Morocco, at the limit, is playing a double game: it suits it that the problem gets bogged down at the UN level and Morocco is advancing in the Sahara* ,” he indicates at the microphone of **Houda Ibrahim**.

“ *Israel's agreements are an important step, knowing that Israeli lobbies will deploy around the world to push recalcitrant countries to also recognize the Moroccan nature of the Sahara. In this case, the UN will itself be able to validate the Moroccan nature of the Sahara. Knowing that time is on the side of Morocco in this matter, and that the Polisario has nothing to gain from a posture of breaking the ceasefire, because the **military differences** are such that they are not in its power. favor. And the only path left to him is the path of*

negotiation. So perhaps the negotiated political solution is better than remaining frozen in the Tindouf camps, knowing that the one who has the timing, the time, to resolve this problem is Algiers, ” he continues.