

Congressional Support for US Aid in the Western Sahara

The US Congress has for years worked to bolster Morocco's efforts to improve social and economic conditions in the Western Sahara, through the allocation of specific program funds in annual Appropriations Bills. This Congressional effort supports longstanding US policy advocating a solution to the conflict based on autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty. [The use of development assistance in the Western Sahara](#) makes good on President Obama's and King Mohammed VI's November 2013 commitment to improve the lives of those living there.

- On January 17, 2014, President Obama signed into law the [FY2014 Appropriations Bill](#), which explicitly directed that existing development assistance to Morocco "[should also be available for assistance for the territory of the Western Sahara.](#)"
- During House Appropriations Committee [deliberation on this legislation](#), Congressman Jim Moran stated that the language "supports our current policy," and Congresswoman Kay Granger said that "Morocco has been an important friend of the United States," and a critical ally in the war on terror. Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart has reminded the Foreign Affairs Committee that 21 of its members have signed letters supporting Morocco and the appropriations bill language, which "will strengthen civil society and democratic institutions..." The House Appropriations Committee voted overwhelming to approve the language in a voice vote.
- President Obama also signed into law Appropriations Bills for [FY2015](#) and [FY2016](#), which reinforced the mandate to extend development assistance to Morocco, stating that funds "shall be made available for assistance for the Western Sahara." President Trump signed the [FY2017 Appropriations Bill](#) that maintained the same language mandating that bilateral US development assistance for Morocco also be spent in Western Sahara.
- In 2016, the International Republican Institute commenced a two-year, \$1 million US development assistance program focused on civil society and participative governance in the Western Sahara.
- Both past and current laws also reflect broad Congressional support for resolving this issue based on a formula of autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty. This compromise political framework has been repeatedly endorsed by the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Administrations and backed by strong bipartisan majorities in the US Senate and House of Representatives.
- In May 2017, President Trump signed into law an [FY2017 Appropriations Bill](#) that focuses US Government attention on the plight of the refugees and problems with the delivery of assistance in refugee camps in North Africa, including the Polisario-run refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria. The law requires that "Secretary of State, after consultation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, shall submit a report to the Committees on Appropriations describing steps taken to strengthen monitoring of the delivery of humanitarian assistance provided for refugees in North Africa."

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