

U.S. adopts map of Morocco that includes disputed Western Sahara



U.S. diplomat David Fischer shows map of Morocco to include Western Sahara. (Photo: AP)

Rabat, December 13 (RHC)-- The United States has adopted a "new official" map of Morocco that includes the disputed territory of Western Sahara, its ambassador to Rabat said.

“This map is a tangible representation of President Trump’s bold proclamation two days ago – recognising Morocco’s sovereignty over Western Sahara,” Ambassador David Fischer said on Saturday, according to a statement seen by AFP news agency.

He signed the “new official U.S. government map of the kingdom of Morocco” at a ceremony in the U.S. embassy in the capital, Rabat, adding that the map would be presented to Morocco’s King Mohammed VI.

Western Sahara is a disputed and divided former Spanish colony, mostly under Morocco’s control, where tensions with the pro-independence Polisario Front have simmered since the 1970s. Morocco on Thursday became the fourth Arab state this year, after the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan, to announce it had agreed to normalise relations with Israel.

U.S. President Donald Trump, in turn, backed Morocco’s contested sovereignty over Western Sahara, something Morocco has spent decades trying to gain support for.

Western Sahara has been on the United Nations’ list of non-self-governing territories, a stance also taken by the African Union, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and the European Union. The region is home to some 500,000 people, most of whom live in the capital, Laayoune.

The Polisario Front condemned “in the strongest terms the fact that outgoing American President Donald Trump attributes to Morocco something which does not belong” to the country. The movement dismissed the announcement and vowed to fight on until Moroccan forces withdraw from all of Western Sahara.

Last month, the Polisario announced that it regarded a 1991 ceasefire as over after Morocco sent troops into a UN-patrolled buffer zone to reopen the road to neighbouring Mauritania – Morocco’s sole land link to sub-Saharan Africa.

The Front has since claimed that repeated exchanges of fire have taken place along the 2,700-km (1,700-mile) sand barrier that separates the two sides.

The prime minister of Algeria -- Morocco’s neighbor and regional rival, as well as a key foreign supporter of the Polisario Front -- on Saturday criticised “foreign manoeuvres” that he said aimed to “destabilise Algeria.” “There is now a desire by the Zionist entity to come closer to our borders,” Prime Minister Abdelaziz Djerad said, in reference to Israel.

The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), which Polisario leaders proclaimed in 1976, is a member of the African Union but controls just 20 percent of the territory, mostly empty desert. The territory’s main sources of revenue – its phosphate deposits and rich Atlantic fisheries – are all in Moroccan hands.

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