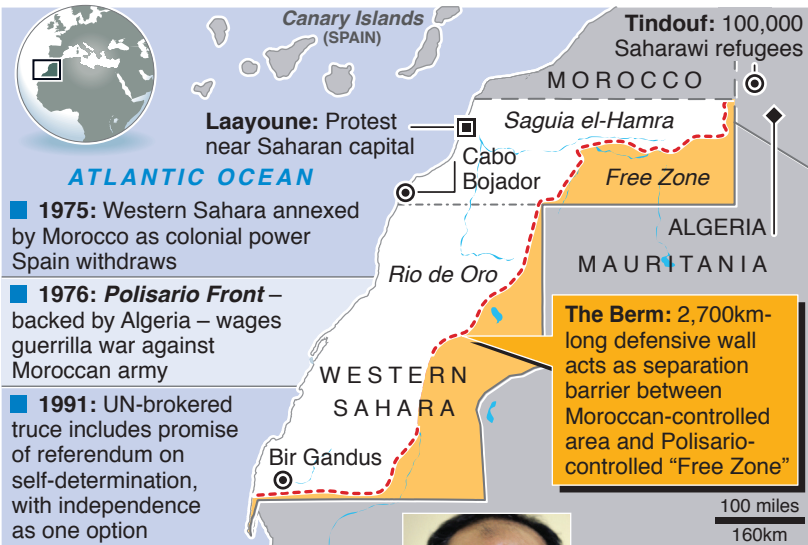


# New talks over contested Western Sahara

Tension is mounting in the disputed region of Western Sahara where tens of thousands of Sahrawis are demanding that Morocco allows the territory's final status to be decided in a referendum on self-determination



■ **1975:** Western Sahara annexed by Morocco as colonial power Spain withdraws

■ **1976: Polisario Front** – backed by Algeria – wages guerrilla war against Moroccan army

■ **1991:** UN-brokered truce includes promise of referendum on self-determination, with independence as one option

■ **2003 onwards:** UN-sponsored talks fail to achieve political solution – Morocco refuses to allow referendum. Refugee camps around Tindouf become recruitment targets for *Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb*

■ **Nov 2010:** Morocco and Polisario Front agree to hold new talks

**The Berm:** 2,700km-long defensive wall acts as separation barrier between Moroccan-controlled area and Polisario-controlled "Free Zone"



*Polisario Front proclaimed **Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR)** in 1976, with government headed by **Mohamed Abdelaziz** in exile in Tindouf, Algeria*