The Portuguese driver of a back-up vehicle in the Paris-Dakar rally has lost his leg after hitting a land mine.

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Event organiser Hubert Auriol said that Jose Eduardo Ribeiro was badly injured near Morocco's fortified sand wall along Western Sahara's border with Mauritania. He said: "A back-up vehicle left the course. Soldiers who were nearby shouted warnings but then immediately they heard the explosion."

The United Nations has flown Ribeiro to its mission headquarters in the main city of Western Sahara, Layoune. The rally organisers have been repeatedly warned by rebels in Western Sahara not to race in the disputed territory. The area is claimed by the Polisario Front which is seeking independence for Western Sahara.

Earlier on Monday, the group lifted its threat to resume war against Morocco in Western Sahara in retaliation for the rally crossing the territory. The UN's special envoy to the region, William Eagleton, told the BBC that rally organisers had discussed neither the route nor security procedures with the UN before the rally. He said the sands around the wall are heavily mined and security precautions are required for safe passage. The Paris-Dakar Rally is one of the most dangerous sporting events in the world. Last year, drivers had to be airlifted out of Niger following threats from Islamist militants.

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<<< zurück zu: News