



# Eight Reasons:

## Why did Algeria sever political relations with Morocco?

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On August 24, 2021, during a press conference held in the capital, Algiers, Algerian Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra announced the severance of diplomatic relations with Morocco, stating that the recent period has witnessed Morocco committing hostile acts against his country.

### Multiple Factors

Political relations between Algeria and Morocco have been characterized by severe tensions during the past period due to the escalation of disputes between them, leading to Algeria announcing the severance of diplomatic relations with Morocco, evident in the following:

**1- Supporting tribal demands:** Algeria accused Morocco of attempting to destabilize its internal affairs by supporting the demands of the Movement for the Self-Determination of Kabylie, known as the MAK Movement, which is classified as a terrorist organization by Algeria and which is accused of receiving funds from Morocco and Israel with the aim of destabilizing Algeria.

Algeria based its accusations on the fact that Omar Hilale, Morocco's permanent representative to the UN, announced last July his country's support for

the demands of the MAK movement to obtain the right to self-determination, describing it as having been subjected to Algerian colonialism since 1963, and referring to Algeria's attempts to stifle its independence in 1980, in 2001 and finally in 2019.

**2- Supporting and funding terrorism:** Algeria also accused Morocco of supporting and funding terrorist organizations in Algeria, specifically the MAK and the Rachad movements. Both movements are accused of shedding Algerian blood during the black decade with the aim of disrupting the Algerian political and security stability. This intensified the tension in the relations between the two countries, particularly since Morocco announced its support for the demands of the MAK movement to obtain the right to self-determination in defiance of Algeria's support for the Polisario Front.

**3- Spying on Algerian officials:** Algeria accuses Moroccan authorities of using Israeli Pegasus

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spyware to spy on Algerian officials and journalists. The Algerian Foreign Ministry announced its country's right to respond to these hostile acts by Morocco.

Morocco denied this, and demanded Algeria to submit evidence for this accusation. Last July, the Moroccan Foreign Minister, Nasser Bourita, stated to the French magazine *John Afrique* that he demands that every individual or body that has accused Morocco must present evidence or bear the consequences of its false slander before the judiciary.

**4- The dispute over the Sahara:** The issue of the Moroccan Sahara is a main reason that contributed to the tense political relations between Morocco and Algeria. Morocco believes that the solution would be through granting the Polisario autonomy under its sovereignty, while Algeria supports the Polisario's vision of holding a popular referendum and obtaining the right to self-determination and the establishment of the Sahrawi Republic, which is independent of Morocco. Moreover, Algeria supports the armed forces of the Polisario Front financially and militarily and hosts them in camps in Tindouf, Southern Algeria.

**5- Setting fires in Algeria:** Algeria accuses Morocco of complicity in setting fires in Algeria's forests. President Tebboune chaired an extraordinary meeting of High Security Council, where he stated that most of the fires that broke out in the country were the result of criminal acts. He also accused the MAK and the Rachad groups, which are classified as terrorist organizations last May, of receiving funding from Morocco to set fires in the Algerian forests.

The Algerian authorities arrested dozens of citizens on charges of belonging to these two movements, and for being involved in igniting these fires, which resulted in the burning of thousands of hectares of forests, and the death of at least 90 people, including 33 soldiers.

**6- Normalization with Israel:** Algeria accuses Morocco of giving Israel a way to interfere in the internal affairs of the Maghreb and North Africa

regions and of threatening Algeria's national security by normalizing with Israel and conspiring against it.

Thus, Algerian Foreign Minister, Ramtane Lamamra has made major endeavors to mobilize the support of African countries to prevent Israel from being granted observer status within the African Union (AU).

This was evident during his visits to Egypt, Ethiopia and Tunisia. The tension in Moroccan-Algerian relations was recently intensified by the statements of the Israeli Foreign Minister, Yair Lapid, during his recent visit to Morocco, where he referred to the concern of his country and of Morocco regarding the Algerian-Iranian rapprochement. This prompted the Algerian Foreign Ministry to issue a statement accusing Morocco of inciting the Israeli Foreign minister to release these insulting statements, which were described as false and arbitrary reflecting Morocco's desire to drag its Israeli ally into the process of confronting Algeria and threatening its national security.

**7- Rivalry between the two African states:** The African arena is witnessing a fierce competition between Morocco and Algeria in extending their influence in all African countries. Active Moroccan diplomatic movements have recently emerged throughout the African continent.

These movements succeeded in restoring Morocco to the African Union and altering the stance of several African countries towards the issue of the Sahara. This was reflected in some African countries opening consulates in the cities of Dakhla and Laayoune, located in the Moroccan Sahara.

These developments prompted Algeria to make counter diplomatic moves. The two countries are also competing to play a regional role in the Libyan crisis as well as the Sahel and Sahara regions.

**8- Failure of the Moroccan appeasement attempts:** Last July, King Mohammed VI of Morocco gave a speech calling on Algeria to overcome existing differences and to reopen borders - which have been closed since 1994. He also called on Algerian President



Tebboune to work together unconditionally, in order to 'develop fraternal relations' and «build bilateral relations based on trust and dialogue» addressing the Algerians that evil and trouble will never come to them from Morocco.

The political leadership in Algeria considered this call as a political maneuver by Morocco to cover up the hostile acts it is undergoing against Algeria. Algeria announced that it would reconsider its relations

with Morocco because of these hostile acts. Thus, the Algerian authorities intensified their security monitoring of the borders with Morocco.

In conclusion, Algeria's decision to sever its political relations with Morocco is only expected in light of the on-going escalation between the two sides recently, despite the Moroccan monarch's attempt to open new horizons for relations with Algeria.

The severing of diplomatic relations between the two countries is expected to impact the economic interests of both countries, particularly with Algeria's announcement that Sonatrach will take measures regarding the gas pipelines linking Algeria's fields to European countries via Morocco, the agreement of which is due to expire at the end of October.

## ABOUT FARAS

Future for Advanced Research and Studies (FARAS) is an independent think tank founded on April 4, 2014 in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E. FARAS seeks to enrich public dialogue, support decision-making and enhance academic research pertaining to future trends that currently constitute a real problem in the Middle East region. In light of instability and unpredictability, the overarching goal of FARAS is to help ward off future shocks regarding these developments.