

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 4, 2016

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

As Co-Chairs of the Congressional Morocco Caucus, we are writing you because of a series of recent events that have brought renewed attention to the issue of the western Sahara. The Congressional Morocco Caucus is a bipartisan group of over 40 Members who are committed to deepening the strategic relationship between the United States and Morocco.

As you know, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon recently visited the Polisario-controlled refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria. In response to a media question, he described the western Sahara as “occupied” and raised the issue of returning to a “referendum” to resolve the issue. This characterization of the region as “occupied” is unprecedented and inconsistent with the position of his predecessors. The episode sparked widespread condemnation in Morocco and provoked massive demonstrations by the Moroccan people.

The issue of the western Sahara is fundamental for Morocco and its national security. We believe it is important for the State Department to reaffirm the longstanding U.S. policy of supporting a resolution to this problem based on a formula of regional autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty. The U.S. Government led the shift away from a referendum and toward this negotiated political solution. Now is the moment to reinforce our longstanding policy.

We remind you that this issue has substantial bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. Attached, please find two letters signed by a majority of Congress at the time as well as the most recent report language from the Fiscal Year 2016 Consolidated Appropriations Act.

This is a critical moment in the U.S.-Morocco bilateral relationship. We can help overcome this unfortunate misstep on behalf of Secretary General Ban and strengthen and support the U.S.-Morocco bilateral relationship. This can be done by working with the Moroccan government to ensure a clean rollover and continuity of the MINURSO mission and reinforcing longstanding U.S. policy on the western Sahara.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. We stand ready to work with you to support the U.S.-Morocco bilateral relationship.

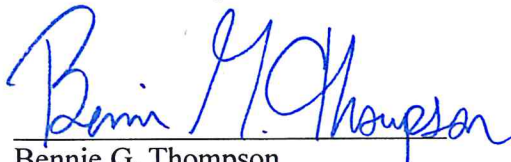
Sincerely,



Carlos Curbelo
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress



Joe Wilson
Member of Congress