



Director of
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ALGERIA-
MOROCCO:

Progress on Western Sahara at Risk

Algeria's introduction of a draft UN General Assembly resolution on Western Sahara calling for direct negotiations between representatives of Morocco and the Algerian-backed Polisario Front may set back the nascent economic and political relations between the two countries. b3

Algeria has 41 cosponsors for its text, which goes beyond the UN Secretary General's peace plan by calling for direct public talks. Algerian military officials said recently that Algiers firmly supports the Polisario and will not compromise on direct negotiations. b1, b3

There were two major attacks in August and September designed to put pressure on Morocco to make concessions. b3

Moroccan officials are mounting an intense campaign in the UN to thwart Algerian efforts and have asked friendly countries to support a resolution in favor of the Secretary General's peace initiative. The Moroccans are hinting that they may link progress on cooperation with Algiers to progress on Western Sahara. b3

Algeria wants a prior political commitment that ensures Saharan autonomy and is insisting on direct negotiations to put Morocco in an uncomfortable position. Algerian officials apparently believe that Morocco has more to lose by a Western Saharan stalemate and that Rabat will not jeopardize relations by refusing to compromise. President Bendjedid probably has accepted the hardline position of some of his key advisers as the politically expedient course, particularly in the aftermath of the recent violence in Algeria—even though many Algerians resent the diversion of scarce resources to the Polisario. b3

Morocco so far has been unwilling to grant de facto recognition to the Front by meeting openly with its representatives. b3

Official remarks, both public and private, make it clear that Morocco's King Hassan may be willing to put on hold bilateral relations with Algeria and the "Grand Maghreb" scheme to develop regional unity rather than make domestically unpopular concessions on Western Sahara. b3

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