

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Algeria Summary 26 August 2026

Switzerland-based International Organization for Migration (IOM) data indicates that Algeria has overtaken Morocco as the leading country of origin for irregular migrants arriving in Spain. US President Donald Trump (2015-2021; 2025-present) on 1 August reaffirms his country's recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over the disputed Western Sahara, dealing a blow to Algeria, which opposes Morocco's claim. Algeria appears to be strengthening its already formidable military capabilities, with media reports indicating that the country has signed a contract with Russia for three Il-78MK-90A aerial refuelling tankers.

Algeria emerges as leading source of irregular migration to Spain

Switzerland-based International Organization for Migration (IOM) released [data](#) on 12 August indicating that **Algeria** has overtaken **Morocco** as the leading country of origin for irregular migrants arriving in **Spain**. IOM's data shows that of the 5,647 arrivals in Spain between January and April 2026, 41% were Algerian citizens and 22% were Moroccans. While Morocco has historically been the primary country of origin for irregular migration to Spain, IOM data indicates a shift in regional migration patterns.

[Stricter](#) European and national controls in Morocco and on the neighbouring **Western African** and **Central Mediterranean** routes compressed traditional routes and pushed more departures towards Algeria's shores. IOM's data also shows that Algerian authorities have decreased their maritime interceptions, with the country registering 1,002 interception operations between January and April, a 37% year-on-year decline. If this trend continues, it will pose a significant challenge for Spain and other European countries seeking to curb irregular migration from the region.

This development comes shortly after a major migration [crisis](#) in the region, where an estimated 60,000 or more Moroccan migrants crossed into the **Spanish** enclave of **Ceuta** in the last week of July, killing at least 72 people. Some commentators, including **International Crisis Group's North Africa** director **Riccardo Fabiani**, have [suggested](#) that Moroccan authorities might have deliberately facilitated the crossing to punish Spain for strengthening ties with Algeria, Morocco's longstanding regional rival. Spain's prime minister **Pedro Sanchez** (2018-present) visited Algeria shortly before the crossing incident on 20 July, in a visit aimed at strengthening bilateral relations and expanding cooperation between the two countries (*see ARC Briefing Algeria Jul 2026*).

However, citing an investigation conducted by Spanish analyst **José María Gil Garre**, several Moroccan media outlets [reported](#) in early August that an Algerian-based network was responsible for causing the incident. Garre's investigation found that the Algerian network launched a coordinated digital operation, including on **WhatsApp**, **Facebook** and **TikTok**, to orchestrate the incident. This appears to be a media-based narrative and not a Moroccan government one. However, in the aftermath of the Ceuta crisis, Algerian media [accused](#) Morocco of "weaponising" migration. Algeria's state television in particular said that what took place in Ceuta was a "mass escape" that highlights the difficult economic and social conditions in Morocco.

Regardless of the competing Moroccan and Algerian narratives about the Ceuta crisis, Algeria's growing role in irregular migration to Spain is likely due to several factors, including high unemployment, [estimated](#) at around 31%; limited job opportunities may have pushed more young Algerians to seek opportunities in Europe. If the trend continues, irregular migration could become a growing challenge for Spain and another source of tension in the already strained Algeria-Morocco relationship.

Trump reaffirms US recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara

United States (US) President **Donald Trump** (2015-2021; 2025-present) on 1 August [reaffirmed](#) the US' recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over the disputed **Western Sahara**, dealing a blow to Algeria, which opposes Morocco's claim. In a congratulatory message to Morocco's King **Mohammed VI** (1999-present) on the commemoration of his Throne Day, Trump said that "any other path" that prolonged the prevailing dispute in the Western Sahara dispute was "unacceptable", adding:

"We [US] support Morocco's serious, credible, and realistic autonomy proposal as the only basis for a just and lasting solution".

US secretary of state **Marco Rubio** [shared](#) an almost identical message a day prior, further emphasising support for Morocco's position.

Diplomatic relations between Morocco and Algeria have been severed since 2021, with Western Sahara remaining a central source of tension alongside Morocco's normalisation of relations with **Israel**. In recent months, the US has renewed its efforts to resolve the decades-long Western Sahara dispute by pressuring Algeria to take a direct role in its resolution. In May, Trump's advisor for **Arab** and **African** affairs, **Massad Boulos**, met with **Sabri Boukadoum**, Algeria's ambassador to the US, regarding Algeria taking a more active role in the UN-backed peace process (see *ARC Briefing Algeria May 2026*). Citing the 31 October 2025 **United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2797**, that recognised Morocco's autonomy over the disputed region, Boulos said that it was "time to reach a resolution".

In February, US officials also convened rare discussions involving long-standing rivals Morocco and Algeria over the future of Western Sahara, as the US sought to push forward a resolution to one of Africa's longest-running territorial disputes (see *ARC Briefing Algeria Feb 2026*). But beyond Boulos' efforts and Trump's statements, there has not been any significant concrete results towards a resolution to the conflict – particularly as the Algeria-backed Western Sahara separatist group, the **Polisario Front**, have remained steadfast in their objections to US and Moroccan demands.

The Polisario Front remains an [active](#) political and military movement seeking independence for Western Sahara. Morocco controls most of the territory, while the Polisario Front controls a smaller, sparsely populated area east of the Moroccan-built barrier, which separates the two sides. The Polisario Front continues to conduct attacks against Moroccan positions, while pressure is [mounting](#) in the US to designate the movement as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO). Since 2020, the conflict has largely remained a low-intensity armed conflict, rather than the large-scale guerrilla war seen during the 1970s and 1980s.

After the US, under Trump, became the first country to recognise Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara in 2020, France, the **United Kingdom (UK)**, and Spain have shifted towards backing autonomy under Moroccan control. France, the UK and the US are permanent members of UNSC, giving Morocco an unprecedented diplomatic advantage as it consolidates international support for its position. This alignment among major powers not only strengthens Morocco's leverage but also reshapes the geopolitical landscape around the dispute, with an increasing number of **European** governments changing their policies in the same direction. Trump's recognition of Moroccan sovereignty has also helped spur investment in Western Sahara, with US companies [seeking](#) to back projects in the region.

While some media [reports](#) indicate that Algeria appears to be gradually shifting its position on the Western Sahara after losing some support from key allies, it is very difficult to imagine Algeria completely abandoning the cause. This would weaken Algeria's support for the Polisario Front, reduce its diplomatic leverage over the dispute and potentially strengthen Morocco's position as the dominant political power in the region.

Algeria deepens military ties with Russia

Algeria appears to be strengthening its already formidable military capabilities, with media reports [indicating](#) that the country has signed a contract with **Russia** for three Il-78MK-90A aerial refuelling

tankers, with an option for three more. While Russian authorities have not officially disclosed the identity of the customer, aviation analysts have identified Algeria as the most likely buyer of the newly unveiled aircraft.

Algeria and Russia [share](#) a decades-long partnership rooted in Soviet support for Algeria's independence from France and reinforced by their diplomatic, energy and military cooperation. Russia has historically supplied the vast majority of Algeria's military equipment. The two countries also cooperate closely within **OPEC+** and the **Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF)** on managing global oil and gas markets. Algeria is also one of Russia's leading trading partners in Africa, with bilateral trade [estimated](#) at around \$3 billion annually.

In terms of military cooperation, Algeria's potential acquisition of the tankers would add to the country's growing fleet of Russian weaponry and aircraft, while strengthening the defence partnership between the two countries - although not a formal alliance. Algeria's Russian-built military ecosystem includes Su-30MKA fighters, MiG-29s fighters, Su-24 strike aircraft, Il-78 tankers, air-defence systems, helicopters and, most recently, the Su-57E fifth-generation fighter. Algeria, which has Africa's largest military [budget](#), has set aside \$25.4 billion for defence in 2025, equal to approximately 8.8% of GDP. The country's military spending is supported by its large oil and gas revenues, estimated to be close to \$50 billion or more a year.

Notably, Algeria's military spending and expansion is part of a wider regional arms buildup across North Africa. Following the events of the Arab Spring about 15 years ago, Algeria, **Egypt**, Morocco and **Tunisia** have collectively [spent](#) more than \$320 billion on their militaries, reflecting a sustained effort to strengthen national security. However, each country has followed a different [procurement](#) path, with Algeria mainly opting for Russian weaponry, while Morocco is currently considering US and French systems.

Taken together, the massive scale of military spending in North Africa shows that the region has become an increasingly competitive military environment – with no signs of slowing down. For Algeria, its potential acquisition of the Russian Il-78 tankers, with both reinforce its position as one of the region's most heavily armed powers and further strengthen military ties with Russia.

Planner

2026 (**Algeria**) Possible cabinet reshuffles or major appointments following election

2026 (**Algeria**) Potential confirmation of Algerian acquisition of Russian weaponry;

Chronology

23 Aug 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Echorouk online*. **Ukrainian** ambassador to Algeria **Oleksandr Voronin** reveals that his country exported 2.5 million tonnes of wheat to Algeria last year, while Algeria's total wheat imports are estimated at nine million tonnes;

23 Aug 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Indexbox*. **Italian** energy giant **Eni** and Algerian state-owned energy company **Sonatrach** sign a new memorandum of intent aimed at deepening their joint efforts to cut carbon in Algeria's hydrocarbon industry and curb emissions following global best practices;

21 Aug 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Morocco World News*. Former **Tunisian** president **Moncef Marzouki** says that Algeria's handling of the Western Sahara dispute drove the **Arab Maghreb Union** into what he called its "*clinical death*";

20 Aug 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Business Insider Africa*. Months after delivering the first Su-57E stealth fighters to Algeria, **Russia** has unveiled a new Il-78MK-90A aerial refuelling tanker in export configuration, raising speculation that the aircraft could join Algeria's growing fleet of Russian-built military aircraft and support systems;

17 Aug 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Algeria Press Service*. Algeria, which currently chairs the **African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council**, begins a field mission to **Khartoum (Sudan)** aimed at engaging with the country's ongoing conflict;

15 Aug 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Business Insider Africa*. A 2026 analysis by Remitly finds that **North Africa** leads **Africa's** 'price of happiness' ranking, with **Egypt, Tunisia** and Algeria requiring the highest annual incomes on the continent before additional earnings begin to make a difference on overall life satisfaction;

13 Aug 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Morocco World News*. According to the **International Organization for Migration's (IOM)** latest global overview of migration routes, Algeria has become the leading country of origin for migrants arriving in **Spain** along the **Western Mediterranean** route;

10 Aug 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *North Africa Post*. According to findings cited by **Moroccan** news outlet **Le360**, a social-media campaign that helped mobilise thousands of people to cross from Morocco into the **Spanish** enclave of **Ceuta** last month was linked to networks operating from Algeria;

9 Aug 2026 **Niamey (Niger)** *Business Insider Africa*. **Algeria** donates four military helicopters, including two Mi-24 attack helicopters and two Mi-171 transport helicopters, along with logistical and maintenance support, to Niger to strengthen its capabilities against armed groups;

7 Aug 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Middle East Monitor*. **European** authorities dismantle a major criminal network operating a two-way maritime smuggling route between Europe and Algeria;

4 Aug 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Business Insider Africa*. **Condor Electronics**, Algeria's leading appliance manufacturer, secures orders for 250,000 air conditioners from **European** buyers;

2 Aug 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Middle East Monitor*. **United States (US)** President **Donald Trump** reaffirms his country's recognition of **Moroccan** sovereignty over **Western Sahara**, saying that "any other path" to resolving the dispute is "unacceptable";

31 Jul 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Reuters*. A passenger bus overturns in the **Boumerdès** governorate, killing at least 25 people were killed and injuring 44 others;

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Africa Risk Consulting (ARC) is a pan-African consulting company that provides timely, relevant information and advice that enables its clients to take informed investment decisions and to safeguard their reputations.

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