

Sahara tension: Moroccan row deepens with Germany



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RABAT: Morocco's Foreign Ministry has suspended ties with the German Embassy because of "deep misunderstandings," notably related to the disputed Western Sahara.

Morocco is angered by German criticism of former US President Donald Trump's recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara in return for moves by Rabat to normalize its relations with Israel.

A letter leaked online from Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita to the rest of the government orders officials to suspend "all contact, interaction and cooperation" with the German Embassy and embassy-related activities.

A senior Moroccan government official confirmed on Tuesday that the letter was authentic, but said it was not meant to be made public.

The official also noted the appearance of a flag of the pro-independence Polisario Front outside the state assembly in the northern German city of Bremen. Germany's Foreign Ministry said it was aware of media reports about the letter.

The Algeria-backed Polisario Front fought for independence for Western Sahara after Morocco annexed the former Spanish colony in 1975. UN peacekeepers now monitor a 30-year-old cease-fire between Moroccan forces and Polisario supporters.

The UN has expressed concern that Trump's decision could thwart negotiation efforts in the long-running Western Sahara conflict.
