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# MaghrebiWeek

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



**Morocco's youth:**  
**A betrayed generation**  
**facing addiction and**  
**isolation**



# Moroccan youth facing addiction, unemployment, and exclusion

**Malaika Remedios**

A new report from the Moroccan League for the Defense of Human Rights has exposed the harsh realities facing Moroccan youth, warning that immediate intervention might be needed to bring them back from the brink.

The study, reported by Lakome2 on August 20, highlights the disconnect between academic credentials and the labor market. 67 percent of working youth currently remain in the informal sector, working precarious jobs that offer little security.

The numbers reflect an imbalance that the kingdom has long struggled to manage. Morocco generates roughly 240,000 new jobs annually, yet 350,000 young people enter the labor market each year.

Political participation is similarly low. By March 2024, only 20% of registered voters were youth, even as their representation in elected bodies and party leadership

remains negligible. The report argues that this disengagement reveals a need for the inclusion of youth in policymaking.

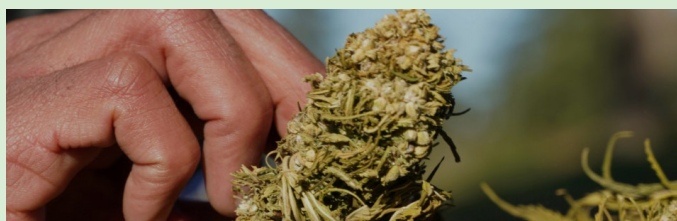
The education system was also scrutinized, plagued by overcrowding, high dropout rates, weak vocational training, and university shortcomings ranging from misalignment with job-market needs to nepotism, lack of spatial equity, and constraints on student organizations.

Perhaps in part due to this negligence, suicide rates are climbing, and drug use has become widespread. In 2023, 9.4% of youth aged 15–24 admitted to using cannabis at least once, while hospitalizations for hard drugs soa-

red by 47% between 2018 and 2023, a trend reinforced by the 2025 UN Report on Drugs and Crime.

Adding to the strain, irregular migration continues to surge, propelled by youth-led desperation over joblessness, exclusion, and frustration. The league demands a comprehensive strategy seeded in social development and expanded local opportunities.

In response, the League offers a series of recommendations: overhaul youth-focused policies, guarantee decent work, and establish a Youth and Community Action Advisory Council. This is aimed at integrating young people to help them escape cycles of addiction, crime, and violence.





# Algeria: exchanging shale gas for Western Sahara?

Georgie Archer

A report by the pro-Morocco North Africa Post on 18th August described the conflict in Western Sahara as reaching a “watershed moment” presenting what it called a choice between continuing a “bloody journey leading to nowhere” or pursuing “peace and compromise”.

In October, the UN Security Council is set to hold what the outlet termed a “pivotal” meeting on Western Sahara as the US, France and UK explore ways to move the protracted dispute towards resolution. The outlet said discussions are likely to focus on Morocco’s proposed Autonomy Plan, which would place Western

Sahara under Moroccan sovereignty with limited self-rule.

According to the outlet, Algerian authorities are intensifying diplomatic and economic manoeuvres ahead of the meeting in order to delay or block the resolution of the conflict in favour of Morocco. It characterised Algeria’s leadership as seeking “personal survival at all costs”, linking the issue to unresolved legacies of the 1990s civil conflict which saw hundreds of thousands of people killed.

The report further alleged that Algiers is using energy policy to influence international positions, including what is described as a “shale gas for

Western Sahara” deal. Algeria is reportedly close to finalising agreements with the US energy giants Exxon Mobil and Chevron to extract natural gas and shale in eastern Sahara.

The outlet suggested this could be aimed at softening US policy on Western Sahara, avoiding the designation of Polisario as a terrorist organisation and keeping the Sahara listed on the UN Security Council agenda.

Such arrangements would not affect long-standing and mutually beneficial relations between Washington and Rabat, emphasised the report. The US President Donald Trump recognised Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara in 2020,

and subsequent administrations have upheld that stance. Algeria maintains a longstanding position of commitment to Sahrawi self-determination, rejecting Morocco’s claim to sovereignty and supporting the Polisario Front both politically and diplomatically. Algiers has been suffering from increasing diplomatic isolation in North Africa amid Western endorsements of Morocco’s autonomy plan.

Disputes over Western Sahara remain the primary point of contention in Rabat-Algiers relations, with Algeria viewing support for Sahrawi independence as a critical matter tied to anti-colonial solidarity and regional balance.

## Tunisia’s UGTT union in direct clash with President Saied

Joe Barlow

Tunisia’s powerful labour union, the UGTT, stands on a collision course with President Kais Saied, escalating a dispute that could reshape the country’s fragile democratic experiment, as reported by The New Arab plus agencies on August 18th.

Founded in 1946 and central to Tunisia’s modern political life, the union helped topple Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011, resisted previous authoritarian leaders, and even won a Nobel Peace Prize in 2015 as part of the “national dialogue quartet.”

***“The government has shut down every door to dialogue”***

Now it accuses Saied of closing every channel of negotiation. “The government has shut down every door to dialogue,” said union spokesperson Sami Tahri, announcing a nationwide protest in Tunis. President

Saied recently signalled in vague terms of plans to limit the unions’ political power.

“There are files that must be opened because the people are demanding accountability... so that their money can be returned to them.”

Tensions spiked after the government revoked provisions that allowed union officials to take paid leave from their jobs, a practice rooted in independence-era agreements. Prime Minister Sara Zanzari called the system an abuse of public funds. The UGTT denounced her decision as “a declaration of war.”

Pressure has grown on both sides with pro-Saied protestors

adding to the controversy. Saied’s supporters recently attempted to storm the union’s headquarters after a strike, accusing its leadership of “corruption” and “squandering the people’s money.”

***“the union will not be humiliated, you guard of the Italians”***

In response, Saied declared: “There are files that must be opened because the people are demanding accountability... so that their money can be returned to them.” Union leaders rejected the allegations as intimidation, insisting evidence should be tested in court.

On the streets, union members chanted “the union will not be humiliated, you guard of the Italians,” a reference to Saied’s controversial migration pact with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.

That slogan sparked pro-government calls to prosecute UGTT leader Nouredine Taboubi.

Rights groups warn Tunisia’s last independent institutions now face dismantling. “After going after political parties and civil society groups, it appears the authorities are now targeting trade unions, one of the last pillars of democracy in Tunisia,” said Bassam Khawaja of Human Rights Watch.





## A right to self-determination: Algerian support for the Sahrawi cause

**Georgie Archer**

Algeria supports Sahrawi independence based primarily on the belief that all peoples have a right to self-determination, according to an article published in *The Conversation* on August 18th.

The Sahrawi people originate from Western Sahara, a disputed territory in north-west Africa that borders Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania and remained a Spanish colony until 1975. Since then, it has been claimed by Morocco and the Polisario Front, an independence movement backed by Algeria, who first recognised the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic in 1976 and has since provided ongoing military and financial aid.

Many Western powers, including French President Emmanuel Macron in 2024, have endorsed Morocco's 2007 autonomy plan for Western Sahara, which proposes self-governance under Mo-

roccan rule. Algeria recalled its ambassador to Paris in response amid deteriorating Paris-Algiers relations, seeing such endorsements as legitimising occupation and diminishing Sahrawi rights. Morocco regards Western Sahara as an integral part of its territory, whilst the Polisario Front seeks a referendum on self-determination, according to the outlet, which is underlined by Algiers as being a basic right.

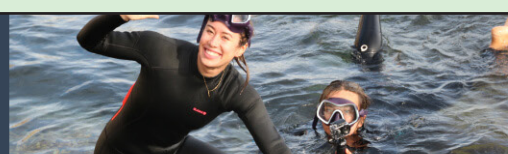
The dispute reflects regional tensions, strategic interests from both sides and persistent Sahrawi aspirations for autonomy despite 50 years of occupation. Algeria, having fought its own war of independence, has consistently

supported liberation movements such as the Polisario Front, citing the principle of a right to self-determination and independence.

Since 1975, Algeria has contested Morocco's de facto annexation of Western Sahara, hosting approximately 165,000 of Sahrawi refugees and expressing frustration at the ongoing lack of conflict resolution. Western Sahara's resources, including fishing grounds and valuable phosphate deposits, add to the geopolitical complexity and tension. A lucrative coastline offers an array of potential, and Morocco harbours plans to develop the port of Dakhla to enhance regional trade links.

The normalisation of Moroccan-Israeli relations with the 2020 Abraham Accords and Morocco's growing military capacity have significantly influenced Algeria's security outlook. Algeria's support for the Polisario Front reflects its wish to not only uphold human rights but also to maintain regional influence. Without the principles of self-determination, respect for colonial-inherited borders and international law, resistance to occupation, and the right to multilateralism, the Sahrawi people will remain colonised.

The path ahead for Western Sahara remains uncertain, shaped by competing national interests, international alignments (and misalignments) and the unresolved question of the Sahrawi people's right to decide their own future.





# NEWS IN BRIEF

## Libya: Syria reopens embassy in Tripoli after 13-year closure

After over 13 years of closure following the Syrian revolution in 2011, Syria's embassy in Libya's capital Tripoli has reopened, according to the Libya Observer on August 21st.

The reopening happened alongside a visit to Libya by a Syrian foreign ministry delegation, which was led by the deputy director of Arab affairs, Mohamad Jafal.

There is a large community of Syrian refugees residing in Libya, and earlier in August Syria sent a delegation to facilitate urgent consular services and to settle the legal status of its nationals, until the embassy could be reopened.

## Libya: rights group calls for release of abducted journalist

The National Human Rights Institution in Libya has called on the Government of National Unity to immediately and unconditionally release abducted journalist Abdelbaset Al-Tir, according to the Libya Review.

On August 15th Al-Tir was abducted by Internal Security Agency officials whilst travelling from Tripoli to Al-Aziziya after participating in a public event.

The NHRI is calling for a full and transparent investigation, and to end arbitrary detentions outside of legal frameworks.

## Algeria-Polisario coordination boosting separatist movement

A report has alleged that Algerian authorities and the Polisario Front have been engaging in coordinated activities intended to boost the separatist movement in Western Sahara, as covered by Maghrebi Week on August 18th.

These activities have seen Algiers "mislead" the Polisario Front and both sides refuse to accept the so-called "failure" of separatism in the region at a time when the United Nations is expected to endorse Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara.

Algerian diplomats in France have reportedly been the subject

of arrest warrants over the alleged attempted kidnappings of Algerian dissidents, and Algiers has facilitated Polisario representatives gaining unsolicited access to international diplomatic events.

## Libya: 86,000 litres of fuel seized amid smuggling crackdown

Libya's Attorney General reported on August 17th that 86,000 litres of petrol and diesel have been seized in raids in the northwestern Libyan municipality of Ajilat, according to the Libya Herald.

The seizure follows a fuel shortage crisis in Western Libya, being dealt with through raids and arrests as part of an anti-fuel smuggling campaign.

The 86,000 litres seized were in areas where fuel is traded for purposes other than the use it is intended for.

## Flights between Libya and Syria to start after long suspension

The Syrian Civil Aviation Authority has declared that on August 24th, one-way flights from the Libyan capital of Tripoli to Syria will begin, according to the Libya Review.

Flights will be operated by Syrian Airlines, with the goal of reconnecting Syria with the international community and boosting relations with other countries to support recovery and reconstruction.

The Syrian community in Libya is comprised of over 150,000 people distributed widely across west and eastern Libya. There are plans to reopen the Syrian embassy in Tripoli and open a new consulate in Benghazi.



## UN releases results of public survey on Libyan elections future

### Ally Freischmidt

According to the Libya Review on August 17th, The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has announced the closure and results of its public opinion survey after two months.

Beginning on July 14th, the goal of the survey was to collect views of the Libyan people on how the nation should move forward towards democratic and uncorrupted national elections.

UNSMIL was founded in 2011 after the overthrow and killing of dictator Moammar Gadhafi

led to the governance of Libya being split into two rival administrations, one based in Tripoli and backed by the UN, and the other based in the east and backed by nations including Russia and Egypt.

The goal of USMIL has been to facilitate an "inclusive Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process."

The public opinion survey received more than 22,500 responses and was mostly carried out online but included some telephone surveys for those without internet access.

Respondents were given the opportunity to give preferences

on four options proposed by an Advisory Committee made up of legal, political, and constitutional experts.

Results reveal that 42% of respondents favoured the first option given, which is to hold both presidential and parliamentary elections at the same time and as soon as possible.

23% of respondents supported the fourth option, making it the second most popular. The fourth option calls for the dissolution of existing institutions in Libya, and the formation of a new dialogue forum and a 60-member constituent assembly. The assembly would be responsible for drafting

a temporary constitution and electoral laws to pave the way for national elections.

On August 11th, the head of the High National Election Commission in Libya announced that despite election preparation being finished, the delays are due to an absence of electoral laws- the fourth option proposed to the public by the Advisory Committee would address this issue.

UNSMIL will use the findings from this survey in the political roadmap to be presented during the UN Security Council briefing on August 21st.



## Israeli eyes recruitment of Jewish diaspora

### Yemen to face extreme floods threatening agriculture, UN warns

The UN warned on August 15th that Yemen faces the risk of widespread floods during the present rainy season, putting already strained agricultural output at risk, as reported by Asharq Al-Aswat.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) cautioned that climate change and delayed and shifting weather patterns could shrink cultivated land to less than half its former size in a country with agricultural production already depleted amidst an ongoing famine.

A UN FAO's meteorological early warning bulletin warned

that convective rainfall expected during the early Autumn season has a likelihood to cause extensive flash floods, especially across the western and southern lowlands, where critical precipitation thresholds may be exceeded.

These predictions indicate that the high level of rainfall could cause soil saturation and place unsustainable pressure on both natural and artificial drainage systems.



### France condemns Israel's West Bank settlement plan

The UN human rights office has also denounced the settlement, declaring it illegal under international law and warning it could force Palestinians from their homes – an act the UN said constitutes a war crime.

After two decades of delays, the plan is now nearing its development. The planning committee dismissed all objections to the project on August 6th, according to the rights group Peace Now.

Experts say infrastructure could begin within months and housing construction in about a year, waiting for final approval on August 20th.

### Hamas official says group agrees to Gaza ceasefire proposal

Senior Hamas official Basem Naim confirmed via a post on Facebook that Hamas has agreed to a ceasefire proposal, as reported by the Middle East Eye via Reuters on August 18th.

Reportedly, Reuters, citing an Egyptian source reported earlier on August 18th that Hamas has agreed to a 60-day ceasefire in Gaza that will see half of the remaining captives freed in exchange for Palestinian prisoners and a halt in fighting.



Naim wrote: "The movement has handed over its approval to the new proposal presented by the mediators.

A delegation from the Palestinian group, led by senior official Khalil al-Hayya, had previously arrived in Cairo to advance negotiations. The delegation was expected to meet with the Egyptian authorities to discuss ways of stopping the war and to allow the entry of humanitarian aid.

### Iran helps Houthi militias smuggle weapons of mass destruction



A crew aboard the "Al-Sharwa" ship, which travelled through complex routes via Somalia and Djibouti, have said that Iran has been smuggling weapons to Houthi militias, as covered by Maghrebi Week on August 18th.

Audio and video confessions exposed that Iran has been working with Houthi militias in a bid to smuggle weapons of mass destruction to Yemen.

The crew's shipment, carrying a reported 750 tons of strategic weapons, was made to look like workshop equipment, as said by statement published on X.

## Israeli eyes recruitment of Jewish diaspora

### Angelina Castrucci

Israel is considering the launch of a campaign to recruit young Jews from diaspora communities worldwide, in response to extreme manpower shortages in its military, according to Middle East Eye on August 18th.

Army Radio reported that the potential initiative aims to reach Jewish communities abroad to help fill a shortfall of 10,000 to 12,000 soldiers. The shortage has become increasingly acute as the war in Gaza, which began in October 2023, continues to strain Israel's military resources.

The number of existing recruits has steadily declined over the past two years, with many

citing physical exhaustion and psychological trauma from the prolonged conflict.

One of the main reasons for the gap is the refusal of many ultra-Orthodox Jews to be enlisted. Despite repeated efforts to integrate this conservative community, who are traditionally exempted from service in exchange for religious study, this desired outcome has not been achieved.

Tensions over the issue have also spilled into politics. Last month, two ultra-Orthodox parties withdrew from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition on July 14th and 15th, respectively. The move was in response to a

bill not being advanced which would have formalised the conservative community's exemption from compulsory military service.

Faced with these challenges, the army has turned its focus abroad. The recruitment drive is expected to particularly target Jewish communities in the United States and France, with hopes of enlisting around 700 soldiers annually.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu's plan to seize full control of Gaza City is moving forward. The Israeli Broadcasting Authority reported on August 17th that the occupation operation could take around four months.



## Israel will go ahead with plan for Gaza City

The Israeli defence minister has given the green light on August 20th for a plan to conquer Gaza City, as reported by Al-Monitor via AFP.

Defense Minister Israel Katz has approved the call-up of 60,000 reservists, as the pressure mounts on Hamas while mediators pursue their goal of a ceasefire. Katz's decision comes after Hamas agreed to the most recent proposal for a Gaza ceasefire.

Hamas has approved a framework that proposes an initial 60-day truce, a staggered liberation of captives, and the release of some Palestinian detainees.

The framework also includes provisions that allow the entry of aid into Gaza. Israeli forces have systematically prevented aid from entering the Gaza Strip, even going as far as intercepting the Gaza Freedom Flotilla's Madleen ship, which carried rice, baby formula, and medical supplies.



The security cabinet of Israel had also okayed the Gaza City plan in August, despite international pressure to end the war. The German government has said that it "rejects the escalation" of Israel's military campaign.

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## Lawsuit filed against US government over Gaza aid funding secrecy

### Prominent journalists from Al Jazeera killed in Gaza by Israel

Some of the most recognisable faces of Al Jazeera have been killed in what appears to be a deliberate targeting of the journalists' tent in Gaza, as covered by Maghrebi Week on August 18th.



Al Jazeera's Anas al-Sharif and Mohammed Qraiqa along with three others and two unarmed civilians, were all killed when

Israel launched intense missile bombardments across the east and south of Gaza City.

Israel claimed without evidence that Sharif was the head of a Hamas terrorist cell. Al Jazeera said the Israeli attack was "a desperate attempt to silence voices in anticipation of the occupation of Gaza."

### Israeli far-right urge Netanyahu to dismiss Gaza ceasefire deal

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has faced demands from multiple far-right politicians to reject a Hamas-backed temporary ceasefire, according to The New Arab on August 19th.

Hamas agreed to a 60-day ceasefire, mediated by Egypt and

Qatar, to prevent a major Israeli offensive and return hostages. The far-right ministers Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir, urged Netanyahu to continue the war until Hamas is fully defeated.

Netanyahu has not responded officially, but has insisted on a comprehensive deal, which outlines the complete disarmament of Hamas and the occupation of Gaza.



## Lawsuit filed against US government over Gaza aid funding secrecy

### Joe Barlow

The Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) in New York has filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration, accusing it of withholding financial documents of the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), as reported by Middle East Eye on August 20th.

The legal action demands disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. CCR explained that its suit "seeks records that could shed light on not only the decision-making process... but also on the creation of GHF, its funding and how it plans to use" a US government grant. The group said it also wants to determine whether the foundation's activities connect to

with President Trump's so-called "Gaza Riviera" project, which it described as a scheme to drive Palestinians out and redevelop the territory for investors.

GHF began distributing food parcels in southern Gaza in May, yet its finances remain opaque. Its chief executive resigned in protest over human rights concerns. Israeli forces have since killed hundreds near the group's four distribution sites.

Videos have also circulated showing US military contractors working for GHF firing on desperate civilians. Anthony Aguilar, an ex-US special forces soldier, confirmed those incidents after leaving the organisation.

Amnesty International has claimed that Israel has used aid as an opportunity to carry out a genocide against Palestinians.

CCR alleged that GHF operates "in close coordination with the Israeli government and US for-profit private military contractors," turning its centres into "scenes of chaos and carnage". The group concluded: "GHF, far from alleviating suffering in Gaza, is contributing to the forced displacement, killing and furtherance of genocide of Palestinians."

CCR also urged Delaware's attorney general, Kathy Jennings, to revoke GHF's charitable registration, arguing that it masks complicity in war crimes.



Military personnel from Mali, Chad and Niger overlaid over a rough map of Islamist terror attacks, 2025

## Sudanese military's allies placed under direct army command

Sudan's military chief General Abdel Fattah Al Burhan has placed all allied militias under direct army command to restrict abuse of civilians, according to The National on August 18th. According to a statement from Sudan's military, the new configuration was implemented on August 16th.

The military has been heavily reliant on former rebels and Islamist groups to compensate for its chronic shortage of infantry during its war against the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a Sudan government backed paramilitary.

The military's allies have been linked to various atrocities committed against civilians and suspected RSF spies. None of these groups have commented on the decision.



## France urges Mali to release diplomat seized in coup plot case

France has denounced the 'unfounded' arrest of its diplomat in Mali, calling for his immediate release, according to Africanews

plus agencies on August 18th. The French diplomat Yann Vezillier was taken into custody accusing him of taking part in a plot to destabilise the country

Mali's military junta, in power since a May 2021 coup, has reportedly accused the French national of being an intelligence agent tasked with rallying soliders and civil society figures. Two generals and other military personnel were also arrested.

The French foreign ministry has said they are in talks with the regime over his release, citing the arrest as a "misunderstanding" but, also a violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

## Over 120 aid workers have been killed in Sudan's brutal civil war

Over 120 aid workers have been killed in Sudan since the civil war erupted in April 2023, according to Asharq Al-Aswat on August 20th.



The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said Sudan's civil war is one of the deadliest conflicts for aid workers, with over 120 killed since April 2023, nearly all Sudanese.

OCHA's Luca Renda mourned the deaths but praised their collective resilience despite threats of abduction and abuse. Humanitarians remain vital amid a recent cholera outbreak and widespread suffering.

Renda condemned the lack of action and general impunity from war crimes, particularly in Darfur with reports of targeted sexual violence.

## Sahel states cement military ties with Moscow



On August 14th, Russia held its first official military talks with defence ministers from Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, the three countries of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), The News Chronicle reported on August 19th.

The Moscow summit with Defence Minister Andrei Belousov underscored growing Russia-AES ties, after the bloc expelled French forces and curbed US operations following coups and ECOWAS sanctions.

Agreements on training, arms, and counterterrorism extend earlier Russian backing, once through Wagner, now the Africa Corps. Critics warn of dependency and rights abuses as the Sahel emerges as a global battleground.

## Africa: the global epicentre of the Islamic State

Georgie Archer

A report published by Geopolitical Monitor on August 19th declared Africa the global epicentre of the Islamic State (ISIS) citing the group's successful transformation as central to this development. 2025 is likely to see an even stronger "caliphate of the mind," with insurgencies further embedding themselves further in local conflicts.

ISIS has evolved from a centralised organisation into a "lethal, autonomous... constellation of local insurgencies," with Africa, the "world's most fragile continent," at its centre. Once operating like an empire, ISIS now functions as a remote "global franchise," with a world-

wide propaganda network. Its provinces maintain operational and financial autonomy, enabling resilience after leadership losses.

Today, 90% of ISIS-claimed terror attacks occur in Africa, where multiple crises fuel insurgencies in three regions. In the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), a Boko Haram offshoot, carries out attacks while positioning itself as an alternative to corrupt and failing states.

Its rival, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), exploits ethnic divisions across Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. Coups in these AES states have expelled European forces, tilted towards Russia, and weakened counterterrorism efforts.

Further south, ISIS affiliates terrorise Mozambique's Cabo Delgado and eastern Congo. Islamic State-Mozambique (ISM) threatens gas projects, while the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) stage massacres, exploiting exclusion and state violence. Both sustain themselves through local war economies funding them through extortion, kidnapping, smuggling and raids.

The report warns of a "dangerous gap" between the scale of the threat and available resources. Roots causes still remain ignored. The Geopolitical Monitor urges long-term, coordinated commitment from African states and partners, prioritising good governance and equality over quick tactical wins."





**Rachel Marsden**

The European Union had been wailing about “transatlantic unity” in the run-up to US President Trump heading to the negotiating table with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska on Friday—without it. It sounded like a toddler stomping their feet because Daddy let go of their hand in the mall and now they’re lost between Cinnabon and Burger King.

A lot of good their dogmatic rhetoric has done them so far. If it wasn’t for Brussels getting drunk on its own transatlantic solidarity and unity propaganda, maybe it wouldn’t currently be in economic and political dire straits. The kind where you’re trying to duct-tape your economy back together with overpriced American gas.

They could have charted a different path vis-a-vis Russia. Maybe one that involved spearheading diplomacy rather than marching in lockstep behind the US-led NATO parade of weapons and fighters on Russia’s border with Ukraine, which helped supercharge the conflict in the first place. They could have insisted on keeping their cheap Russian energy instead of sanctioning their own imports like they were vying for a Nobel Prize in masochism.

Now, the US is daring them to even close their clever little loophole in their own anti-Russian sanctions. The one that lets them moralize about helping Ukraine and the need to avoid negotiations with Russia while guzzling Russian fuel on the down-low. Trump Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told them to “put up or shut up” and sanction the Indian and Chinese importers of Russian petroleum through which the EU still buys Russian fuel.

While the EU indulges itself in rhetorical games, Trump has dropped all pretexts of serving any interests but America’s first, and isn’t following any agenda beyond trying to wrap things up with Russia in Ukraine and to score some economic wins in the process. Brussels has had more than three years to do the same. Instead, it kept repeating the mantra that Kiev had to win on the battlefield. There were no other options, it said.

## EU throws tantrum as Trump meets Putin

**Brussels has been relegated to running behind Trump, pleading to let Zelensky have any say in a Russia-Ukraine war resolution.**

Whoops! Now that the option has materialized, the Europeans are relegated to running behind Trump, pleading with him to indulge them by letting Ukraine’s Vladimir Zelensky decide where the post-conflict borders will be. What did they think the downside of their “win by force” gamble would be, if not changed borders? The EU insists on Ukraine fighting Russia with EU cash and weapons, and when Kiev loses, they say, “Ok, well this sucks – how about if everyone just pretends that none of this happened and we dial all the territorial gains and losses back to a point of our choosing, okay?”

The EU insisted on waiting for someone else to take the initiative for peace. Now all it can do is pick up its pom-poms and cheer Trump on. Then hope that he rewards it.

***“If it wasn’t for Brussels getting drunk on its own transatlantic solidarity and unity propaganda, maybe it wouldn’t currently be in economic and political dire straits.”***

As Zelensky’s self-appointed babysitters, instead of spending the past week in the run-up to the Alaska summit insisting that Putin and Trump allow a high chair booster seat and a pack of crayons at the negotiating table so he can show them where he wants the borders, maybe the Europeans should have been calming him down and managing expectations. He sounded like he was treating his phone like a toy, calling up everyone in the contacts under “EU” – Estonia, Denmark, probably a few pizza places...

The EU has tried to gaslight Trump with the same rhetoric that it constantly firehoses onto European citizens about peace in Ukraine being a dangerous gateway drug for Russia to invade Western Europe – a convenient marketing pitch to justify boosting the weapons industry to the detriment of domestic priorities.

Not even warhawk US Senator Lindsey Graham is saying that now, telling NBC News that “Russia is not going to Kiev”...let alone the EU. European leaders treated Wednes-

day’s video call with Trump like a win. Perhaps because he didn’t explicitly tell them off, for once. But they really have no idea what he’ll actually discuss with Putin, nor do they have leverage over any eventual US–Russia deal. They don’t know whether Trump is just placating them because he doesn’t need a bunch of hysterical circus clowns in the mix.

So how could the EU spin this to avoid looking completely irrelevant? “Today Europe, the US and NATO have strengthened the common ground for Ukraine, we will remain in close coordination. Nobody wants peace more than us. A just and lasting peace,” said unelected EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Yeah, sounds desperate for peace, alright. Which must be why the EU is building weapons factories at breakneck speed, according to the Financial Times. Nothing says “we’re committed to ending the war” like tripling down on weapons. What are you going to do with all those if peace breaks out? Toss them in the landfill and hope that taxpayers forget about the boondoggle, like you did with the hundreds of millions of unused Covid jabs?

Brussels talks like a co-architect of global policy, but in practice it’s more like a subcontractor who has to implement someone else’s blueprint. The Alaska summit exclusion exposes how little agency it actually has in resolving conflicts that it has been funding and fueling. So much for a “feminist” foreign policy. The EU is behaving like a geopolitical tradwife.

Whatever happens between Trump and Putin, the EU has already vowed to adopt Ukraine’s problems while crossing its fingers that Trump might pitch in with “assistance” – military or otherwise. Why would Trump want a piece of that when Brussels has already welcomed it being dumped on its lap? Why settle for normalization with Russia, business, trade, and peace when you can have endless soap opera reruns instead?

*The views expressed in this article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Maghrebi.org. Rachel Marsden is a columnist, political strategist, and host of independently produced talk-shows in French and English. You can find more of her work at [rachelmarsden.com](http://rachelmarsden.com).*

*If you wish to pitch an opinion piece please send your article to [grace.sharp@maghrebi.org](mailto:grace.sharp@maghrebi.org)*



**Dalia Ghanem**

When Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune arrived in Rome on July 24 for a state visit, the diplomatic language expressed alongside Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was effusive. Both leaders described an increasingly crucial partnership to their respective broader strategic ambitions. Tebboune pointed to Italy as “an essential and serious partner in accompanying Algeria’s ambitious economic momentum,” while Meloni declared that her country’s determination to become “a hub, a gateway for energy to Europe” could not be achieved “without Algeria’s valuable cooperation.”

Behind the summit’s handshakes and the signing of over 40 agreements—spanning from subsea data cables to vehicle manufacturing—lies a quiet, yet substantive shift in Mediterranean geopolitics. For Italy, this partnership is the cornerstone of its “Mattei Plan for Africa,” a vision to establish itself as a crucial bridge between Europe and its southern continental neighbor. For Algeria, it is a meticulously engineered effort to escape the gravitational pull of its fraught relationships with France and Spain and forge a new power center with a crucial anchor in Europe.

***“This Algiers-Rome axis is far more than a simple deal for natural gas; it redraws the geopolitical map of the Mediterranean.”***

This Algiers-Rome axis is far more than a simple deal for natural gas; it redraws the geopolitical map of the Mediterranean, granting Algiers solid diplomatic leverage within the European Union and a potent counterbalance to the long-standing influence of the Paris-Madrid-Rabat axis, a bloc that Algiers has long viewed as a strategic threat designed to isolate it. But with Mediterranean regional dynamics

# Algeria-Italy ties are reshaping the Mediterranean

**After shutting out traditional partners France and Spain, Algeria has quickly expanded ties with Italy with larger geopolitical implications for the region.**

in constant flux, the critical question remains: Is this new axis built to last, or is it a fragile partnership of convenience?

The catalyst for this alliance was, undeniably, energy demand. As Russian pipelines to Europe shut down after the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Italy, once heavily reliant on Russian energy giant Gazprom, turned south. The data reveals a stark reversal: In 2021, Italy imported 29 bcm of gas from Russia versus 22.5 bcm from Algeria. By 2023, Russian volumes had collapsed to a mere 2.9 bcm. The enormous gap was largely filled by a surge in liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports, primarily from the United States and Qatar, while Algerian supplies held strong at 25.5 bcm, valued at an impressive \$14 billion. By 2024, pipelined gas from Russia had all but ceased, and Algeria emerged as Italy’s indispensable energy anchor—a fact cemented by a \$1.35 billion deal between Italy’s Eni and Algeria’s Sonatrach.

Yet, to see this as just a story about hydrocarbons is to miss the larger geopolitical gambit. For Algiers, Italy is not just a growing customer; it is a powerful replacement for its traditional partners. The most dramatic evidence of this came in its diplomatic rupture with Spain in 2022. When Madrid reversed its long-held neutrality on Western Saharan independence that year to align with Morocco’s position, Algeria’s response was swift and severe. It suspended a two-decade-old treaty of friendship and initiated a comprehensive trade boycott that cost Spanish businesses an estimated €930 million (\$986 million) in just three months, a clear signal that Algiers was willing to absorb economic pain to enforce its political red lines. While the Algiers-Madrid relationship crumbled, and ties with Paris frayed, over a host of recurring diplomatic disputes, including historical memory, visa restrictions, and French policy in the Sahel, reaching their lowest point in decades between 2024 and 2025, the Rome-Algiers axis solidified, signaling that Algeria would no longer tolerate unfavorable terms from its traditional European interlocutors.

Crucially, the foundation of this new axis is being purposefully diversified beyond

hydrocarbons, insulating it from the volatility of commodity markets and the pressures of Europe’s green transition. The partnership is following a deliberate “twin-track” approach: using Algerian gas as a transitional “bridge fuel” for current security, while simultaneously co-developing renewable energy sources for the future. This long-term vision is now being advanced through ambitious strategic initiatives. The proposed SouthH2 Corridor, a planned 3,300 km pipeline, aims to transport green hydrogen produced in Algeria into the heart of Europe, aligning with the EU’s objective to import 10 million tons of renewable hydrogen by 2030. This positions Italy as a hub for both natural gas and future green energy, while offering Algeria a path to monetize its vast solar and wind potential long after the world transitions away from fossil fuels.

The geopolitical payoff is also already evident. A new Rome-Algiers alignment is creating a diplomatic counterweight to the Paris-Madrid-Rabat bloc. On critical issues like the crisis in Libya and the Sahel, Italian and Algerian

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### Morocco's rail infrastructure to get 10bn dollar face lift

NEWS IN BRIEF

Macron to be "sole point of reference" for Algeria relations

Emmanuel Macron is the "sole point of reference" for handling the issue with its former colonial ruler according to Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, as reported by France 24 on March 24th.

Relations between the two nations have been strained over immigration and since Macron recognized Moroccan sovereignty of the disputed territory of Western Sahara in July last year.

"We will keep President Macron as our sole point of reference," Tebboune said in an interview broadcast on Algerian television.

France 24

Egypt, Lebanon and Iran warn of escalating tensions in Middle East

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelaty has warned of the risks of escalating tensions in the Middle Eastern region during phone calls with his Lebanese and Iranian counterparts, according to Middle East Monitor on March 22nd.

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry released a statement conveying that Abdelaty's conversation with Iraq addressed the "dramatic escalation in southern Lebanon".

They also warned that "such an escalation could lead to further tension and instability in the region and exacerbate an already fragile situation."

### Torture victims bring actions against Tunisia over regime's inaction

Six former detainees, victims of

However, "Not one trial has led

Rachid Chammaki and Sahouna

Continued on page 2



positions have begun to converge, and often stand in contrast to French-led initiatives. In Libya, both countries support the UN-recognized government in Tripoli, while France had been seen as tacitly supporting Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar in the east. Similarly, in the Sahel, both Rome and Algiers opposed a military intervention in Niger following the 2023 coup, advocating for a negotiated transition while France supported efforts by the West African regional grouping ECOWAS to reverse the military coup.

***“For Algiers, Italy is not just a growing customer; it is a powerful replacement for its traditional partners”***

This diplomatic alignment is the deliberate outcome of a new relationship where energy security provides the foundation for political cooperation, diminishing the role of traditional actors. The strategy is not without risks, however. Skeptics correctly point to Algeria's tight gas export capacity and domestic political risks, while others warn that Italy is merely swapping a dependency on Moscow for one on Algiers. These are valid concerns, but for now, they are being eclipsed by the immense strategic benefits.

For Italy, the partnership secures its energy supply and elevates its status as a European energy hub. For Algeria, the rewards are even greater: a vital economic lifeline, drastically reduced its traditional dependence on France and Spain, and engineering strategic relevance



**Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni at a summit in Rome, July 2025.**

at the heart of the Mediterranean. This could force difficult reassessments in capitals like Paris and Madrid, which can no longer take their historical positions for granted. It also intensifies the strategic pressure on Morocco along its eastern border, exacerbating the regional security dilemma. The question is no longer whether the Mediterranean map is changing, but how quickly other regional actors can adapt to the new reality being drawn by the Rome-Algiers axis, and what new countermeasures this gambit will inevitably provoke.

*The views expressed in this article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Maghrebi.org. Dalia Ghanem is a senior fellow and director of the Conflict and Security Program at the Middle East Council on Global Affairs. Her research focuses on Middle Eastern and North African politics, including issues of political violence, radicalisation, civil-military relations, and gender studies.*

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