

MOROCCO on the MOVE

Polisario Fuels Standoff in the Sahara, Moroccan Teen's Second Chance with Embroidery, and More



Embroidered tunics from Safrou, Morocco. Photo: Duncan Smith.

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King Mohammed VI in Abidjan

Continuing his weeks-long, multi-country tour of Africa, Morocco's King Mohammed VI is in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, where today he and Ivorian President Alassane Dramane Ouattara chaired a ceremony to present the progress of the Cocody Bay Protection and Development Project, which was launched by the King in 2015.

Last week, Morocco's Attijariwafa Bank "signed two agreements with Ivory Coast's Ministry of Defence" financing "two new military camps as well as establishing a line of credit to finance housing for members of the Ivory Coast's Armed Forces," as reported by Reuters.



Moroccan Designer Offers Troubled Teens Second Chances with Embroidery School

Moroccan designer Fadila El Gadi's

Polisario Fuels Standoff in the Sahara

Since last summer, Moroccan troops and Polisario fighters have stood "within 200 meters (yards) of each other in a narrow strip of land near the Mauritanian border."

On Sunday, February 26, days after a phone call between Morocco's King Mohammed VI and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Morocco announced "'a unilateral withdrawal from the zone' in conformation with the UN Secretary General's recommendations," as reported by Reuters.

The same day, the US Embassy in Rabat tweeted, "We welcome Morocco's decision to withdraw personnel from the buffer zone in the region of Guerguerate in support of SecGen's request."

Over the weekend, Special Representative for the Sahara and Head of MINURSO Kim Bolduc, accompanied by MINURSO Force Commander Wang Xiaojun, met with Polisario officials in Tindouf urging them to withdraw from the area. However, they refused.

According to The Arab Weekly, "Polisario Front fighters remain in the buffer zone of the Guerguerat region, intimidating Moroccan truck drivers despite the United Nations' call for unconditional withdrawal."

We are following the situation closely.

"lusciously embroidered kaftanesque coats, sheer silk kaftan cover-ups, billowing printed blouses and wonderful one-of-a-kind leather bags and chunky beaded accessories" (as described by travel site Indagare) have garnered the attention of Barbra Streisand, Beyoncé, and even Will Smith. And her work is no stranger to fashion blogs and magazines around the world.

But it was the launch of her embroidery school in Sale late last year that has made the most recent headlines. The Associated Press reported last week on the 13 young students now studying at the school. All had "dropped out of school, whether through boredom or academic troubles. But now they willingly spend nine hours a day in this free program, learning the traditional art of Moroccan embroidery - as well as the traditional academic subjects they once left behind."

[Read the full piece here...](#)

IMF Recommends Strengthening Gender Equality to Boost Growth

This month, the IMF released a report on the implications of gender inequality for growth in Morocco, concluding that "policies that better integrate women into the economy could significantly improve the country's growth. For instance, if there were as many women working as men currently are in Morocco, income per capita could be almost 50 percent higher than it is now."

The release noted that the government has already initiated several reforms, including revising the family code in 2004, enshrining gender equality in the 2011 Constitution, and introducing "the first and most advanced gender budgeting initiative in the Middle East and Central Asia region" in 2002.

[Access the report here.](#)

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