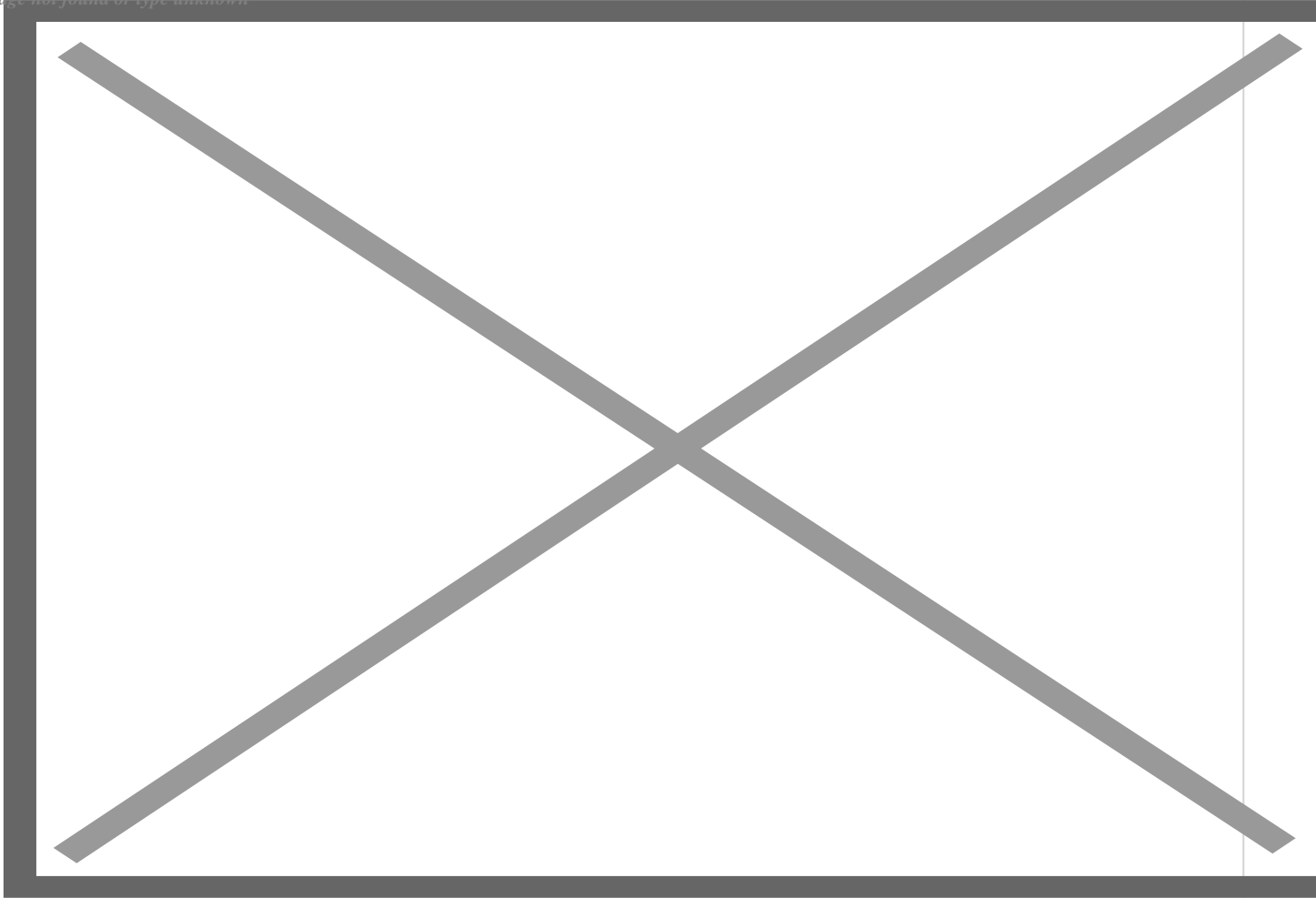


Algeria recalls ambassador to France for consultations

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The Algerian presidency did not immediately give a reason for the move [File: Farouk Batiche/AFP]

Algiers, October 3 (RHC)-- Algeria has recalled its ambassador to France for consultations, though the reason was not immediately clear. The office of the president said on Saturday that a statement on the issue would be issued later.

On Thursday, the government said it summoned the French ambassador to Algiers after Paris decided to slash the number of visas it issues to nationals of Algeria and other countries in North Africa's Maghreb

region.

“We will reduce the number of visas very significantly,” French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said in Paris on Wednesday. The number of visas issued for Algeria and Morocco will be reduced by 50 percent, while visas granted for Tunisian nationals will be reduced by two-thirds, he added.

Algeria’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the move, which France said was in response to Maghreb governments’ refusal to take back illegal immigrants and refugees sent home by Paris, as a “unilateral decision of the French government.”

Far-right French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen gave qualified backing to the visa reduction on Tuesday, but suggested that President Emmanuel Macron’s government waited too long before acting. Le Pen was Macron’s main rival in the 2017 election and is seen as his principal opponent.

Morocco’s foreign minister on Tuesday slammed the French decision as “unjustified.” Nasser Bourita said his country has issued 400 consular documents to Moroccans being expelled from France, but the number was limited because many of them refused to take a coronavirus test, which is required to re-enter Morocco.

That is “the problem of France, which must deal with it”, Bourita told a news conference in the capital Rabat. Tunisia took a more conciliatory public stance. President Kais Saied’s office said: “We are among countries that are cooperative in this domain, and we have excellent relations with France.”

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