

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Morocco Summary 17 May 2021

The administration of United States (US) President Joseph Biden (2021-present) says it will not reverse former president Donald Trump's (2017-2021) decision to recognise Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara. The confirmation dashes Algeria's hopes of a reversal of US recognition in favour of the Polisario separatists it backs. Morocco is in diplomatic tiffs with Germany and Spain, while building support among African countries for its claim over the Western Sahara. Arab League foreign ministers establish a ministerial committee to communicate with permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to halt the "illegal Israeli" policies in occupied East Jerusalem. Haut Commissariat au Plan (HCP) (high commission for planning) statistics reveal the economic impact of Covid-19, noting that Morocco's unemployment rate increased from 10.5% to 12.5% between Q1 2020 and Q1 2021. Government coronavirus website Le Portail Officiel du Coronavirus au Maroc reports that Morocco has provided almost 6.2 million of its 36.5 million citizens with at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine.

US confirms recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara...

In a boost for **Morocco's** claim to the disputed area of the **Western Sahara**, the administration of **United States (US)** president **Joseph Biden** (2021-present) has announced it will not reverse former president **Donald Trump's** (2017-2021) decision to recognise Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara.¹ US secretary of state **Anthony Blinken** reportedly made the statement during a call with Morocco's foreign minister, **Nasser Bourita**, on 30 April.² The confirmation underlines the strong partnership between **Washington** and **Rabat** and dashes neighbouring **Algeria's** hopes of a reversal of US recognition in favour of the **Polisario** separatists it supports.³

Despite Algeria's support for the Polisario, it is unlikely to go to war with Morocco over the issue.⁴ Algerian media reported on 29 April that their foreign minister, **Sabri Boukadoum**, had similarly met with Blinken by phone. In a **Facebook** post, Boukadoum said the Sahara was top of the agenda, although the US **Department of State** made no mention of the issue in its press release.⁵

The US, under former president Trump, recognised Morocco's territorial integrity and sovereignty over the Western Sahara in December as part of a deal that included the resumption of formal ties between Rabat and **Israel**.⁶ Trump announced in a presidential declaration on 10 December that Morocco and Israel had agreed to "*full diplomatic relations*" in a US-brokered deal under which Washington recognises Moroccan sovereignty over the disputed territory of Western Sahara.⁷ The declaration had immediate legal effect, with Washington considering Western Sahara as part of Morocco's territory since then.⁸ Morocco and the US are currently preparing for **Africa's** largest

¹ Axios, 30 Apr 2021

² The North Africa Post, 1 May 2021

³ The North Africa Post, 1 May 2021

⁴ ARC Source: North Africa analyst, 3 May 2021

⁵ The North Africa Post, 1 May 2021

⁶ The North Africa Post, 1 May 2021

⁷ Financial Times, 10 Dec 2020

⁸ The North Africa Post, 1 May 2021

military drills, **The African Lion 21**, which is scheduled to take part in the Sahara territory on 7-18 June.⁹

A local analyst says the US statement points to potential renewed live conflict and certainly to a situation that Islamists are likely to exploit politically and, if they can, militarily.¹⁰ For the international Islamist movement, it would be strategic to feed a Sahrawi perception that Polisario has failed and must try something new.¹¹

Morocco has been building support among several **African** countries for its claim on the Western Sahara. Foreign minister Bourita on 11 May reaffirmed support on Morocco's position on the Sahara conflict from his counterparts in **Burundi** and **Equatorial Guinea**. Both foreign ministers informed Bourita that they support Morocco's claim over Western Sahara and applaud Rabat's efforts in adhering to the **United Nations Security Council's (UNSC)** conventions surrounding the conflict.¹² On 5 May, **Malawi** also reaffirmed its support for Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara¹³ while **Zambia** followed suit on 7 May¹⁴ in further demonstration of growing pro-Morocco consensus on the Western Sahara question.

... as Western Sahara provokes diplomatic spats with Germany and Spain ...

Control of the Western Sahara appears to be at the centre of a diplomatic tiff between Morocco and **Germany**. Morocco on 6 May recalled its ambassador to Germany amid rising tensions between the two countries. While Rabat appears to have three main issues with **Berlin**, the most pressing appears to be control of the Western Sahara.¹⁵ The other two issues include Morocco's displeasure at not being invited to a conference on **Libya** in Berlin, and Germany's failure to silence or expel **Duisburg**-based Moroccan social media activist **Mohammed Hajib**.¹⁶ In March, Morocco's ministry of foreign affairs decided to cease cooperation with Germany's embassy in Rabat, following months of simmering tensions.¹⁷ In recalling its ambassador to Germany, Morocco's foreign ministry claimed that Berlin had been engaged in "*hostile acts that are detrimental to the higher interests of the Kingdom of Morocco*".¹⁸ A spokesperson for the German foreign ministry said the allegations had no basis and that Germany hoped for a quick resumption of bilateral relations.¹⁹

Morocco is also involved in a diplomatic rift with **Spain**. Morocco's ministry of foreign affairs summoned the Spanish ambassador in Rabat on 25 April to "*clarify*" reports that Spain had decided to host **Polisario Front** leader **Brahim Ghali** for medical treatment after he tested positive for **Covid-19**.²⁰ Foreign affairs minister Nasser Bourita on 1 May addressed a direct message to the Spanish government, asking whether it was ready to sacrifice the strategic ties between Rabat and **Madrid** for Ghali.²¹ Spain said Ghali's hospitalisation was for "*humanitarian reasons*" and that the situation should not affect ties between Madrid and Rabat.

... and Morocco shares concerns over Israel-Palestine conflict

As a member of the **Arab League**, Morocco has expressed concern about the current conflict between **Palestine** and **Israel**. During a virtual meeting of Arab League foreign ministers on 11 May, foreign minister Nasser Bourita said Morocco shared serious concerns about Israel's "*violation*" of Palestine and Palestinians in **Jerusalem** (Israel), particularly in the **Sheikh Jarrah** neighbourhood where

⁹ The North Africa Post, 1 May 2021

¹⁰ ARC Source: North Africa analyst, 3 May 2021

¹¹ ARC Source: North Africa analyst, 3 May 2021

¹² North Africa Post, 11 May 2021.

¹³ Morocco Shafaqna, 5 May 2021

¹⁴ Diplomatie, 7 May 2021

¹⁵ DW, 8 May 2021

¹⁶ DW, 8 May 2021

¹⁷ DW, 8 May 2021

¹⁸ DW, 8 May 2021

¹⁹ DW, 8 May 2021

²⁰ Morocco World News, 25 Apr 2021

²¹ Atalayar, 1 May 2021

Israeli forces attacked and arbitrarily arrested Palestinians in the **al-Aqsa** mosque, one of Islam's holiest sites. Bourita said the Arab League condemned the "*hateful speeches of some Israeli extremist religions*" and warned that such practices will lead to an escalation of violence and prevalence of hate speech.²² Bourita reaffirmed Morocco's position, noting its placement of the Palestinian issue and **Al-Quds al-Sharif** (Arabic name for Jerusalem) at the forefront of its concerns:

*"We all agree on our categorical rejection of all violations and unilateral measures that harm the legal status of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people in achieving their aspirations for freedom and independence."*²³

Arab League foreign ministers established a ministerial committee on 11 May consisting of Morocco, Palestine, **Egypt, Jordan, Qatar** and **Saudi Arabia** to communicate with permanent members of the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** and other influential countries to take action to halt the "*illegal Israeli*" policies in occupied East Jerusalem.²⁴ The committee includes the president of the Arab summit, the Arab member in the Security Council and the secretary-general of the Arab League. For Morocco and other countries that normalised relations with Israel in 2020 – **Sudan, Bahrain** and the **United Arab Emirates** – the escalation of violence has placed a significant strain on their governments, which had argued that closer relations with Israel would help restrain Israel's actions against Palestinians in the **West Bank** and **Gaza**.²⁵

Arab League ministers expressed support for the Palestinian cause as the central focus of the Arab community, committing to support Palestine's causes and reaffirming occupied East Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital.²⁶ In a report to the League Council, the Arab foreign ministers called on the **International Criminal Court (ICC)** to open a criminal investigation into apartheid, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Israel against the Palestinian people.²⁷ The council called for an investigation into the forced evictions of Palestinians from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah and the rest of the Palestinian territories, requesting the ICC to provide the necessary material and human resources for the investigation. However, some analysts note that while the Arab world is unified in condemning Israeli attacks in Gaza and its invasion of the Aqsa mosque, so far words have not translated into action.²⁸

Covid-19 hits Morocco's employment figures

A **Haut Commissariat au Plan (HCP)** (high commission for planning) report released on 3 May paints a sobering picture of the economic impact on Morocco's economy of **Covid-19** and the measures to curb its spread. The HCP reports that Morocco's unemployment rate increased from 10.5% to 12.5% between the first quarter (Q1) of 2020 and Q1 2021.²⁹ The number of unemployed persons increased by 242,000 between the first quarter of 2020 and 2021 from 1,292,000 to 1,534,000.³⁰

Cities and rural areas have both seen a sharp rise in unemployment in Q1 2021. Urban areas have seen unemployment increase from 15.1% to 17.1%, with an additional 185,000 people unemployed, while the figure has increased from 3.9% to 5.3% in rural areas, with 57,000 additional people unemployed.³¹ The highest increase in unemployment was reported among females (14.3% to 17.5%) and those aged 15-25 years (26.8% to 32.5%).³² Graduate unemployment also increased to 19.8%, seeing an increase of 2%.

²² Morocco World News, 11 May 2021

²³ Morocco World News, 11 May 2021

²⁴ Morocco World News, 11 May 2021

²⁵ The New York Times, 14 May 2021

²⁶ Morocco World News, 11 May 2021

²⁷ Morocco World News, 11 May 2021

²⁸ The New York Times, 14 May 2021

²⁹ Map News, 3 May 2021

³⁰ Map News, 3 May 2021

³¹ Map News, 3 May 2021

³² Morocco World News, 3 May 2021

In its 3 February report (see *ARC Briefing Morocco February 2021*), the HCP study attributed the increase in unemployment to several factors, citing a number of socio-economic crises that led to many losing their jobs. The labour market deteriorated as a result of the pandemic, causing destruction of jobs, a drop in working hours, and an increase in the unemployment rate.³³ Measures to curb the spread of Covid-19 resulted in the shutdown of many companies in Morocco.³⁴

Within the same period, underemployment increased from 954,000 to 988,000 people, or from 8.8% to 9.2%.³⁵ In urban areas, the number of underemployed people increased from 531,000 to 552,000 people while in rural areas it increased from 423,000 to 435,000.³⁶ The rate of underemployment for men is 10.2%, while for women it is 5.6%.³⁷ In urban areas the figures is 9% for men and 8.3% for women, while in rural areas it is almost five times higher among males at 12% versus 2.5% among females.³⁸

Offsetting the pessimistic employment figures, the **Chandler Good Government Index (CGGI)** on 26 April ranked Morocco 33rd globally in its **Attractive Marketplace** Pillar.³⁹ Morocco is the only lower-middle income country to feature in the top 40. Additionally, on 23 April, the new director-general and executive vice-president of the **International Finance Corporation (IFC)**, **Makhtar Diop**, confirmed support for Morocco's post Covid-19 recovery. Diop emphasised the IFC's readiness to strengthen its support, both financially and technically, to Morocco's efforts "*to improve its economic and social development, by using the private sector*".⁴⁰ In its **World Economic Outlook Report** published on 6 April, the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** predicted that Morocco's economy will grow by 4.5% in 2021 and 4.4% in 2022.⁴¹

Morocco's vaccinated population exceeds 6 million

The rate at which Morocco's economy recovers, including upticks in employment and business resilience, will depend on how quickly the government can bring the coronavirus under control. Covid-19 infections are decreasing in Morocco, with the country reporting on average 169 new infections each day in May, which is 3% of the peak reported on 17 November.⁴² The government hopes that the decreasing case numbers and its ambitious vaccination campaign will enable revitalisation of the domestic economy and relieve the pressure of Covid-19 on the healthcare system.

Morocco launched its vaccination program in January and aims to inoculate 80% of its adult population – 25 million of its 36.5 million inhabitants – to reach herd immunity against Covid-19. Morocco has vaccinated at least 16.72% of its population with at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine, leading Africa in the vaccination campaign against Covid-19 and ranking 13th globally.⁴³ The government has provided 6,171,437 Moroccans with at least one dose of a covid-19 vaccine, according to the government coronavirus website, **Le Portail Officiel du Coronavirus au Maroc**.⁴⁴ As of 16 May, Morocco had fully vaccinated 4,500,638 people.⁴⁵ Morocco has earned international acclaim, more recently from the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, for positioning itself among the top countries worldwide to speed up the vaccination process.⁴⁶ Representatives of various **United**

³³ Morocco World News, 3 Feb 2021

³⁴ Morocco World News, 3 Feb 2021

³⁵ Morocco World News, 3 May 2021

³⁶ Morocco World News, 3 May 2021

³⁷ Morocco World News, 3 May 2021

³⁸ Map News, 3 May 2021

³⁹ Morocco Telegraph, 7 May 2021

⁴⁰ Morocco World News, 23 April 2021

⁴¹ International Monetary Fund, 6 Apr 2021

⁴² Graphics Reuters, 16 May 2021

⁴³ Our World in Data, 18 May 2021

⁴⁴ Le Portail Officiel du Coronavirus au Maroc, 16 May 2021

⁴⁵ Le Portail Officiel du Coronavirus au Maroc, 16 May 2021

⁴⁶ North Africa Post, 1 May 2021

Nations (UN) agencies based in Morocco have also lauded the country's swift response to the Covid-19 pandemic as "*exemplary*".⁴⁷

The health ministry has hedged its bets on ordering and using different types of Covid-19 vaccine. Morocco ordered 66 million doses from **British-Swedish** multinational pharmaceutical **AstraZeneca** and **China-based Sinopharm**, but pressure on manufacturers has complicated its plan to vaccinate all Moroccans within three months.⁴⁸ Morocco has received a total of 11.5 million doses to date, which includes delivery of two million Sinopharm vaccines on 10 May.⁴⁹ Half a million doses of the Chinese vaccine were delivered on 26 April, and another 500,000 on 30 April. A further delivery of AstraZeneca vaccine makes up seven million doses. In order to deal with global scarcity, Morocco has also ordered one million doses of **Russia's Sputnik** Covid-19 vaccine.

Morocco has expanded its inoculation campaign to include those aged 50 and older. Initially, vaccination was only made available to those 55 and older, health professionals aged 40 and older, teachers aged 45 and over, security officers, local authorities and senior citizens older than 75.⁵⁰

As of 16 May, Morocco has performed more than six million tests for Covid-19 since the respiratory illness syndrome first appeared in the country in March 2020 (see *ARC Briefing Morocco March 2020*).⁵¹ The country has recorded 515,112 confirmed cases in its population of 36.5 million, with 503,280 recoveries and 9,098 Covid-19-related deaths.⁵² The national recovery rate is 97.7% with a fatality rate of 1.8%. At time of writing, Morocco has 2,734 active Covid-19 cases.

Planner

Feb-May 2021 (**Morocco**) National vaccination programme;

7-18 June 2021 (**Morocco**) Scheduled period of the **African Lion 21** military drill, conducted by **United States Africa Command** with allies and **African** partners in Morocco, **Tunisia** and **Senegal**

2021 (**Morocco**) Scheduled construction of five new dams;

2021 (**Morocco**) Scheduled legislative, regional and local elections;

2021 **Oued Zem (Morocco)** Scheduled opening of automotive testing centre;

Q4 2021 **Marrakech (Morocco)** 24th **General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**

2022 **Marrakech (Morocco)** **International Monetary Fund** and **World Bank** annual meetings to take place in Morocco;

Chronology

16 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco switches to daylight saving time (DST);

14 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Reuters*. King **Mohammed VI** instructs Morocco's foreign affairs ministry to begin dispatching emergency aid to **Gaza** in **Palestine**, amid escalating violence;

12 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Khaleej Times*. Government decides to maintain the night curfew among other lockdown measures during the **Eid al-Fitr** holiday;

12 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Islamic resistance movement **Hamas** political office head **Ismail Haniyeh** informs Morocco's prime minister, **Saad Eddine El**

⁴⁷ Morocco World News, 30 Apr 2021

⁴⁸ North Africa Post, 1 May 2021

⁴⁹ Morocco World News, 10 Mar 2021

⁵⁰ Morocco World News, 10 Mar 2021

⁵¹ Morocco World News, 13 Mar 2021

⁵² Our World in Data, 16 May 2021

Othmani, about developments in **Palestinian** territories;

11 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Foreign affairs minister **Nasser Bourita** holds talks through videoconference with **Gambian** counterpart **Mamadou Tangara** centering on ways to foster bilateral cooperation in renewable energy, agriculture, infrastructure, training, water, education, and exchanging experience in water management and dam construction;

11 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco's government shares serious concerns regarding **Israel's** violations against **Palestine** and Palestinians during the **Arab League** foreign ministers' virtual meeting;

11 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The ministry of Islamic affairs announces that Morocco will not celebrate Eid al-Fitr prayers in mosques due to the **Covid-19** crisis;

11 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *North Africa Post*. Foreign minister **Nasser Bourita** reaffirms support on Morocco's position from counterparts from **Equatorial Guinea** and **Burundi** in the **Western Sahara** conflict;

11 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco receives two million doses of the **Sinopharm Covid-19** vaccine from **China**;

11 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Prime minister **Saad Eddine El Othmani** says government is committed to effectively implementing generalised social protection by initiating a comprehensive reform of the health system;

10 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *North Africa Post*. **Algeria's** President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** orders the country's government and private economic companies to terminate their contracts with Moroccan companies;

9 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The government releases a statement on the ongoing violence in **Palestine's** **Al Quds** and the **Al Aqsa** Mosque, describing the violence "as an inadmissible act" that is likely to lead to growing tensions;

9 May 2021 **Madrid (Spain)** *Morocco Shafaqna*. **Spain's** foreign affairs minister, **Arancha Gonzalez Laya**, says that the country has "nothing to add to what has been said" regarding the case of **Polisario** leader **Brahim Ghali**;

8 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **Germany** calls Morocco's criticism over perceived German intransigence on Western Sahara "unfounded" amid a diplomatic spat between the two countries;

8 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Map World*. The foreign affairs ministry accuses **Spain** of being a "bad partner" in failing to notify its Moroccan counterparts of the arrival of the leader of the 'Polisario' militias;

8 May 2021 **Guercif Basin (Morocco)** *Predator Oil & Gas Holdings Plc Press Release*. **United Kingdom**-headquartered **Predator Oil & Gas Holdings** announces "the imminent drilling" of the company's well in the **Guercif Basin**, north-eastern Morocco;

7 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Diplomatie*. **Zambia** reiterates support for Morocco's territorial integrity and sovereignty over the **Western Sahara**;

7 May 2021 **Casablanca (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The **National Airports Office (ONDA)** announces the change of terminals for international flights from its **Casablanca Mohammed V** airport from Terminal 2 to Terminal 1;

7 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco ranks 53rd out of 190 countries for the best economy in the world;

7 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Foreign ministers of Morocco and **Benin**

discuss strategies to improve relations between the two countries;

6 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *North Africa Post*. Government extends the state of emergency until 10 June;

6 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco recalls its ambassador in **Germany** amid a diplomatic tiff between the two countries;

5 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Daily Sabah*. **Turkey**-based discount chain **BIM** announces the sale of 35% minority shares of the capital of its subsidiary in Morocco, **Bim Stores SARL**, to **Blue Investment Holding**, affiliated with **United Kingdom**-headquartered private equity fund **Helios Investment Partners**;

5 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco Shafaqna*. **Malawi** reaffirms unwavering support for Morocco's sovereignty over the **Western Sahara**;

5 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The ministry of equipment, transport, logistics and water announces that Morocco's main national dams reached a filling volume of more than 8.26 billion cubic meters, equivalent to a filling rate of 51.3%, as of 3 March, compared to the same period of 2020 with a filling rate of 49.8% (7.77 billion cubic meters);

5 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The interior ministry says it has developed a study showing Morocco's interest in prioritising the **European** market in terms of the supply of medical cannabis;

4 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Diplomatie*. Foreign affairs minister **Nasser Bourita** discusses bilateral issues in a video conference with his Nigerian counterpart, **Geoffrey Onyeama**;

3 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *all Africa*. The **Haut Commissariat au Plan (HCP)** (high commission for planning) reports a 2% increase (10.5% to 12.5%) in the unemployment rate in Morocco between the first quarter of 2020 compared to 2021;

4 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Government to re-supply all pharmacies with chloroquine-based medicines in June, limiting the supply of such medicines to hospitals to ensure treatment of advanced **Covid-19** cases;

4 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Government is set to announce an easing of **Covid-19** restrictions post-Ramadan for restaurants and cafes, allowing restaurants and cafes to operate until 11 p.m. while maintaining preventive and protective measures including social distancing and the wearing masks;

4 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Reuters*. **South African** insurance giant **Sanlam** buys a 22.8% stake in Morocco's **Saham Assurance** as Sanlam looks for opportunities to expand beyond South Africa's struggling economy;

4 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *North Africa Post*. The **African Development Bank (AfDB)** announces it will support Morocco's business climate with a \$1million grant;

3 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *North Africa Post*. **Polisario** leader **Brahim Ghali** to appear on 5 May before a **Spanish** court on charges of arbitrary kidnapping, detention and torture;

3 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Energy, mining and environment minister **Aziz Rabbah** says his department is preparing an environment code to combine all the texts related to the field;

3 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco Shafaqna*. **Bank Al-Maghrib (BAM)** (central bank) announces that the country's foreign reserves stand at \$34 billion;

3 May 2021 **Casablanca (Morocco)** *Times Live*. The ministry of health announces that it recorded two cases of the **Indian Covid-19** variant in the city of **Casablanca**;

1 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Atalayar*. Foreign affairs minister **Nasser Bourita** has addressed

a direct message to the Spanish government, asking whether it is ready to sacrifice the strategic ties between **Rabat** and **Madrid** for **Polisario** leader **Brahim Ghali**;

1 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The **World Bank Group**'s latest contribution to Morocco's post-pandemic development strategy includes projects on gender equality, job security, sustainable development, and social security;

1 May 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *North Africa Post*. Morocco's fully vaccinated population reaches 5 million;

30 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *North Africa Post*. Morocco receives a further 500,000 doses of **China**-manufactured **Sinopharm** vaccine;

30 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Axios*. **United States (US)** secretary of state **Antony Blinken** holds his first call with foreign affairs minister **Nasser Bourita**, and reportedly tells Bourita that US President **Joseph Biden** will not reverse former President Donald's Trump's recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over the **Western Sahara**;

30 Apr 2021 **Oualidia (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **InnoVent Maroc**, a local subsidiary of **France**-based renewable energy company **InnoVent**, says it is in the process of setting up a 36-megawatt wind farm in the town of **Oualidia**, in the **Sidi Bennour** province of Morocco;

30 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The house of representatives launches discussion of a cannabis bill;

30 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Representatives of various **United Nations (UN)** agencies based in Morocco have lauded the country's swift response to the **Covid-19** pandemic as "*exemplary*";

27 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*. A new report from the **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)** estimates Morocco's military spending at \$4.8 billion, representing a 29% (as a share of GDP) increase compared to 2019;

27 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco Maroc*. Morocco's percentage of its population without access to banking institutions is the highest in the world at 71%, with approximately 26.2 million Moroccans lacking access to a bank account;

26 Apr 2021 **Singapore (Singapore)** *Chandler Good Governance Government Index*. Morocco places 33rd in in the **Chandler Good Government Index (CGGI)**'s **Attractive Marketplace** list, and is the only lower-middle income country to feature in the top 40 Attractive Marketplace Pillar;

26 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Delegate interior minister **Noureddine Boutayeb** says Moroccan security services arrested more than 1.53 million people for violating **Covid-19** preventive measures between July 2020 and 22 April 2021;

26 Apr 2021 **Madrid (Spain)** *La Razon*. Spanish news publication **La Razon** reports that **Polisario** leader **Brahim Ghali**'s arrival in Spain was "*negotiated at the highest level between Spain and Algeria*";

26 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco expands vaccination campaign to cover those aged between 55 and 60;

26 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *North Africa Post*. Morocco receives 500,000 doses of the **China**-manufactured **Sinopharm Covid-19** vaccine;

25 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco Shafaqna*. Three individuals attack Morocco's embassy in **Germany**;

25 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco's foreign affairs minister has

summoned Spain's ambassador to Morocco to "clarify" Spain's decision to host **Polisario** leader **Brahim Ghali** for medical treatment after Ghali tested positive for **Covid-19**;

24 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **Russia's S7 Airlines** and **Aeroflot** to open new flight routes to Morocco;

23 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Construction World*. **India**-based manufacturer and supplier of uPVC water pipes **Vinyl Pipes** announces its expansion into the Moroccan market to help improve water management in Morocco;

23 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco's airport authorities announce that the country will suspend all flights to and from **India** starting on 24 April;

23 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. New **International Finance Corporation (IFC)** director-general and executive vice-president **Makhtar Diop** confirms support for Morocco's post **Covid-19** recovery;

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