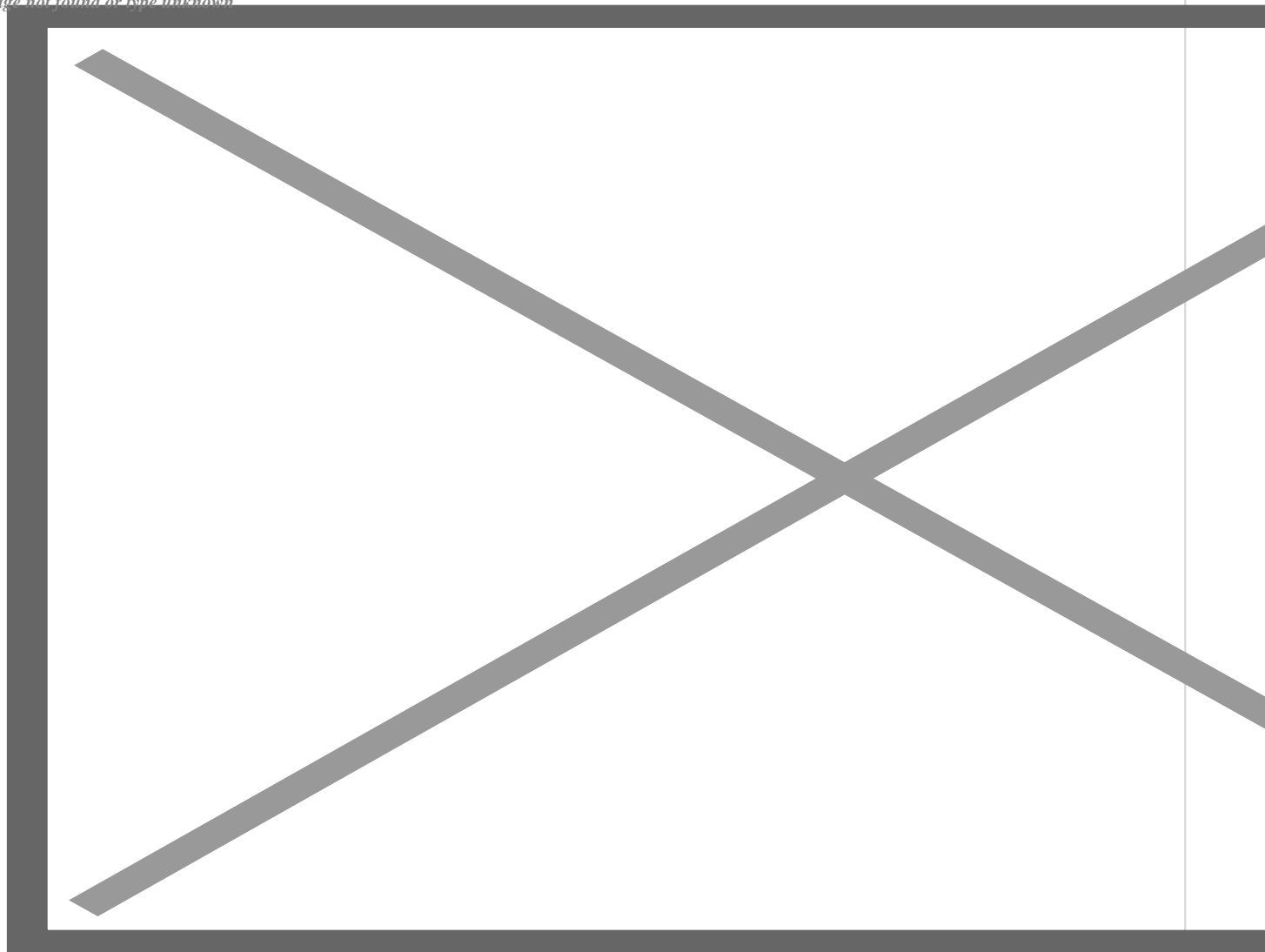


Moroccan journalists condemn normalization with Israel

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In this file picture, employees of the Israeli i24NEWS channel work at the network's headquarters in the Israeli port city of Jaffa near Tel Aviv, the Israeli-occupied territories. (Photo by Getty Images)

Rabat, June 14 (RHC)-- A group of Moroccan journalists have condemned the U.S.-sponsored normalization of diplomatic relations between the North African country and Israel, and demanded closure

of the office of Israel's i24NEWS television news channel in the capital Rabat.

On Monday, the journalists in a joint statement denounced media cooperation with Israel as “a crime against Palestinians, Moroccans and humanity.” They condemned the opening of an office for the Israeli i24NEWS channel in Morocco, and demanded its immediate closure.

The journalists stated that the measure provoked the feelings of Moroccans, whose hearts go for supporting the Palestinian cause and defending oppressed Palestinians.

Veteran journalist Aboubakr Jamaï, Ali Anouzla, the editor-in-chief of the online media platform Lakome who is a well-known critic of government policies, independent journalist Hajar Raissouni and Hanane Bakour were among the distinguished signatories of the Moroccan journalists' statement.

i24News channel opened an office in Morocco on May 30, becoming the first Israeli television channel to have a presence in the North African country.

A ceremony attended by a host of figures and academics was held at the archaeological site of Chellah in Rabat to celebrate the opening of the office. The Israeli channel is expected to have another two offices in Rabat and Casablanca.

Israel and Morocco agreed on December 10, 2020 to normalize relations in a deal brokered with the help of the administration of former U.S. President Donald Trump, making the North African country the fourth Arab state to strike a normalization deal with the regime. The others were the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan.

Trump sealed the agreement in a phone call with Morocco's King Mohammed VI. As part of the agreement, the U.S. president agreed to recognize Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara region, which has been at the center of a dispute with neighboring Algeria.

The Algerian Foreign Ministry later rejected Trump's stance, saying the US decision “has no legal effect because it contradicts UN resolutions, especially UN Security Council resolutions on Western Sahara.”

The Algeria-backed and pro-independence Polisario Front has also rejected “in the strongest terms” Trump's stance on the disputed Western Sahara Desert region, stating that Trump had attempted to give to Morocco “that which does not belong to it.” The agreement with Israel also drew condemnation from the Palestinians.

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