



# MaghrebiWeek

A snapshot PDF magazine of the news from North Africa and the MENA region

Edition 002

14th April 2025

## Tunisian opposition party goes on hunger strike in prison



Two protests have been staged in Tunisia against the rule of Kais Saied as opposition politician begin a hunger strike in prison.

According to Saudi news agency Asharq Al-Awsat, six detained figures from the opposition Free Constitutional Party have held a hunger strike in light of their impending trial.

The politicians, who include leader Abir Moussi, were arrested on conspiracy charges in 2023.

Abdelhamid Jelassi, Jawhar Ben Mbarek, Khiyam Turki, Ridha Belhaj, Issam Chebbi and Ghazi Chaouachi were all detained in 2023 during a crackdown on opposition politicians from a number of parties.

Saied described the politicians as “traitors and terrorists” at the moment of their arrest and later added that judges who were to acquit them were accomplices. Most high-profile politicians are not in prison including the most

prominent political opponents of Saied, Abir Moussi and Rached Ghannouchi, who is the head of the Ennahada party.

Moussi began her own hunger strike in February of this year after being arrested for calling for the election in Tunisia in October 2024.

Her lawyers released a statement saying that: “Our client informed us that she no longer feels safe  
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### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Morocco links cyberattacks to diplomatic progress on Sahara issue

Morocco has blamed recent cyberattacks on two government institutions on hostile actors seeking to undermine its diplomatic progress on the Sahara issue, reports the Moroccan government friendly Hespress on April 10th.

Sensitive data from the National Social Security Fund was leaked and partially distorted online.

The attacks coincided with the US reaffirming recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over the Sahara.

#### US renews support for Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio reiterated support for Morocco and their sovereignty claims over the Western Sahara, according to The New Arab on April 8th.

Support for Morocco's sovereignty claims has been a long source of contention with Algeria.

During his first term in office, Donald Trump supported Morocco and Rubio backed this up by saying: “The United States recognises Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara and supports  
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## New Lockerbie documents point the finger back at Libya

Fresh allegations accusing Libya, once again, to be the architect of the Lockerbie bombing in 1998 have arisen, with the US quick to endorse their validity.

According to the BBC, Samir Shegwara, a Libyan writer and politician, has published documents in his new book *Murderer Who Must Be Saved*, which contains classified documents that he claims he took from the archives of Libya's former intelligence chief Abdullah Senussi after the collapse of Colonel Gaddafi's regime in 2011.

No one, so far, not least the

Americans nor the Libyans, have validated the documents and so question marks arise over whether they are genuine or have been created by those with vested interests in keeping the blame for Lockerbie firmly with Colonel Gaddafi.

The classified documents are claimed to have been dated October 4th 1988 with the handwritten report labelled as “top secret” alongside one of the files contain-

ing the subject matter “Experiments on the use of the suitcase and testing its effectiveness.”

The report later explains that the tests were effective in avoiding X-ray scanners ideal considering the Pan Am flight did not hand check the bags on the flight but rather just X-rayed them.

The report also details an agent  
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by the name of Aboujila Kheir - believed to be Abu Agila Masud Kheir Al-Marimi - who was involved in the tests. More details are believed to involve the "expenses" of an agent who traveled to Malta days before the attack on Pan Am 103, despite the island effectively being the international base for all of Libya's foreign intelligence operatives.

The documents reportedly implicate Abdullah Senussi, Gaddafi's brother-in-law, in planning both the Lockerbie bombing and UTA Flight 772 attack. Senussi was convicted in absentia for the UTA bombing in 1999 but never served his sentence. Scottish and American prosecutors later named him as a Lockerbie suspect in 2015. Sami Shegwara was arrested on the 20th of March after the documents he released were seen as a national security risk. His publishers have come out and stated that Mr Shegwara is facing legal proceedings over the "alleged possession of classified security documents, without legal justification."

The strange case around this arrest is that Shegwara who is the mayor of Hay al Andalous in Tripoli has openly shown his possession of these documents since 2018.

Some believe this shows that the document must be real for the arrest to take place yet it also calls into question why it would take seven years for such documents to become of such importance.

No matter for the Americans who have seized them with both hands.

The documents have now been described by a former FBI agent as "dynamite" and will be used to prosecute Abu Agila Mas'ud Kheir Al-Marimi, known as Masud, who is accused of building the bomb for his trial in Washington.

While these new documents have surfaced and become "dynamite" evidence in the past month, the case of Lockerbie has been a whirlwind of truth and lies.

This is so much so that Nelson Mandela himself was sceptical to

blame Libya.

Documents in the National Archive of the UK have shown that Nelson Mandela told the UK that it was wrong to hold Libya responsible for the Lockerbie bombing.

Mandela was acting as the intermediary for Libya and in a conversation with Tony Blair on April 30th 2001 "Mandela argued it was wrong to hold Libya legally responsible for the bombing," the cables revealed.

Mandela believed that the UN was wrong to impose economic sanctions on Libya after Al Megrahi's extraction to the Netherlands for trial where he was convicted controversially.

Leading figures such as Mandela have not affected the blame Libya has faced even up to the modern day.

The unusual actions in this case echo a familiar pattern, as the US faces accusations of violating international laws to abduct a Libyan national, fuelling suspicions regarding Libyan involvement in the Pan Am attack.

This occurred in November of 2002 Libyan militiamen captured Abu Agila Mas'ud, accused of bombing Pan Am Flight 103 in 1988. US agents took custody of the suspect in a controversial midnight raid in Tripoli. The operation highlights ongoing tensions surrounding the Lockerbie terrorist attack.

After decades of silence, the Lockerbie victims' families have erupted in a rare public challenge, casting doubt on the US justice system's ability to deliver a truly impartial trial.

Dr Swire who leads representations for the families who have lost loved ones in the attack and who lost his daughter himself believes the US has blurred the lines of this situation even more, with a UN trial being the more just prosecution.

Their unprecedented call for a UN-led prosecution speaks volumes about the deep-seated suspicions surrounding America's long-stand-

ing narrative of the terrorist attack. Swire told the BBC Radio Scotland:

***"There are so many loose ends that hang from this dreadful case, largely emanating from America, that I think we should remember what Nelson Mandela said to the world and to us then, and seek a court that is free of being beholden to any nation directly involved in the atrocity itself."***

Whilst Libya has been at the forefront for blame over the Lockerbie bombing, there are alternative theories which suggest Libya was not at the forefront for the bombing.

Many journalists support the opposing argument, suggesting that a bomb was planted on the plane at Heathrow Airport by a Syrian terrorist cell that was paid for by Iran.

Whether this theory of the attack is true or whether Libya is involved it appears that the bombardment of blame onto Libya which has been carried for 37 years feels unjust and excessive, to say the least.

The current investigations have begun with the new documents as the Scottish detectives have now been examining the new files to verify Libyans involvement, alongside the US trials still taking place.

After three decades, the case for Lockerbie seems to have a new lease of life.

These new documents could potentially reshape the understanding of the case. However, a lingering question remains: why are files that have existed for seven years now being presented as urgent and pivotal evidence?



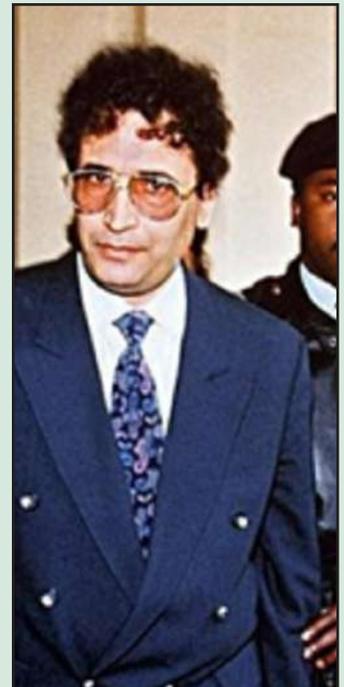
## Maghrebi Week

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Abdel Basset Ali al-Megrahi in 1992

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## Sarkozy faces prison over alleged Libyan cash

Nicolas Sarkozy, the former French president, faces prison over alleged Libyan financing of his campaign in 2007

Nicolas Sarkozy, the former French president, faces prison over alleged Libyan financing of his campaign in 2007.

According to AP News, the financing of the 2007 campaign is opening interest in France's back-channel communication with the Libyan government of Colonel Gaddafi.

The trial where this channel has come to light has been ongoing since January of 2025 and has ended on the 8th of April. Lawyers gave their closing arguments and a verdict is expected later this year.

The French prosecutor has suggested a seven-year prison sentence for the ex-president who has denied any wrongdoing.

During the trial, there was a key focus on talks between France and Libya in the 2000s. This was a period when Gaddafi was looking to rehabilitate Libya's international standing following the Lockerbie and UTA flight bombings.

Both bombings were officially attributed to Libya by American and French investigations and saw British and French civilians murdered with the Lockerbie case being the deadliest terror attack in UK history.

Gaddafi himself accepted the responsibility for the attacks by Libya, yet neither has sufficient evidence to prove that Libya

indeed sponsored these attacks.

While Libya accepted responsibility for the bombings, questions about the actual perpetrators remain. Dr Swire, a prominent spokesperson for Lockerbie victims' families, has pointed to evidence suggesting a Syrian terrorist cell, funded by Iran, may have planted the bombs at Heathrow.



Despite the blame for the bombings still lacking evidence for Libyan blame, the current investigation and alleged donations by Libya to the ex-French president have led the French families of the bombings to call into question whether French government officials forgot about the bombings in exchange for business opportunities with Libya.

One member who lost her father in the bombing, Nicoletta Diasio, told the court that she wondered if the victims of the bombings "could have been used for bartering" in talks between France and Libya.

Sarkozy made sure to respond to such allegations by stating he "never ever betrayed" families and did not use their deaths to bargain for funding.

***"You'll never find one Libyan euro, one Libyan cent in my campaign. There's no corruption money because there was no corruption."***

These questions have been asked of Sarkozy as he was one of the first in the West to restore relations with Libya once Gaddafi had accepted responsibility and ended his nuclear weapons program.

So much so that he invited Gaddafi to Paris in 2007 with a five-day official visit. Sarkozy defended this by explaining it was a matter of diplomatic gesture after the release of Bulgarian nurses by Libya in a deal which was brokered by First Lady Cecilia Sarkozy and EU officials on July 24, 2007.

Gaddafi's son Seif al-Islam claimed in a January statement to RFI that he delivered \$5 million in cash to finance Sarkozy's 2007 campaign.

According to al-Islam, the money was paid in two instalments of \$2.5 million each, with Libya expecting Sarkozy to drop legal proceedings related to the 1989 UTA bombing in return.

Sarkozy categorically denied these allegations at his trial.

census's importance for food security decisions, directing verification of all national agricultural products.

Several bilateral cooperation agreements were also approved during the meeting.

### Swarm of locusts make their way to Morocco

A swarm of locusts, which have spread through Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria, are making their way toward Morocco's borders, prompting the Kingdom to raise its alert level according to government friendly news source Hesperess on April 5th.

This response comes amid growing concerns about the impact of locusts on agriculture, a vital sector for the national economy.

The sector is the livelihood of millions of Moroccans, and reports have highlighted the insect's ability to destroy crops at an alarming rate.

### Tensions rise between rival militias in western Libya

Tensions are rising between rival militias in western Libya as concerns grow over the renewal of civil war.

Reported by Asharq Al-Awsat, armed factions have been amassing in western cities and seen heading in the direction of the capital.

The Tripoli Protection Force has warned militias against advancing towards the capital, vowing a "violent and unprecedented retaliation to any military advance on Tripoli."

### Rights group slam trial of politicians in Tunisia

A number of rights groups in Tunisia have condemned the "dangerous and deviant" trial of opposition figures in the conspiracy case, as reported by Middle East Monitor on April 11th.

The outrage came after a court decided to hold the trial session "remotely", without the defendants, despite their categorical rejection of being tried in absentia.

Rights groups have warned that the trial is a blatant violation of rights and a coup against what remains of judicial independence in Tunisia.



Aid workers in Gaza

## Syria and South Korea begin bilateral relationship

Syria and South Korea have established diplomatic relations as Seoul's Foreign Ministry expressed its relationship with the new Islamist government.

According to the Independent, South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul visited Damascus on April 10. During the meeting, the South Koreans signed a joint communiqué with Syria's Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani.

The South Korean ministry has highlighted the new opportunities for bilateral relations presented by the recent relationship, which were previously obstructed due to Syria's "close ties with North Korea."

## Red Crescent calls for international inquiry after Israeli attacks

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society has called for an independent international inquiry after 15 humanitarian aid workers were found dead in Gaza.

According to Al Jazeera on April 7th, the Red Crescent have called the attack a "full-fledged war crime", after footage leaked proved the workers were wearing highly

reflective uniforms and in clearly identifiable uniform; footage which has disproved the original Israeli narrative of the attack.

According to UNRWA, at least 408 aid workers, including more than 290 UNRWA staff members have been killed by Israeli forces in Gaza since October 7th, 2023.

Despite interim Syrian President Ahmad Al-Sharaa attending Cairo's Arab summit, Egypt showed restraint with a low-level reception.

According to Middle East Monitor, President Al-Sisi's concerns include potential revolutionary spillover, the Syrian harbouring of Egyptian opposition figures, and Turkish influence in Damascus.

Egypt has set clear conditions for normalising relations, including non-interference in Egyptian affairs and no support for Islamist groups.

## Turkey seeks three-year prison sentences for Imamoglu journalists

Turkey is seeking three-year jail terms for seven journalists arrested while covering the recent protests following the arrest of Istanbul Mayor and major political opposition figure, Ekrem Imamoglu.

Reported by Middle East Eye on April 9th, the journalists' indictment stated that the journalists declared they were at the protest within the scope of journalism activities, but that there was no evidence to verify that.

Thousands of people have been arrested in response to the protests with Turkey being regularly cited as one of the world's worst jailers of journalists by media freedom organisations.

## US admits to mistakenly cutting funds for UN World Food Projects

The United States has publicly admitted to mistakenly cutting funding to the UN World Food Projects.

As reported by the Associated Press, funding had been reduced for certain initiatives that "were not meant to be cut", according to a statement made by the State Department on April 8.

These UN World Food Projects provides emergency food aid across 14 impoverished countries worldwide, helping sustain millions of lives and preventing mass starvation.

## Erdogan slams opposition for corruption in Imamoglu probe

President Erdogan accused the opposition CHP on April 8th of obstructing a corruption probe into jailed Istanbul mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, calling their actions an attempt to politicise the judiciary.

According to The New Arab, the CHP says the charges are politically motivated, as Imamoglu is seen as a strong potential rival to Erdogan.

His arrest has sparked mass protests and triggered economic turbulence, including a sharp drop in the lira.

## More journalists killed in Gaza than any conflict since US Civil War

The number of journalists killed in Gaza by Israel is far greater than similar deaths in any armed conflict since the civil war of the US, according to the Watson Institute's Cost of War project at Brown University, Middle East Eye reported on April 1st.

In comparison, the total count of journalists killed in Ukraine since the extensive Russian invasion in 2022 is 19. Since 2014, the Committee to Protect Journalists counts 29 journalists killed in Ukraine from crossfire, dangerous assignments, and other causes.



Written by investigative journalist, Nick Turse, the paper said: "The war in Gaza has, since October 7, 2023, killed more journalists than the US Civil War, World Wars I and II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War (including the conflicts in Cambodia and Laos), the wars in Yugoslavia in the 1990s and 2000s, and the post-9/11 war in Afghanistan, combined."

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) stated that in 2024 alone, Israel accounted for one-third of the 54 journalists killed worldwide. "Palestine is the most dangerous country for journalists," noted the report published on December 12th, 2024.





South Sudan has accepted deportees from the US

## Sudan accuses UAE of genocide convention breach in Darfur

Sudan has, as of April 10th, accused the United Arab Emirates (UAE) of violating the Genocide Convention by backing paramilitary groups responsible for ethnic attacks in Darfur.



As reported Middle East Monitor, presenting its case to the International Court of Justice, Sudan requested emergency measures to protect the Masalit community.

The UAE denied the allegations, calling the case politically motivated and without credible evidence.

## South Sudan to welcome Congolese national to appease US

South Sudan have announced they will allow the entry of a foreign national after their refusal to do so led to the US revoking visas for all citizens, according to AP on April 8th.

The US revoked all South Sudanese visas after the country refused to accept Makula Kintu, a deported citizen from the US.

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Apuk Ayuel Mayen, said the move was “in the spirit of maintaining friendly relations” between South Sudan and the US.

## Russia hosts meeting with Sahel countries

Russia has hosted a high-level meeting with several Sahel countries, promising to train their militaries and supply them with weapons and equipment. As reported by the Associated



Press, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov held the meeting on April 3 with key Sahel nations including Mali, Burkina, and Niger. In a statement to the press, Lavrov

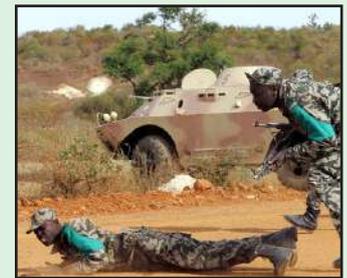
emphasized “Moscow’s readiness to help expand the potential of the united armed forces of the Sahel”, adding that Russia was also willing to provide military equipment.



## Sahel alliance recall ambassadors from Algeria after drone downing

A military alliance of Sahel states have recalled their ambassadors from neighboring Algeria after a Malian drone was shot down by Algeria, escalating tensions between the two.

Reported by The Associated Press on April 7th, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger in a joint statement said they were withdrawing their ambassadors and blamed Algeria on social media for the downing of the Malian drone.



Arguing that it violated international law, the Sahel alliance condemned it as an “irresponsible act” which was “contrary to historical relations and fraternal relations between the peoples of the AES confederation and the Algerian people.”

## South Sudan accepts US deportee

South Sudan has confirmed that they will accept the deportation of a Congolese national from the US.

According to AP on April 8th, South Sudan initially rejected the deportation prompting the US to revoke visas for all of their citizens.

However, Congolese national Makula Kintu has now been accepted into South Sudan “in the spirit of maintaining friendly relations” according to Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Apuk Ayuel Mayen.

After Kintu was denied entry at the South Sudanese border due to the fact that officials claimed he had illegally used the travel documents of a South Sudanese

national named Nimeri Garang. Following the rejection, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio revoked visas for all South Sudanese citizens due to the fact that the country had failed to accept deported citizens “in a timely manner”.

Former US President Joe Biden had previously allowed a Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for South Sudanese nationals, a designation that is due to expire on May 3rd that protects citizens from deportations due to ongoing instability in the country.

South Sudan had initially protested the decision, branding it “unfair” due to the fact that the Kintu deportation case was an isolated incident and they had previously cooperated on all other deporta-

tion cases.

The US defended their actions claiming they were ‘prepared to review’ the decision to revoke all visas “when South Sudan is in full cooperation.”

An executive director for the Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation, Edmund Yakani said: “The issues associated with the identity of the deportee should be handled without harming the South Sudanese in totality.”

South Sudan lies on the edge of another civil war after Vice President Riek Machar was arrested by President Salva Kiir Mayardit’s party earlier this year.

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**Alastair Tibbs**

Confronting the conundrum of geostrategic alignment which troubles North Africa, it seems Algiers has chosen the West at the dire cost of the 50 year long struggle for Sahrawi independence.

On 25 September 1963 a thousand Moroccan soldiers crossed into a neonate Algeria and seized two border posts in the western desert region of Saoura. For four months and three weeks the Algerian revolutionaries clashed with the invaders in the barren wastelands on the Sahara's periphery, resulting in the deaths of hundreds on both sides. The Sand War, as it would become known, ended in a bitter stalemate, with Morocco troops forced to cede their gains and uphold the status quo – a costly diplomatic blunder in the eyes of the international community. A nascent revolutionary state, its euphoric birth blighted by a neighbour's hawkish opportunism, Algeria never forgot the ambitions of the palace in Rabat. The threat of Greater Morocco – a return to borders of French colonial rule which included areas of the petroleum rich Saoura – was ever present and Algiers vowed to harry it wherever it sprung.

The conflict over Western Sahara was never Algerian expansion, nor was it fought with the best in mind for the indigenous Sahrawi people, whose pro-independence militants were backed by Algiers. The game for Algeria was simple – to bog down Morocco and sap faith in its own impetus. Thus the irresistible idea of Greater Morocco could be held in check and Rabat's dominance in North Africa postponed. When the French left Western Sahara in 1975, much of the territory was cleaved out by Morocco at the expense of Mauritanian and Sahrawi claims. The building of giant sand berms in the 1980s secured Rabat's control but the 2500km stretch had to be kept secure from the desert beyond, where the Sahrawi nationalist liberation movement, the Polisario Front lurked. Western Sahara had been split but the rebels still resided over vast swathes of arid land. Recent events however have dealt a major blow to Algeria's strategy of deterrence via its backing of the Polisario. Last year France joined the US, Spain and Israeli in supporting Morocco's annexation of Western Sahara, plunging relations between Paris and Algiers to an all time low.

## Has Algeria finally lost Western Sahara?

**After six months of fallout from France's recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara, Algeria, stuck between a rock and a hard place, has come crawling back to Europe.**

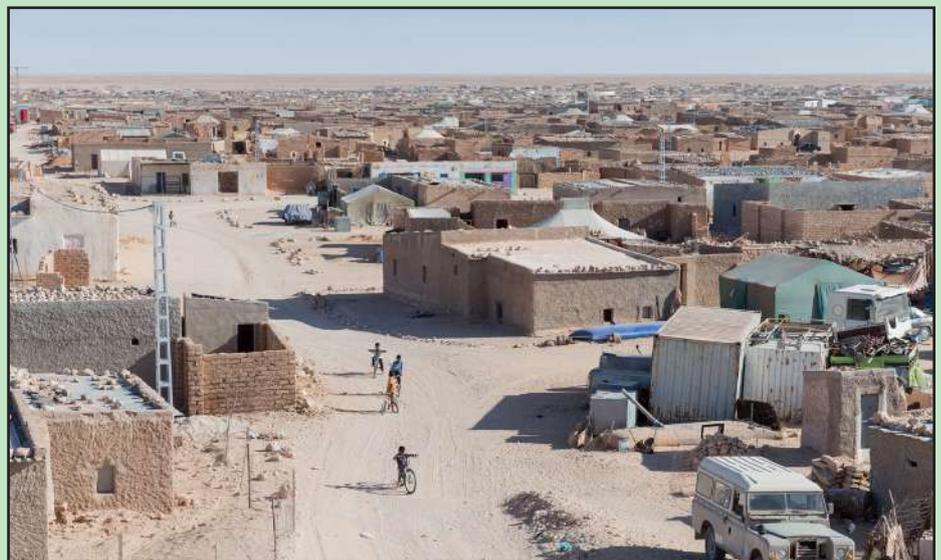
The rhetoric was fierce and for some, the fracturing was deadly. The tit for tat that ensued saw French-Algerian writer and critic of Algerian president Abdelmadjid Tebboune's regime, Boualem Sansal imprisoned in North Africa. French authorities responded by arresting Algerian influencers on terrorism charges, their attempt to deport them blocked by Algiers. A knife attack cost the life of a French citizen in Mulhouse, eastern France – committed by an Algerian which French authorities had tried to deport 14 times in vain – and froze relations further. Given the importance of Western Sahara to Algeria's security and national pride, its reaction was unsurprising, perhaps even lacking. The weight of international presence under the green star of Morocco has never been greater.

This week, as Algeria and France held talks, looking to put six months of familial vitriol behind them, it became clear that Algiers has lost Western Sahara. In rapprochement with Macron and a country unlikely to back down, Algeria has prioritised trade with its second largest export partner over its support of Sahrawi independence. While Paris and Rabat prepare for a radically brazen joint military drill in September near the Algerian border, a move which Algeria's Foreign Ministry described as an "unjustified military escalation" according to The New Arab, the North African nation looks to mend ties with its ex-colonial overlord. The intention of the September gathering can only be to serve as a rubber stamp to France's unwavering position on Western Sahara. Yet Algiers looks to make friends.

The cause of Polisario dwindles with every piece of infrastructure erected by Morocco. To join rapidly expanding holiday resorts, Morocco and

Mauritania have agreed to connect electricity grids through Western Sahara. As both countries increase border crossings and merge economically, the Sahrawi cause is left further out in the cold. With King Mohammed VI's announcement of his 'Royal Atlantic Initiative', a proposal which would give ocean access via Western Sahara to the landlocked Sahel region, Morocco played the local crowd. Chad, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso all welcomed the project despite having connections to far closer ports in neighbouring countries. One relationship which has been of particular benefit to Rabat is their cordial bonds with Tel Aviv. Their ties go way back to the construction of the Western Saharan sand berm, when Israeli engineers lent a hand, drawing on their experience from the West Bank. Following the controversial normalisation of relations between Rabat and Tel Aviv, a deal which set international recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara in motion, Morocco has built its military and security muscle with imported Israeli arms and technology. Not only has Rabat targeted Sahrawi activists with the Israeli built Pegasus monitoring software, as reported by Amnesty International, but last year it signed a \$1bn contract to acquire surveillance satellites from Tel Aviv according to Middle East Monitor. No doubt this technology will be used to monitor the vast strips of desert that make up North Africa's interiors and consolidate control over Morocco's claims.

With Rabat winning allies, regional and international, Algeria looks isolated and vulnerable. To contend it needs the strong backing of a great power. Its ties with Russia are overstated by Western voices which mirth the reality of its long standing policy of non-alignment. Events like the visit of President Abdelmadjid Tebboune to Moscow in 2023 understand-



**Sahrawi refugee camp near Tindouf, Algeria**



Image of Russian President Valdimir Putin displayed in Niger

ably provoked uproar from Europeans and Americans alike, who construct foreign policy around a cold-war inspired bipolar world. The proof that Algeria is not some sort of Russian satellite, like perhaps Khalifa Haftar's administration in Eastern Libya, can be found in many places. Algeria's exports are grafted onto European markets – its top three trading partners are Italy, France and Spain. Its relationship with Europe is of primary importance.

In April 2023, it joined other UN General Assembly members in voting on a resolution recognizing “the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine,” according to The Washington Institute, though it abstained on five other General Assembly votes regarding the war. Real divergences in foreign policy have even materialised regarding Algeria's neighbour Mali. While Russia has made great inroads in the Sahel following the domino of coups in the last five years involving Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso, Tebboune has urged the Malian military government to end the presence of the

Russian private military contractor, the Wagner Group, in their country. Again the effective end of FrancAfrique, with Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Senegal, and Ivory Coast all terminating their defence agreements with Paris since 2022 and reorientating towards Moscow, has located Algeria at another geopolitical flashpoint.

With Algeria seemingly back on peaceable terms with France since the 31 March call between Macron and Tebboune, it took only a few days for tensions with Mali to surface. After Algeria shot down a Malian drone, the junta led country accused Algiers of supporting terrorism, according to the BBC. Indeed, Mali's military are continuing their enduring campaign against Tuareg separatists in the country's north, a movement Algeria has been accused many times of supporting. The Tuareg threat exploded in 2012 when a coalition of indigenous tribes and Islamic fighters blazed through Mali's north, holding Timbuktu for nearly three months. They still reign over large areas of land today, though most of the major towns are back under government rule with the

help of Russian mercenaries.

Menas Associates suggests that major defeat of Mali and its Russian allies to Tuareg forces in July 2024 was due to Algerian intervention, perhaps pressured France and US who were desperate to preserve some regional influence. Algiers' motive could have been driven by the humiliating rejection of its BRICs application in 2023 and its warnings about deploying foreign forces so close to its border. It was after all Algerian guerrillas that expelled the French during the Algerian war of independence, now it seems guerillas are the antidote to all Algeria's ails.

It is in this context that we see an isolated nation. A revolutionary Arab socialist republic which in an increasingly polarised world, has found nowhere to fit in, backing recent causes in contradiction to its region, from Assad, to Hezbollah and Hamas. The new lines that have been drawn in Africa force it to straddle greater gulfs and maintain ever fraying ties. In containing such contradiction, something has to break. The tragic cause of the Sahrawi people looks to be the first casualty in the geostrategic crisis that now grips Algeria.

*The views expressed in this article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Maghrebi.org. Alastair Tibbs is the editor of Maghrebi.org and a qualified journalist. You can follow him on X: @AlastairTibbs*

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