



PRESS STATEMENT

THE SECURITY COUNCIL FAILURE TO ENSURE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF MINURSO MANDATE IS THE CAUSE OF THE COLLAPSE OF THE CEASEFIRE AND RETURN OF WAR IN WESTERN SAHARA

[New York, 6 September 2021] Thirty years have elapsed since the coming into effect of the ceasefire between the two parties to the conflict in Western Sahara, the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco, on 6 September 1991, as an integral part of the UN-OAU joint Settlement Proposals that were accepted by both parties on 30 August 1988.

The ceasefire paved the way for the deployment of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) with a view to holding a fair and impartial referendum, without military or administrative constraints, in which the people of Western Sahara would exercise their right to self-determination and independence.

For almost three decades, the Frente POLISARIO remained fully committed, in good faith, to the UN peace process in Western Sahara and made tremendous concessions so that MINURSO could fully implement its mandate and achieve its ultimate objective, namely the holding of a free and fair referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara.

Nonetheless, the inaction of the Security Council has allowed the occupying state of Morocco not only to sabotage the full implementation of MINURSO mandate but also to prevent the Mission from functioning in accordance with the general principles applicable to UN peacekeeping operations. The restrictions imposed by the occupying state on MINURSO, which continue to date, have seriously undermined the already eroded credibility, impartiality, and independence of the Mission.

Today, the best example of the inaction of the Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, is its failure to act robustly in the face of Morocco's serious breach of the 1991 ceasefire and its new act of aggression on the Liberated Territory of Western Sahara on 13 November 2020.

The Moroccan new act of aggression, which continues to date with complete impunity, has led to the collapse of almost thirty years of ceasefire and the outbreak of war again in Western Sahara, which could lead to the most serious consequences for peace, security, and stability in the entire region as armed confrontations between the Sahrawi Army and Moroccan occupying forces continue and intensify with each day that passes.

Moreover, although the Security Council has been including human rights components in the mandates of peace operations since 1991, MINURSO remains an anomaly in respect of its lack of any mandate in relation to human rights. Now, after thirty years of its deployment in the Territory, MINURSO is still completely unable to protect the human rights of the Sahrawi civilians and human rights activists in the territories under Morocco's illegal occupation who are subjected daily to unspeakable cruelty and barbaric and inhuman practices before the eyes of the Mission.

There is no denying the fact that the obstructionism, procrastination, and evident lack of political will of the occupying state of Morocco have practically precluded MINURSO from fully implementing the mandate for which it was established under the authority of the Security Council in its resolution 690 (1991) dated 29 April 1991.

Moreover, the occupying state, which continues to enjoy protection and patronage by some quarters, has demonstrated clearly through its unceasing destabilising and unlawful actions in the Occupied Western Sahara that it is still bent on preventing MINURSO from fully implementing its mandate and achieving a peaceful and lasting solution to the decolonisation of Western Sahara.

The Security Council should however realise that the inability of MINURSO to fully fulfil its mandate is primarily due to the failure of the Council itself to use all the powers conferred upon it by the UN Charter to ensure the full implementation of the mandate of its Mission in Western Sahara. The Council should also realise that “business as usual” is what has led to the present situation and the concomitant collapse of the ceasefire and return of war in Western Sahara.

The Sahrawi people, who for three decades had opted for the peaceful solution and demonstrated patience and flexibility and exercised the utmost restraint in the face of Morocco’s continued provocations and aggressions, are now being brutally subjected to a new aggression by the occupying state of Morocco before the eyes of the United Nations and the international community.

In this regard, the Frente POLISARIO underscores once again that it remains fully committed to the peaceful and lasting solution to the decolonisation of Western Sahara based on the full respect for the inalienable and non-negotiable right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination and independence in accordance with the objectives and principles of the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU) and relevant UN and AU resolutions.

However, the Frente POLISARIO further underscores that the Sahrawi people will never accept the fait accompli that the occupying state of Morocco is seeking to impose by force in the Occupied Territories of Western Sahara and will continue to use all legitimate means to defend their rights and legitimate national aspirations.

The time has therefore come for the United Nations and the Security Council in particular to match their repeatedly stated commitment to a peaceful, just and lasting solution in Western Sahara with concrete actions to enable the Sahrawi people to exercise freely and democratically their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

This is the core mandate for which the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was established thirty years ago.

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