

United Nations Security Council Renews Mission for the Western Sahara as Independence Remains Elusive

For more than five decades the Sahrawi people of Northeast Africa have been denied their rightful place in the international community

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What has been described as “Africa’s last colony”, the Western Sahara territory is still waiting to exercise its decades-long desire for national independence and sovereignty.

Formerly known as the “Spanish Sahara”, the area has been under the domination of the Kingdom of Morocco since 1975.

The liberation movement which grew out of the struggle for freedom is popularly known as the Polisario Front. The organization engaged in an armed struggle and mass political campaign since the 1970s having designated itself as a “government in waiting”.

This provisional government is called the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and is recognized by the United Nations General Assembly and the African Union (AU). Despite the work of the Polisario Front/SADR in gaining widespread acceptance particularly among progressive forces and AU member-states, the UN has failed in holding a nationwide plebiscite on the future of the oppressed nation.



Museum of the Sahrawi People's Liberation Army (Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0)

In April 1991, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was adopted. However, after 34 years the Sahrawi people have been unable to participate in the last stages of the independence processes.

Although the UN Security Council voted to extend the mission in the territory, Algeria, perhaps the staunchest ally of the SADR, failed to vote on the resolution. Algeria and other progressive states on the continent, many of whom are in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) subregion, want full independence for the Western Sahara.

Since the Western Sahara was a colony of Spain, it would be entitled to independence as all other African territories on the continent. To make an exception to the SADR in favor of the Kingdom of Morocco which is allied with the imperialist states such as France, Spain and the United States constitutes a grave injustice to the indigenous people.

After the acceptance by the AU of the SADR as full members of the continental body, the Kingdom of Morocco resigned from the then Organization of African Unity (OAU). However, after the transition from the OAU to the AU in 2002, efforts began for Morocco to rejoin the organization. This was eventually agreed upon, absent the willingness of the monarchy to accept a process towards full independence for the SADR.

Such a decision to readmit Morocco clouds the actual stance of the AU in regard to the SADR. Several governments have decried this contradictory situation saying it provides the ability of the AU and UN to sidestep the imperatives of decolonization.

In a statement issued by the UN Security Council on October 31, [it notes](#):

“Authorizing the Mission’s continued operations until 31 October 2025, the 15-member

organ adopted resolution 2756 (2024) (to be issued as document S/RES/2756) with 12 votes in favor, zero against and two abstentions (Russian Federation and Mozambique). One State, however, did not participate in the vote. Through the text, the Council called upon the parties to negotiate under the Secretary-General's auspices without preconditions and in good faith, encouraging the continuation of consultations between his Personal Envoy and Morocco, Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), Algeria and Mauritania to build on progress achieved. It reaffirmed its commitment to assist the parties to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, based on compromise which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara."

Yet, in reality there can be no compromise on the total liberation of the SADR as in any other colonial territory. Unfortunately, the adoption of this conciliatory view has been institutionalized within the AU and the UN although it remains counterintuitive. Every other African state which was colonized theoretically received the support of the AU and its predecessor as it relates to gaining national independence.

Imperialism Behind the Colonial Status of the SADR

Obviously, the natural resources found within the Western Sahara including offshore oil deposits and the strategic location of the area has compelled Morocco and its imperialist allies to continue stalling the UN-mandated referendum. In recent years the situation has become further complicated as administrations in Washington, Paris and Madrid have publicly moved away from an actual acceptance of the demand for independence for the people of SADR.

Just recently U.S. **Secretary of State Antony Blinken** stated that some undefined form of "autonomy" for the SADR would be more reasonable. This seems to be the same position enunciated by other imperialist states such as France and Spain.

Under the previous administration of **President Donald Trump**, he declared that Washington would recognize the King of Morocco's "sovereignty" over the Western Sahara. Apparently, this same position has been carried over into **President Joe Biden's** White House. Interestingly enough the presidential and congressional races for November 2024 have completely excluded any discussion and debate on U.S. foreign policy towards Africa.

Despite the lack of acknowledgement of the 1.5 billion Africans on the continent in the electoral battle for the White House, House of Representatives and the Senate, major efforts have been underway for nearly three years to sway the AU member-states away from advocating for a diplomatic solution to the Ukraine-Russian war. There has been proposed legislation within the House which would impose sanctions on AU member-states which maintain good diplomatic, economic and political relations with the Russian Federation.

This same posture holds true in regard to the demand for full independence of Palestine and the lifting of sanctions on the Republic of Cuba by the U.S. Algeria has continued to distinguish itself by being unwavering in its advocacy for the liberation of the Western Sahara.

The same UN statement cited above said of the position in neighboring Algeria:

"Algeria's representative, whose country had earlier proposed two amendments to the

resolution, said his delegation did not participate in the vote because of ‘the attitude of the penholder’ (U.S.). His country’s views and positions, despite having been ‘well-founded’ in consonance with the Council’s processes, were ‘deliberately ignored’. He regretted that the penholder did not demonstrate objectivity or impartiality, but circulated a text that did not ‘at all’ contain elements of prior agreements. ‘The vote on this resolution changes nothing on the fundamental crux of this issue,’ he said. Algeria believes that the right to the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara belongs only to the Saharawi people, and as such will ‘strive to speak out’ on all matters thereon.”

Algeria and other anti-imperialist states have maintained the demand that the SADR should come into existence as an independent and sovereign state. Any proposal advocating an imposed neo-colonial solution will inevitably fail in bringing peace and stability to this region of Africa.

Polisario Front Reemphasizes Its Right to Self-Defense and Independence

In the aftermath of the debate and vote within the UNSC on the MINURSO decision to extend its role for another year, the official representative of the national liberation movement at the UN for the Western Sahara held his own press conference to clarify their positions. **Dr. Sidi Mohamed Omar** announced on Sahrawi National Television that the struggle of the people would continue.



A MINURSO car (left), and a post of the Polisario Front (right) in 2017 in southern Western Sahara

Dr. Omar specifically criticized the French and U.S. governments for their efforts to undermine the Sahrawi people in their quest for total freedom. While, in other comments, the Polisario Front representative singled out Algeria for praise as it upheld the rights of the Sahrawi people as being essential in any efforts to resolve the crisis.

In this statement from Dr. Omar, [he stressed that](#):

“The fact that our sisterly Algeria submitted two proposals on the subject of human rights for a vote by the Security Council is nothing but evidence of this principled position and its strong commitment to the United Nations Charter and its staunch defense of international law, which exposed the members of the Security Council who defend human rights around the world while choosing silence, inaction and double standards when it comes to Western Sahara. Whatever the content of the latest Security Council resolution, the Sahrawi people remain strongly determined to continue and escalate their struggle by all legitimate means, including armed struggle, to achieve their national aspirations for freedom and independence and to re-establish their sovereignty over the entire territory of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic”.

The President of the SADR and Secretary General of the Polisario Front, Brahim Ghali, was in attendance at the recent 70th anniversary commemoration of the beginning of the Algerian Glorious Liberation War on November 1. He extended his appreciation to Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

Ghali said in a written statement that the experience of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) was an inspiration to the Sahrawi and other oppressed peoples internationally by noting:

“His heartfelt wishes to the President of the Republic and the Algerian people on the sidelines of the commemoration of this important and exceptional event, not only in Algeria’s history, but the entire humanity, being a symbol of struggle, revolution, liberation and resistance against colonialism, enslavement and colonial domination. By fighting for freedom and independence, with determination and unwavering will, the Sahrawi people are at the forefront of all these peoples who, not only have been inspired by the commendable Algerian Revolutionary experience, but who further benefited from Algeria’s immutable support to legitimate struggles across the world, in accordance with the principles of the 1st November Revolution, the UN Resolution Charter and the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU).”

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