

Western Sahara

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WORKING FOR JUSTICE FOR THE SAHARAWI PEOPLE

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Your Excellency

Further to our letter of 24 September:

In response to the Secretary-General's report (S2023/729) we would especially like to draw attention to paragraphs 66, 67, 76, 96 and 101 that raise issues that need to be addressed.

The Secretary-General's report notes that "The Mission's lack of access to local interlocutors west of the berm continued to severely limit its ability to collect reliable situational awareness information, and to assess and report on developments across its area of responsibility" (para. 66). We thank you for the support that the Security Council has shown to the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Staffan de Mistura. To give further support the new Security Council MINURSO resolution should include a strong call for the Personal Envoy to have the regular, unrestricted access to the Territory that he needs and for MINURSO to have full and unrestricted access to local interlocutors in Western Sahara.

On human rights, the report states that "The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was unable to conduct any visits to Western Sahara for the eighth consecutive year, despite multiple requests, and despite the Security Council in its resolution 2654 (2022) urging enhanced cooperation, including through facilitating such visits". (para. 76). Since 2018 every resolution has strongly encouraged or urged "enhancing cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)" (s_res_2440 31 Oct 2018) without producing any change. The new resolution should demand that the OHCHR have full and unfettered access to both occupied Western Sahara and the refugee camps.

The report also draws attention to MINURSO's mandate. It states:

"Independent, impartial, comprehensive and sustained monitoring of the human rights situation is necessary to ensure the protection of all people in Western Sahara." (para. 101)

"The general perception among the population of the Mission's impartiality continued to be affected by the requirement of Morocco that MINURSO use Moroccan vehicle number plates west of the berm, in contravention of the status-of-mission agreement. This pending issue, together with the stamping of MINURSO passports by Morocco, continues to be the subject of objections from Frente POLISARIO." (para 67)

"I note Morocco's stated intention to remain respectful of the ceasefire and the provisions of the military agreements and to maintain close cooperation with MINURSO at all levels. I urge Morocco to remain true to this spirit and refrain from building further military infrastructure west of the

The WSC works in solidarity with the Saharawi people to generate political support in order to advance their right to self-determination and promote their human rights

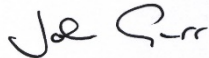
berm. It also remains essential that the Royal Moroccan Army refrain from conducting military activities that have an impact on civilians.” (para 96)

To uphold the sacred trust which the Security Council holds towards the people of Non-Self-Governing territories MINURSO should be empowered to accomplish its mandate and operate as a peacekeeping force that monitors, protects, and reports on human rights. And to should be empowered to protect the natural resources of the territory and to regularly report on the political, economic, social, and cultural situation in the Territory. Or the resolution should establish an independent, permanent UN mechanism to cover these functions.

The Secretary-General notes “Morocco’s stated intention to remain respectful of the ceasefire and the provisions of the Military Agreements and to maintain a close cooperation with MINURSO at all levels” (para. 96). However when Moroccan forces crossed the ceasefire line in Guergerat on 13 November 2020 and breached the ceasefire the Security Council did not take action. The consequence has been the breakdown of the ceasefire. The impunity with which Morocco has been allowed to obstruct the self-determination referendum, needs to end before any advance in achieving a just, lasting, and mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in the context of arrangements consistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nation.

Therefore, we ask the Security Council to restore its credibility with the warring parties, uphold the principles of the United Nations, and fulfil the promise made to the Saharawi people, before more lives are lost, by giving MINURSO the powers to address the matters raised in the Secretary-General’s report so to stave off further deterioration in Western Sahara and increasing warfare that could lead to wider hostilities and further prevent development in the Mahgreb.

Yours sincerely



John Gurr
Co-ordinator