

Polisario Front's commander, three Western Sahara fighters killed by drone



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ALGIERS: A Polisario Front commander and three Sahrawi fighters were killed in the disputed Western Sahara as a US delegation visited the region, the official Saharawi news agency SPS reported.

The Western Sahara dispute dates back to 1975, when colonial ruler Spain withdrew from the territory, sparking a 15-year war between Morocco and the Polisario which seeks the territory's independence.

“The head of the sixth military region, Abba Ali Hamudi, member of the Polisario national secretariat, fell on the field of honor with three other fighters,” announced the Polisario agency.

The Sahrawi presidency has declared three days of national mourning starting Saturday.

According to the Saharan information site Ecsaharai, “following fighting in the Mahbes region, the Moroccan air force responded using two Israeli-made drones.”

FASTFACT

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No confirmation could be obtained from the Moroccan side.

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In April 2021, another Sahrawi military leader, the commander of the gendarmerie Addah Al-Bendir, was killed by a drone in Tifariti, a northern region under Polisario control.

Rabat controls nearly 80 percent of Western Sahara and sees the entire region, home to abundant phosphates and fisheries, as its sovereign territory.

The Polisario continue to demand a UN-supervised self-determination referendum, which was agreed in a 1991 cease-fire accord but has still not taken place.

After nearly 30 years of ceasefire, the truce broke down in November 2020.

Morocco sent troops to the far south of the Western Sahara to disperse Sahrawi protesters blocking the sole highway to Mauritania and the rest of Africa, which the Polisario says was built after 1991 in violation of the agreement.

For almost three years, the Sahrawis have reported frequent clashes, often announcing that they have inflicted losses on the Moroccan side, which are never confirmed by Rabat.

Western Sahara is a vast desert territory bordering the Atlantic, with fish-rich waters and significant phosphate reserves.
