



Le Maroc

En 2009, le Maroc n'hésite pas à mettre en garde les Etats-Unis, de manière très explicite, sur leurs intérêts au Maroc: "Les États-Unis seraient mal avisés d'abandonner leurs vrais amis au profit du pétrole (faisant allusion à l'Algérie)." Dans un autre câble, on apprend, selon des propos attribués au ministre marocain de l'Intérieur, Chakib Benmoussa, répondant à une question de l'ambassadeur américain, que déployer le drapeau de la République arabe sahraouie démocratique (RASD) est un crime. "Les autorités ne resteront pas les bras croisés quand des drapeaux de la RASD seront déployés, ou quand les drapeaux marocains seront brûlés, ce qui confirme que les deux sont considérés.

Le Maroc déclare pâtir en outre de la campagne de communication de l'Algérie sur ce sujet. «L'Algérie et le Front Polisario communiquent mieux que le gouvernement marocain». Cet aveu est celui de Taïeb Fassi Fihri, ministre des Affaires étrangères marocaines quant il lâcha ces propos à l'ambassadeur des Etats-Unis au Maroc. Des échanges révélés par Wikileaks. Selon ces câbles, la question du Sahara serait devenue, depuis les accords de libre-échange entre le Maroc et les Etats-Unis, le sujet dominant les échanges entre l'ambassade américaine au Maroc et Rabat.

Des échanges réguliers depuis 2005, avec celui qu'ils apprécient "pour sa franchise", et qui tournent essentiellement autour de la personne du roi et de la question du Sahara. C'est ainsi qu'en mars 2006, Taïeb Fassi Fihri se lâche à nouveau: "J'ai entendu que vous vous plaignez de difficultés à faire passer des messages au patron (The Boss)". L'ambassadeur, dérouté, lui répond que les messages du président ou de la secrétaire d'État sont toujours acheminés par un canal sûr et effectif.

L'Algérie

Un mémo de 2008 rend compte de la rencontre entre un diplomate américain, le président algérien Bouteflika et son Premier ministre Belkhadem. Bouteflika explique alors que si le conflit au Sahara dure, c'est en raison de la "maladresse" des Marocains. Et de dénoncer "le manque d'élégance" de la position marocaine, qui défend alors une proposition unilatéral d'autonomie. "Ils veulent un Anschluss comme Saddam avec le Koweït.

" La position algérienne, elle, est exprimée ainsi: pour Bouteflika et son Premier ministre, il s'agit avant tout de trouver une solution qui permette à l'Algérie de "sauver l'honneur". Et d'ajouter qu'il envisagerait que les Sahraouis choisissent de

rester une région du Maroc si cela se faisait de la même manière que "Puerto Rico a choisi de rester au sein des États-Unis", une comparaison habilement choisie. Enfin, pour Bouteflika, le Maroc doit offrir quelque chose en contrepartie au Polisario, "vous ne pouvez pas demander des concessions à des gens qui n'ont rien dans leurs poches", peut-on lire, en résumé, dans un câble du 17 août 2009, dans lequel le chargé d'affaires Robert P. Jackson analyse "les réalités du Sahara occidental".

L'Algérie a indiqué que ses relations avec le Maroc ne pouvaient pas s'améliorer tant qu'il n'y aurait pas d'autonomie au Sahara occidental. Le Maroc, qui suit de près les liens étroits entre les dirigeants du Polisario et leurs hôtes algériens, reste convaincu qu'il n'y aura pas d'accord si les relations avec les Algériens ne s'améliorent pas

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06RABAT2344	2006-12-28 15:19	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN	Embassy Rabat

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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5472

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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3186

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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 4491

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RABAT 002344

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NOFORN STATE FOR NEA/MAG, DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/17/2016

TAGS: PBTS PHUM PGOV MO

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF INTERIOR TOUGH ON PRESS REFORM AND
HUMAN RIGHTS IN WESTERN SAHARA

REF: A. RABAT 2300

¶B. RABAT 2318

¶C. RABAT 2320

¶D. RABAT 2337

¶E. RABAT 2285

¶F. SECSTATE 200675

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Thomas T. Riley for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)
¶1.(C) Summary: Ambassador Riley raised freedom of expression issues, the Western Sahara and elections with Interior Minister Benmoussa December 27. Following up on earlier senior contacts, Ambassador argued for liberalization of the press code and against the new draft law on polling. Repeatedly referring to Moroccan values, a frank Benmoussa said that with the new code, penalties for press liability would be lightened, but responsibility had to increase, adding that Morocco needed responsible polling as well. He thought upcoming elections would be hotly contested and

recent disputes over participation thresholds may raise voter interest. On the Western Sahara, he highlighted CORCAS activities and, while asserting that the GOM respected rights in the territory, said it would arrest anyone raising the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) flag. He said recidivism among released Islamist prisoners was being targeted by the Ministry of Justice. The nations top cop, Benmoussa was tougher than previous interlocutors, stressing the need for enhanced government control. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador accompanied by PolCouns, called on Minister of Interior Chakib Benmoussa for an hour-long exchange on December 27, reinforcing representations made earlier to Prime Minister Driss Jettou, MFA Minister-Delegate Fassi Fihri, Minister of Justice Bouzoubaa, and Royal Adviser Belfiqh (reftels. Benmoussa was joined by MOI Director of International Affairs Rachid Rguibi, and the new MOI Governor/Coordinator for MINURSO, El Arbi Mrabet.

Press Code ¶3. (C) Ambassador urged speedy action passing revisions liberalizing the press code, Benmoussa said work on the bill was almost finished; the government was moving forward after

consulting with press and publisher associations. Its object is a revised code which lightened penalties, but at the same time increased the responsibilities of the press.

This responsibility can be administered in the first instance by the press association. While Morocco would continue to move forward, it had to protect its fundamental

"values," to which he referred repeatedly. In clear reference to the recent banning of the Arabic weekly Nishane, he noted that publishing jokes on religion passes the social norms, and has already provoked strong international reaction, some of which the Ambassador confirmed he had been shown by Taieb Fassi Fihri (reftel E). The government had to act to keep protests from turning violent. The Ambassador pushed back, noting that in the US we believed that freedom of the press provided the best possible safety valve, but was again answered with reference to values.

Polling Law ¶4. (C) Ambassador noted that the proposed law on polling was worrisome. Benmoussa began by noting that in the past there had been restrictions on polling but they had not been defined or codified into law. The law had not yet been fully defined and would be subject to full debate when it is submitted to Parliament. The bill, reflecting regulations in force in France and elsewhere, should be seen as a step forward. It would establish a commission including civil

society but headed by the Secretary General of the Prime Minister's office. Polls should not take on the King, religion, or fundamental values. Today, a poll can look at anything. Polls can be used to put into circulation a "bad message." Noting that last summer's IRI-sponsored electoral poll had "forced the situation," he said there were many protests by the political parties. The Ambassador countered

RABAT 00002344 002 OF 003 that last summer's poll was good for the country, as it made people aware of the political situation. The government could only benefit from knowing what people were thinking. ¶5.(C)Comment:There was an important inconsistency noted in some of Benmoussa's comments on the polling law and the IRI poll in particular. When asked if the IRI polls had been the reason for the new law Benmoussa strongly denied this and cited a need for some time now to have a law that covers the quality of polls, similar to laws in Europe and elsewhere. He also denied that there was any intent to modify or control the content of polls, only to assure that it had been done properly and scientifically and not just to manipulate the public. Nevertheless, he complained emotionally about the specific follow-up question asked by IRI to the "undecided" category: "for whom would you vote if you had to vote tomorrow" which, when added to original answers resulted in a large majority (47%) for the Justice and Development Party (PJD). One got the strong feeling from these criticisms that, at least for Benmoussa, the law would have allowed him to modify or even not conduct the IRI poll, for reasons that had little to do with professionalism or scientific bases. End Comment.

Elections ¶6. (C) Benmoussa said the electoral law had passed Parliament and included provisions enabling candidates to bypass threshold restrictions by getting enough signatures in their district. There was a good, if heated, debate in Parliament over raising the threshold from 5 to 6 percent. This had increased transparency, raising public interest, and it may help boost voter participation. There has since been a notable increase in coordination among the smaller parties. In response to a question, he noted the PJD had been initially in favor of raising the

participation threshold. It later sided with the small parties on the ease of eligibility of candidates, to position itself as leader of the opposition, although it continued to push for a higher threshold percentage, which was inconsistent with its "concern" for small parties. This was all part of the political game, he said.

Western Sahara ¶7. (C) Ambassador noted he had discussed the autonomy plan with MFA Minister-Delegate Fassi Fihri. He appreciated the access to the Western Sahara afforded to embassy personnel by the GOM. He raised concerns about human rights, noting it was difficult to comprehend arrests in Laayoune of those who were pro-independence, but peaceful.

Benmoussa was defensive, expressing concern about known supporters of independence, who, "financed by the Polisario," expressed themselves outside the country. When there is a risk of security, he insisted, the police will intervene. They will not stand by when SADR flags are unfurled, or when Moroccan flags are burned, confirming that both were considered crimes.

Ambassador specifically asked if showing the SADR flag was a crime, and surprisingly Benmoussa confirmed yes, it was considered inciting the crowd. This was the first time, we believe that the GOM has admitted to arresting Sahrawi demonstrators for other than violent crimes, property damage, etc.

He complained that many of those arrested were also trafficking in narcotics and contraband, and that those who take a boat to the Canaries use the SADR flag to gain asylum from the Spanish. The GOM was committed to keeping access open to the Western Sahara, allowing in many journalists, but keeping out those with pre-planned and "sometimes-paid" agendas. (Comment: We have seen no evidence of smuggling by activists, but have heard from Spanish authorities that many Sahrawi boat people have exaggerated their repression for asylum purposes. End Comment.)

Law Enforcement Issues ¶8. (C) Benmoussa, consulting with his staff, said the RABAT 00002344 003 OF 003 money-laundering bill will likely be approved in the coming legislative session. He was interested in principle in training. He also responded positively to the possibility of FBI-provided anti-corruption training, highlighting the government's efforts in this direction, but deferring in practice to his head of police. ¶9. (C)

On prisoners, he was concerned about recidivism among released Islamist prisoners. The government tries to track them after release, though not always successfully. there is a program focused on changing prisoner's perspectives, administered by the Ministry of Justice but he was not familiar with the details.

Visit Embassy Rabat's Classified Website;
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/rabat>

Riley

L'Algérie

Viewing cable 08ALGIERS251, ALGERIAN LEADERSHIP TOWS WESTERN SAHARA LINE WITH

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08ALGIERS251	2008-03-03 13:21	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Algiers

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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5374

INFO RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 8834

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RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 2207

RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 7060

RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

RUEHNK/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 6256

RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 1497

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ALGIERS 000251

SIPDIS E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/01/2023

TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER KDEM AG

SUBJECT: ALGERIAN LEADERSHIP TOWS WESTERN SAHARA LINE WITH

A/S WELCH

REF: 07 ALGIERS 1069 Classified By: Ambassador Robert S. Ford; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d). ¶1. (S)

SUMMARY: In February 26 and 27 meetings with NEA

Assistant Secretary C. David Welch, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and Prime Minister Abdelaziz Belkhadem emphasized their familiar line on self-determination for Western Sahara, as well as the need to find a way out that would allow Algeria to "save face." Bouteflika said that relations with Morocco were "brotherly" and that Western Sahara was the only issue standing between them. Because the U.S. was unburdened by the colonial past of France in the region, Bouteflika felt it was ideally placed to serve as an informal referee in resolving the dispute.

Although he said he understood Morocco felt threatened by the prospect of Western Saharan independence, Bouteflika said that Morocco only had itself to blame for the current situation, as it had proceeded in a "clumsy" manner. With a more "elegant" touch, he said, Morocco could have encouraged "a Puerto Rico" outcome, where Sahrawis would happily choose to remain a part of Morocco in some form. Welch underlined to the Algerian officials that the U.S. sought a practical approach that could help the current negotiations make progress, and the Moroccan autonomy proposal offered such a possibility. END SUMMARY.

LOVE FOR BAKER PLAN DIES HARD ¶2.(S) In response to A/S Welch's assertion that the Moroccan plan served to move a frozen situation forward in the absence of any alternative, Bouteflika asserted that the plan of former Secretary of State James Baker was such an alternative. He told A/S Welch that if another option was necessary, "self-determination is that alternative" and the Baker Plan should be discussed. A/S Welch replied that the Baker plan is dead because it, too, failed to generate progress. In Bouteflika's view, Baker failed because it was not given a chance, and he blamed the U.S. for "not taking its UN Security Council responsibilities seriously." Bouteflika said the Moroccan plan offered less autonomy for Western Sahara than an Algerian province currently enjoys (reftel). He conceded that Algeria does have influence in Western Sahara, but swore he would not use it to violate what he sees as international law.

MOROCCAN "CLUMSINESS" TO BLAME ¶3. (S) Prime Minister Abdelaziz Belkhadem told A/S Welch on February 26 that the stability of Morocco was in Algeria's interest, and that attempting "to transform an anti-colonial issue" was not the right path to take and was potentially destabilizing to the region. Bouteflika, meanwhile, said that he understood Morocco felt threatened by the prospect of independence for Western Sahara, but stressed that the Moroccans only had themselves to blame for current Sahrawi determination. Bouteflika explained, saying that Morocco could have easily used a more "elegant" approach to produce a Western Sahara independence that could be controlled or supervised. Instead, he said, "they want Anschluss like Saddam Hussein with Kuwait." Bouteflika said he easily could have imagined an outcome in which Western Sahara chose to remain a part of Morocco after seeing the benefits of Moroccan rule, in much the same way "as Puerto Rico chose to remain part of the U.S." According to Bouteflika, Morocco needs to offer the Polisario something, since "you cannot ask concessions from people who have nothing in their pockets." Had it not been for Morocco's "clumsy" approach, Bouteflika said "they could have gotten what they wanted."

ON FRANCE AND U.S. ¶4. (S) Burdened by its colonial history in the Maghreb, France is unable to play a constructive role in resolving the Western Sahara dispute, according to Bouteflika. France "has never really accepted Algerian independence," Bouteflika said, and he claimed that France was trying to settle scores with Algeria by interfering in Western Sahara

ALGIERS 00000251 002 OF 002 in support of Morocco. In contrast, Bouteflika said the U.S. was an ideal counterweight to balance Morocco, as none of the parties involved had any bone of contention with the U.S. Bouteflika complained that the U.S. treats Algeria as "second class" compared to the preferential treatment it gives to Tunisia and Morocco. He said the U.S. should understand Algeria better, as "you also paid a price for your independence." Belkhadem told A/S Welch of Algeria's admiration for U.S. positions on the independence of East Timor and Kosovo. "Why don't you share the same views on Western Sahara?" asked Belkhadem, "it leaves us wondering what our U.S. friends want." With both Algerians, A/S Welch underlined that the U.S. sought practical approaches that would advance the Western Sahara negotiations forward. The Moroccan proposal, he noted, offered a possibility. He urged the Algerians to consider what they could do to help the current negotiations make concrete progress.

COMMENT: NEED TO SAVE FACE ¶5. (S) Bouteflika repeated to A/S Welch several times

the need for Algeria to get itself out of the Western Sahara dispute in a way that allowed it to "save face." He reiterated that Algeria "has no claim" at stake, and spoke of looking towards positive future relations with Morocco, as "one day we will need to get beyond this." In a February 27 meeting with Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci, A/S Welch invited the Algerian delegation to visit Washington immediately following the next round of negotiations at Manhasset, to continue the discussions. ¶6. (U) This cable has not been cleared by A/S Welch.