
Western Sahara Short Mission Brief

I. Activity Summary: The United Nations in Western Sahara

Background

The United Nations has been involved in Western Sahara for almost 40 years, 24 of those years supporting a deployed peacekeeping mission. The UN today lists the Western Sahara (known to those who favor independence as the Saharwi Arab Democratic Republic, or SADR) as a non-decolonized territory, not a sovereign country. The northern half of the territory is administered by Morocco, while the southern half is administered by the Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro (Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguía el-Hamra and Río de Oro, or POLISARIO). While the territory was first scheduled to hold a UN-backed referendum to decide its status vis-à-vis Morocco in 1992, that has yet to take place due to adamant disagreements between the parties on voter eligibility.

In the mid-1970s, Spain, Morocco, Mauritania, and the Sahrawi people^[i] all claimed what was then Spanish Sahara as rightfully theirs. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) issued resolutions^[ii] on the Sahara under Spanish Domination in 1973 and 1975 supporting Saharwi autonomy, and in October 1975, in agreement with the OAU, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that the international claims were invalid, establishing Sahrawi right to self-determination. However, Spain, Morocco, and Mauritania secretly signed the Madrid Accords in November 1975, giving Morocco and Mauritania claim to the territory without Sahrawi involvement or consent.^[iii] To lay de facto claim to the territory in advance of the planned Spanish withdrawal, Morocco sent 300,000 settlers to the territory in the "Green March" (known by Sahrawis as the "Black March") in 1975-6. The goal of this march was to establish claim to the land and place a significant number of Moroccans in a position to vote pro-Morocco if a referendum should occur.

In response to the new threat, the POLISARIO, a nationalist movement started to fight the Spanish in the early 1970s, turned to fighting Mauritania and Morocco. The POLISARIO made a move from being a resistance movement to a governing political party when it declared the SADR an independent state in February 1976. The Mauritanian military bombed POLISARIO forces with napalm in 1978 as the POLISARIO advanced on the Mauritanian capital of Noukachott. In 1979, due to an internal coup and war-weary populace, as well as pressure from the OAU, Mauritania renounced its claims. In the war with Mauritania, POLISARIO forces killed approximately 2,000 Mauritanian soldiers.^[iv] In that same year, the OAU became actively involved at the urging of its members in attempting to broker peace between the parties, visiting Moroccan and POLISARIO leadership and supporting the idea of a referendum.

The guerilla war lasted from 1975-1991. Sahrawi rights activists and international human rights organizations (i.e. Human Rights Watch, the United Nations, and the African Union) have accused Moroccan forces of bombarding the Saharwis with napalm and cluster bombs, forcing tens of thousands into refugee camps in Algeria, torturing detainees, and "disappearing" and unlawfully imprisoning dissidents.^[v] Approximately 1,000 people were disappeared (650 remain missing today).^[vi] By the end of 1977 after the Moroccan invasion, approximately 80,000 people had fled to Algeria, and in 2009 the Algerian government claimed to host 165,000 Sahrawi refugees.^[vii] Morocco built a 2,500 kilometer wall lined with landmines — the world's largest defensive structure — to separate the Free Territories of Occupied Sahara, which are the southern areas in Western Sahara under POLISARIO control, from Morocco's so-called "Southern Provinces," which are Moroccan-occupied northern Western Sahara.^[viii]

From 1982-85, the Moroccan government accuses the POLISARIO of killing more than 5,000 Moroccan soldiers and detaining and disappearing other Moroccans.^[xi] From 1975 to 1991, Sahrawis claim that Moroccan forces killed approximately 4,000 combatants^[xi] and more than 3,000 civilians.^[xi] Subsequently, partly as a reflection of the success of the Moroccan counter-insurgency strategy, the Saharawi resistance has switched to non-violent strategies.

The Western Sahara dispute is enmeshed in continental politics. First, it has been an element of the rivalry between Algeria and Morocco for political primacy in the Maghreb-Sahara region. The two countries fought a border war in 1963, and Algeria support for Saharawi independence and for POLISARIO reflected this continuing antagonism. Second, the OAU recognition of the Saharawi right of self-determination as a former colonial territory led it into dispute with Morocco, which withdrew from the OAU in protest, and has remained outside the continental organization ever since.

OAU and UN Involvement

The OAU formally acknowledged the legitimacy of Western Sahara's leadership in 1981^[xii] followed by the UN in early 1982^[xiii]. In 1985, the OAU elected the SADR to full membership,^[xiv] and in protest, Morocco resigned its membership. It remains the only African country not a member of the African Union today.^[xv] The POLISARIO occupies the seat allocated to the SADR at the African Union.

Throughout the early 1980s there were a series of almost-peace deals and unrecognized ceasefires negotiated by OAU and UN members but never upheld by the parties.

MINURSO

In December 1985, the UN, at the request of the OAU, initiated a political mission of "good offices."^[xvi] This lay the groundwork for cooperation between the OAU and UN on facilitating negotiations and coordinating operations in Western Sahara, by jointly calling upon the Secretary-General and the Chairman of the OAU to take action to implement the decisions of the OAU^[xvii], which notably "Requests the United Nations in conjunction with the OAU to provide a Peace Keeping Force to be stationed in Western Sahara to ensure peace and security during the organization and conduct of the Referendum."

The 1985 resolution resulted in the OAU and UN proposing the OAU-UN Settlement Plan that, after years of fighting and negotiations, Morocco and the POLISARIO accepted in 1988 in part because of war weariness, but also because both parties thought that as a result of the proposed referendum they would prevail and gain control of the territory. In 1990 the Security Council accepted the full report on the plan,^[xviii] which over a three-year period laid the groundwork for a ceasefire in September 1991, transitional period after the ceasefire came into effect, and eventual referendum on final status for the Western Sahrawis. Both parties were willing to agree to this plan due to extended intense negotiations with both thinking that they would prevail in the referendum. The Settlement Plan provided for a UN peacekeeping mission as well to oversee the ceasefire and help administer the referendum.

In 1991 after the ceasefire, UNSCR 690^[xix] established the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), tasked with overseeing the ceasefire and referendum planned for 1992. This mission marks the first time the UN attempted to administer a referendum.^[xx] At first, 100 military observers deployed to oversee the ceasefire, but more quickly followed in response to the security needs totaling 228 military observers and various support personnel.^[xxi] At its outset the mission, the first of its kind and also the first mission to deploy alongside a UN negotiation process, struggled with communication and organization issues. Mission planning was at first situated in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, far separate from the realities on the ground and the SRSG. Mission planning was finally moved into the office of the SRSG in 1992.^[xxii]

MINURSO's original mandate was to:

- Monitor the ceasefire;
- Verify the reduction of Moroccan troops in the Territory;
- Monitor the confinement of Moroccan and Frente POLISARIO troops to designated locations;
- Take steps with the parties to ensure the release of all Western Saharan political prisoners or detainees;
- Oversee the exchange of prisoners of war;
- Implement the repatriation program for Saharwi refugees in Algeria;
- Identify and register qualified voters;
- Organize and ensure a free and fair referendum and proclaim the results.^[xxiii]

The broad mission had many coordination problems between the various entities. In 1988, the Secretary-General withdrew all mediation functions into his Executive Office, making on-the-ground mission planning difficult because the SRSG in charge of mission planning was kept unaware of political developments that would affect the deployment until after the deployment. Mediation finally became part of the office of the SRSG in 1992.^[xxiv]

The mission was centered in the office of the SRSG, with the military Force Commander, Police Commissioner, Chief Administrative Officer, and the heads of the Identification and Referendum Commission reporting to him. Due to the guerilla nature of the conflict and the geography of the region, the mission's operations were decentralized and heavily reliant on air transport, and leading UNSC members complained about the cost of satellite communications gear and airplanes. While MINURSO's mandate provided for freedom of movement, in actual practice "Moroccan units obstructed UN patrols, sometimes at gunpoint. Of the 185 reported violations of the cease-fire through August 1992, 178 were attributed to Morocco, only seven to POLISARIO."^[xxv]

Voting Rights and MINURSO's Identification Mission

The referendum did not happen in 1992 as planned due to contestation over voting rights. The parties disagreed on who counted as a citizen of Western Sahara (i.e. Moroccan diaspora? Recent immigrants? Refugees in camps outside of Western Sahara?), as each group that is included/excluded would affect the outcome. Morocco wanted the Moroccan diaspora to count, because then the referendum would likely go in favor of unification, while Sahrawi nationalists wanted citizenship to be based on a Spanish census that had occurred in 1974 before the Green March. Thus, from 1993 to 1996, MINURSO's Identification Mission conducted a voter eligibility identification process. However, this process was severely problematic in implementation because the parties disagreed on essentially every aspect political and technical of the voter identification process, and had a long history of violence that made productive discussions difficult. Moroccan forces obstructed UN personnel whenever possible, making simple mission operations excessively difficult. Due to intractability on either side and overall lack of progress due to political disagreements, the UN paused the Identification Mission in 1996. After a year of negotiations it resumed, and completed most of its task by December 1999.^[xxvi]

Thus, in nine years, for approximately \$500 million, MINUSRO had only managed to monitor a ceasefire and create a preliminary list of 86,318 voters, quickly followed by 133,000 appeals submitted mostly by Moroccans.^[xxvii] The mission remained in place because, though UNSC members were not interested in sanctioning Morocco or changing the mission's mandate from Chapter VI to Chapter VII, they were willing to maintain the relatively low steady flow of \$50 million per year to keep up the appearance of action.^[xxviii] The UN was deployed in part to monitor the ceasefire and, because the worst of the civil war had ended before MINUSRO deployed, it is difficult to assess whether the mission had an effect on violence levels.

In 2000 the UNSC tasked James Baker, former US Secretary of State and Personal Envoy for UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan since 1997, to consult the parties and explore options for resolving the dispute.^[xxix] After meeting with the parties in June 2000, Baker proposed a "third option" (negotiated settlement) other than the previously exclusively discussed winner-takes-all referendum based on either the Spanish census (supported by the POLISARIO) or a period of autonomy followed by a referendum (supported by Morocco).

MINUSRO Today

Today, the conflict remains stagnant, MINURSO is still in place, and the UN has extended its mission more than 20 times, from an optimistic and strong mission charged with peacekeeping and election preparations to a voter identification mission to today's peacekeeping mission in existence more because of the status quo than actual effectiveness. Though UN-mediated AU-supported talks continued, amidst mostly peaceful resistance demonstrations, on-and-off through the 1990s and early 2000s, little movement has occurred. The AU continues to verbally support Western Sahara, but has little involvement on the ground. It established an office in 1991 to support the identification process. The office still exists, with its small staff maintaining "consultations with the Parties and relevant international stakeholders."^[xxx]

MINURSO's mandate is now much abbreviated from its original ambitious plan due to the stagnancy and intractability of the conflict, low levels of violence, lack of significant Security Council interest (the US has had a strong partnership with Morocco through the Cold War and now in the Global War on Terror, making it unwilling to upset that partnership through becoming too involved in support of Western Sahara), and overall minimal importance of the region to anyone except the Western Sahrawis and Morocco.

The mission's mandate today^[xxxi] is to:

- Monitor the ceasefire;
- Reduce the threat of mines and unexploded ordnances;
- Support the confidence-building measures, which is a UNHCR-led program that facilitates communication between Saharwis in Western Sahara and those in Algerian refugee camps.^[xxxii]

Deployment

When it was first mandated in 1991, MINURSO consisted of 2,405 personnel total.

Civilians (410):

- 51 international personnel of the Identification Commission
- 285 international personnel to oversee the referendum

- 74 international personnel to oversee repatriation of Saharwi refugees living in camps in Algeria

Security (300):

- 300 police officers for the referendum

Military (1,695):

- 550 military observers
- 700 infantry battalion
- 110 air support
- 45 signals unit
- 50 medical unit
- 40 military police company
- 200 logistics battalion^[xxxiii]

Today, while the conflict is ongoing, it is no longer violent, thus MINURSO is authorized under UNSCR 2281^[xxxiv] for 237 military personnel and 6 police officers. Actually deployed, as of March 31, 2015, are:

- 216 total uniformed personnel (27 troops, 6 police officers, 183 military observers)
- 80 international civilian personnel
- 162 local civilian staff
- 12 United Nations Volunteers

Again, the small number of personnel and truncated mission is due to the lack of significant international interest and the intractability and current relative non-violence of the conflict.

The total number of troops today is 314. Thirty-five countries are contributing personnel: Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Croatia, Djibouti, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Germany, Ghana, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Poland, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Togo, and Yemen. The top contributors are Egypt (22) and Bangladesh (27) while the other countries contribute between one and 12 experts.^[xxxv]

One interesting aspect of the conflict in Western Sahara is that it has become relatively nonviolent. This reflects the success of the Moroccans in containing the POLISARIO guerrilla insurgency and the decision of the Saharawi resistance leaders to switch to non-violent political mobilization. There have been relatively few civilian casualties on either side since the ceasefire, and the total UN fatalities, since MINURSO first deployed in 1991, is just 15.^[xxxvi]

The approved budget for July 2014-June 2015 is \$55,990,080 USD.^[xxxviii] At approximately \$50 million USD per year over 24 years, the mission has cost the UN \$1.2 billion USD to date.

II. Key Issues, Dilemmas, and Lessons From Western Sahara

1. Miscommunication within the Mission

MINURSO is the first UN mission to attempt to implement a referendum at the same time the UN was mediating a ceasefire and peace settlement. At the outset, there was a disconnect between mission planning and political mediation efforts. In 1988, the Secretary-General withdrew all mediation functions into his Executive Office, making on-the-ground mission planning difficult because the planners were not in the offices where implementation occurs. This physical separation translated into communication, coordination, and planning problems for the mission. The SRSG in charge of mission planning was kept unaware of political developments that would affect the deployment until 1992 (after deployment) when mediation became part of the office of the SRSG.^[xxxviii]

2. Lack of Strategy from the Top in Mission Planning

At the outset and through its various mandates, MINURSO did not have a clear goals-to-strategy match. The mission deployed during the Gulf War, which commanded the focus of the mission planners and distracted from the development of a clear mission in Western Sahara from the beginning.^[xxxix] Then, as the negotiations and voter identification process stagnated, the political goals of the UN (negotiate a settlement) differed from actions on the ground (prepare for a referendum). While within the US some politicians called for abandoning the mission all together in the 1990s due to protests over high UN costs and the obvious ineffectiveness of the mission, the US was unwilling to “go it alone” within the Security Council on an issue of such low cost and little political interest.^[xli]

3. Insufficient Major Power Interest

Over the years international interest in the mission has waxed and waned. The major powers interested in North Africa — the US and France — both favor Morocco and are generally ambivalent about the conflict in general, making them unwilling to scrutinize Morocco's claim on Western Sahara.^[xlii] The mission began at a time when international attention was focused elsewhere, and as a relatively stagnant conflict in a lesser-known part of the world, it has struggled to become a priority.

4. Parties' Unwillingness to Compromise

While both sides were willing to agree to a referendum, neither the POLISARIO nor Morocco were willing to compromise, as evidenced by the 40-year intractability of the disagreement. Losing a referendum was perceived as an existential threat by both sides. If the POLISARIO lost, it would likely be destroyed by Moroccan troops. If Morocco lost, King Hassan feared losing the rallying point of a common national cause, and potentially his throne in the resulting political upheaval. This meant that mediation was troubled from the outset, and has led the process to drag on for decades.

5. Continuously Missing Deadlines Damages UN Credibility

The fact that this referendum was supposed to occur in 1992, and has yet to happen still, can be perceived by the parties to the conflict as a lack of seriousness on the part of the UN, and damages the mission's credibility to all parties to the conflict. The UN delays have benefited Morocco, which has been able to consolidate its control and internal support for its claim over the many years of indecisiveness. Thus, the delays are seen by Saharwis as favoring Morocco and imply UN bias in the conflict.^[xliii]

6. Technical Solutions Cannot Solve Political Problems

MINURSO continuously proposed technical solutions, when the problem was in fact a political one. "The stipulation in the settlement plan that the parties' cooperation was necessary for MINURSO to carry out its tasks was turned on its head. The parties would withhold their cooperation with impunity whenever they thought that events were not going their way until MINURSO came up with a 'technical solution,' which they would then negotiate exhaustively."^[xliii] Even when the mission was aware that it was being manipulated by Morocco, it chose to move things forward on technical problems rather than take the more difficult (but ultimately more useful) effort to address underlying political issues through more effective negotiations. "Despite the tremendous difficulties from the start in reconciling the parties' positions, the prevailing attitude among those working on the issue was to keep going, overcoming one difficulty after another in the identification process, in the hope that eventually the parties would be forced into agreeing to a solution."^[xliv]

7. Lack of Control over the Voter Identification Process

MINURSO allowed the parties to "be responsible for distributing and submitting application forms to potential voters" from the beginning, thereby giving up its role as impartial overseer of the process. Morocco was able to significantly influence and sometimes control aspects of the mission, including denying access to the UN Headquarters and identification center in Laayoune. Human Rights Watch reported, "According to senior U.N. officials, both parties have been responsible for obstructionist behavior. However, MINURSO staff members assert that Morocco, which is the stronger of the two parties both militarily and diplomatically, has pressured the United Nations into making concessions in its favor and deliberately obstructed the process. This has ranged from the initial insistence that all U.N. flags be removed from U.N. identification centers, leaving only Moroccan flags, to Morocco's interception of U.N. supplies arriving in the port of Agadir, which held up U.N. operations for months."^[xlv]

Ongoing Issues

1. Human Rights Violations: MINURSO is the only peacekeeping mission in the world without a human rights component because Morocco actively opposes it. The UN mission's operation is dependent on the Moroccan state's consent because Morocco still controls the northern half of Western Sahara. Of critical importance is that the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), African Union, and independent organizations have reported on a number of human rights abuses in Western Sahara that have gone unaddressed. Morocco has been found responsible for arbitrary detentions, torture, forced disappearances, using force against protestors, and trying civilians in military courts.^[xlvi] The African Union has urged the UN to add human rights monitoring to its mission.^[xlvii] Recently, King Mohammed VI has threatened to throw the mission out if MINURSO begins to monitor human rights.^[xlviii] While it is critical for the UN to maintain consent of the parties for a mission, in this case consent is trumping human rights, a dangerous line to begin blurring.

2. Lack of Gender Considerations: Since the mission was mandated, no mention has been made of the role or involvement of women of in any UN Resolution or Secretary-General report. There are currently only two female Military Observers (out of 194), six women in the medical unit (out of 20), and two female police (out of five). It would likely benefit the mission to employ more female Military Observers and police officers for community engagement reasons.^[xlix] The UN acknowledges the importance of including women in peacekeeping operations for both women's rights reasons and also because they add value as mission members. Women have been proven to add value to missions, especially those operating in areas where men and women are often segregated, since they have access to a broader population than men.

III. Literature Review

Reports/Scholarly Works

Dunbar, Charles. "Saharan Stasis: Status and Future Prospects of the Western Sahara Conflict." Middle East Journal, vol. 54, no. 4 (Autumn 2000): 522-545.

This article gives a clear and detailed description of the events in Western Sahara from independence through 2000. It explains the back-and-forth of the negotiation process and the identification project. It also touches on the geopolitical issues at stake, especially citing the United States unwillingness to continue supporting MINURSO in the mid-1990s, but equal unwillingness to withdraw its support due to its ties to Morocco. Other ongoing issues noted in this article are the refugee repatriation problem (1000-1500 at the conflict's outset in Algeria), which would affect the referendum, and the overall lack of international attention to the problem.

Durch, William J. "Building on Sand: UN Peacekeeping in the Western Sahara."

International Security, vol. 17, no. 4 (Spring, 1993): 151-171.

This article suggests that MINURSO's failure, like many other peacekeeping operations, is due to UN member states unrealistic expectations of its abilities in the 1990s, authorizing missions in "intractable trouble spots without strong and consistent political and financial support." The author covers initial issues of deployment as well as the evolution of MINURSO's mandate. This article includes a useful table of Planned Timeline, Planned UN Actions, and Actual Results for the deployment of MINURSO. It concludes that MINURSO failed because (1) lack of sustained great power support, (2) complete unwillingness to compromise on either side of the conflict, (3) structural deficiencies within the UN itself. (Note that this article was published in 1993, only two years after the planned referendum.)

"Keeping it Secret: The United Nations Operation in Western Sahara." Human Rights Watch, vol. 7, no. 7. October 1995. <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1995/Wsahara.htm>.

This report offers a detailed description of the problems in the voter identification process, especially noting the issues within the structure of the mission (i.e. giving identification responsibility to the parties) that made the process unfair and partial to Moroccan interests.

Lee, Iara. "Western Sahara: Historical Timeline 1884-2014." <http://culturesofresistancefilms.com/ws-timeline>.

Comprehensive timeline of events in Western Sahara.

Omar, Sidi M.. "OAU/AU and the question of Western Sahara." Pambazuka News. February 27, 2013. <http://www.pambazuka.net/en/category.php/features/86402>.

Useful synopsis of OAU and AU declarations and resolutions relevant to Western Sahara.

Ruddy, Frank. Review of United Nations Operations and Peacekeeping. Statement before the Subcommittee on the Departments of Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary and Related Agencies. House of Representatives, Committee on Appropriations. January 25, 1995. <http://www.arso.org/06-3-1.htm>.

In his statement, Ambassador Frank Ruddy, former Deputy Chairman, Referendum for Western Sahara, MINURSO Peacekeeping Operation describes the issues within the voter identification process, the delaying tactics employed by Morocco, and the "thuggery" present within the mission. He gives a series of examples of Moroccan abuse of power in Western Sahara.

Theofilopoulou, Anna. "The United Nations and Western Sahara: A Never-ending Affair." The United States Institute of Peace. July 1, 2006.

This report details the role of Baker and the negotiation/mediation process from 1997 through 2004. In addition to basic background information, it also offers a section on lessons learned.

Wainscott, Ann Marie. "Without Reform, UN's Western Sahara Mission Risks Failure." IPA Global Observatory, May 11, 2015. <http://theglobalobservatory.org/2015/05/western-sahara-morocco- united-nations/>.

This is one of the most recent analyses published on the Western Sahara issue. The author describes the situation today, including human rights issues, and the regional political maneuvering Morocco is undertaking to gain support for its cause.

Zoubir, Yahia H. and Anthony G. Pazzanita. "The United Nations' Failure in Resolving the Western Sahara Conflict." Middle East Journal, vol. 49, no. 4 (Autumn, 1995): 614-628.

This article covers the history of the UN in Western Sahara, including involvement by the Organization of African Unity (OAU). It focuses on the time period leading up to MINURSO, covering the negotiations that occurred in the late 70s and 80s. It also covers the issues with the Identification Commission, detailing the reliance on the Spanish Census (1974) and the pros and cons of using that as a basis for identification, as well as discussing the allegations of improper information sharing between the Moroccans and the Identification Commission. It explains the role of first Perez de Cuellar and later Butrus Butrus-Ghali in the negotiation process.

Zunes, Stephen and Jacob Mundy. Western Sahara: War, Nationalism, and Conflict Irresolution. Syracuse University Press. 2010.

This book covers the origins and evolution of the Western Sahara conflict in detail, addressing the issues from local, regional, and international angles to present a complete picture. It details the series of UN-backed initiatives. This book is considered the most comprehensive account of the Western Sahara conflict and would be useful to anyone who wants to know the conflict in depth.

Reports, Agreements, Official Documents

OAU

CM/Res. 82 (VII) — Resolution on the Territories Under Spanish Domination (1966): http://www.issafrica.org/uploads/MCOM_1966B.PDF

CM/Res. 206 (XIII) — Resolution on Decolonisation and Apartheid (1969): http://www.issafrica.org/uploads/SCOM_1969B.PDF

CM/Res. 234 (XV) — Resolution on Decolonisation (1970): [http://webmail.africa-union.org/OAU%20Decision/Council/CM%20Res%20234%20\(XV\)%20_E.pdf](http://webmail.africa-union.org/OAU%20Decision/Council/CM%20Res%20234%20(XV)%20_E.pdf)

CM/Res. 272 (XIX) — Resolution on Special Measures to be adopted on Decolonisation and the Struggle Against Apartheid and Racial Discrimination (1972): [http://webmail.africa-union.org/OAU%20Decision/Council/CM%20Res%20272%20\(XIX\)%20_E.pdf](http://webmail.africa-union.org/OAU%20Decision/Council/CM%20Res%20272%20(XIX)%20_E.pdf)

CM/Res.301 (XXI) — Resolution on the Sahara under Spanish Domination (1973): <http://www.sadr-emb-au.net/cmres-301-xxi-resolution-on-the-sahara-under-spanish-domination-1973/>

CM/Res.344 (XXIII) — Resolution on the Territory of the Sahara under Spanish Domination (1975): <http://www.sadr-emb-au.net/cmres-344xxiii-resolution-on-the-territory-of-the-sahara-under-spanish-domination-1975/>

AHG/Res. 75 (XII) — Resolution on the so-called Spanish Sahara (1975): http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/ASSEMBLY_EN_JULY_28_01_AUGUST_1975_ASSEMBLY_HEADS_STATE_GOVERNMENT_THIRTEENTH_ORDINARY_SESSION.pdf

AHG/Res. 81 (XIII) — Resolution on the Convening of an Extraordinary Summit on the Question of Western Sahara (1976): http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/ASSEMBLY_EN_2_6_JULY_1976_ASSEMBLY_HEADS_STATE_GOVERNMENT_THIRTEENTH_ORDINARY_SESSION.pdf

AHG/Res. 92 (XV) — Resolution on the question of Western Sahara (1978): http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/ASSEMBLY_EN_18_22_JULY_1978_ASSEMBLY_HEADS_STATE_GOVERNMENT_FIFTEENTH_ORDINARY_SESSION.pdf

AHR/Res. 103 (XVIII) — Resolution on Western Sahara (1981): <http://www.sadr-emb-au.net/oau-au-docs/3-resolution-on-western-sahara-ahrres-103-xviii-24-to-27-june-1981/>

AHG/Res. 104 (XIX) — OAU Peace Plan on Western Sahara (1983): <http://www.arso.org/03-3.htm>

AU

EX.CL/ Dec.689(XX) — Decision on the Twenty Ninth, Thirtieth and Thirty First Activity Reports of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights - Doc. EX.CL/717(XX) (2011): <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/ex-cl-dec-689-xx-e.pdf>

EX.CL/Dec.758(XXII) — Declaration on the Organization of Crans Montana Forum in the Occupied City of Dakhla, Western Sahara (2015): <http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-peace-and-security-council-of-the-african-union-au-at-its-496th-meeting-held-on-27-march-2015-on-the-situation-in-western-sahara> and http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/dpap/dv/assembly-au_/assembly-au_en.pdf

UN Security Council Resolutions^[4]

S/RES/377 — The Situation Regarding Western Sahara (October 22, 1975): <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20SRES377.pdf>

This resolution requested the Secretary-General to consult with the parties.

S/RES/380 — The Situation Regarding Western Sahara (November 6, 1975): <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20SRES380.pdf>

This resolution deplored Morocco's movement into the territory.

S/RES/621 — The Situation Regarding Western Sahara (September 20, 1988): <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20SRES621.pdf>

This resolution authorized the appointment of a Special Representative to Western Sahara.

S/RES/658 — The Situation Regarding Western Sahara (June 27, 1990):
<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20SRES658.pdf>

This resolution endorsed the settlement proposals.

S/RES/690 — The Situation Regarding Western Sahara (April 29, 1991):
<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20SRES690.pdf>

This resolution established the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

S/RES/1495 — The Situation Regarding Western Sahara (July 31, 2003):
<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20SRES1495.pdf>

This resolution supported the peace plan proposed by James Baker as an optimum solution on the basis of agreement between the parties.

S/RES/1541 — (April 29, 2004): <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20SRES1541.pdf>

This resolution extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 31 October 2004.

S/RES/1598 — (April 28, 2005): <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20SRES1634.pdf>

This resolution extended MINURSO's mandate until 31 October 2005.

S/RES/1634 — (October 28, 2005): <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20SRES1634.pdf>

Extended MINURSO's mandate until 30 April 2006.

S/RES/1675 — (April 28, 2006): <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20SRES1675.pdf>

This resolution extended MINURSO's mandate until 31 October 2006.

S/RES/1720 — (October 31, 2006): <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20S%20RES%201720.pdf>

This resolution extended MINURSO's mandate until 30 April 2007.

S/RES/1754 — (April 30, 2007): <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20S%20RES%201754.pdf>

This resolution called for negotiations without preconditions and extended MINURSO's mandate by six months.

S/RES/1783 — (October 31, 2007): <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20SRES1783.pdf>

This resolution renewed MINURSO's mandate until 30 April 2008 and called on the parties to continue to show political will and engage in substantive negotiations without preconditions and in good faith.

S/RES/1813 — (April 30, 2008): <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Western%20Sahara%20SRES1813.pdf>

This resolution renewed the mandate of MINURSO until 30 April 2009 and endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation that realism and a spirit of compromise by the parties were essential to maintain the momentum of the process of negotiations.

S/RES/1871 — (April 30, 2009): <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20S%20RES%201871.pdf>

This resolution renewed the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 30 April 2010, welcomed the parties' agreement to hold small, informal talks in preparation for a fifth round of negotiations and called on them to continue to show political will to enter into a "more intensive and substantive phase of negotiations".

S/RES/1920 — (April 30, 2010): <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20S%20RES%201920.pdf>

This resolution renewed the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 30 April 2011, the Secretary-General urged both parties to the dispute, Morocco and Frente Polisario, to continue to negotiate in good faith and without any preconditions under the auspices of his personal envoy Christopher Ross.

S/RES/1979 — (April 27, 2011): <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/WS%20S%20RES%201979.pdf>

This resolution renewed the mandate of MINURSO until 30 April 2012.

S/RES/2044 — (April 24, 2012): <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20S%20RES%202044.pdf>

This resolution extended the mandate of MINURSO for another year.

S/RES/2099 — (April 25, 2012): http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2099.pdf

This resolution extended the mandate of MINURSO until 30 April 2014.

S/RES/2152 — (April 29, 2014): http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2152.pdf

This resolution extended the mandate of MINURSO for a year and supported the Secretary-General's request for an additional 15 military observers, within existing resources.

S/RES/2218 — (April 28, 2015): http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2218.pdf

This was a resolution extending the mandate of MINURSO until 30 April 2016.

[i] The Sahrawi people are a collection of mostly nomadic tribes speaking Arabic and Berber languages, spread across Western Sahara, southern Morocco, Mauritania, and southwestern Algeria. "Sahrawi" means "people of the Sahara" and they are closely related to the Tuareg and Berber populations.

[ii] CM/Res.301 (XXI) and CM/Res.344 (XXIII)

[iii] Lee, Iara. "Western Sahara: Historical Timeline 1884-2014. <http://culturesofresistancefilms.com/ws-timeline>. Accessed June 30, 2015.

[iv] J. David Singe and Melvin Small, "Resort to Arms: International and Civil Wars, 1816–1980," Beverly Hills: Sage publications inc. (1982).

[v] Ibid.

[vi] "Western Sahara," Project Disappeared, <http://www.desaparecidos.org/sahara/eng.html> (accessed August 31, 2015).

[vii] "Naturalization and Long Term Integration," Open Society Foundations (October, 2009), https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/struggles-ch8_20091009_0.pdf (accessed August 31, 2015).

[viii] Ibid.

[ix] Iara Lee, "Western Sahara: Historical Timeline 1884-2014, <http://culturesofresistancefilms.com/ws-timeline>(accessed June 30, 2015).

[x] "[The Sahara War 1975–1991](#)". OnWar.com (December 16, 2000).

[xi] Ruth Leger Sivard, "World Military and Social Expenditures 12th ed. (1987–88)" Washington D.C.: World priorities, War statistics table by William G. Eckhardt.

[xii] Res. 103 (XVIII)

[xiii] A/RES/37/28

[xiv] Durch, William J.. "Building on Sand: UN Peacekeeping in the Western Sahara."

International Security, vol. 17, no. 4 (Spring, 1993): 156.

[xv] Terence McNamee, Greg Mills, and J Peter Pham, "Morocco and the African Union: Prospects for Re-engagement and Progress on the Western Sahara," The Brenthurst Foundation (1/2013).

[xvi] A/RES/40/50, (December 2, 1985), <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/40/a40r050.htm>.

[xvii] (AHG/Res.104 (XIX)

[xviii] S/RES/658, "The Situation Regarding Western Sahara" (June 27, 1990).

[xix] Security Council, "The Situation Concerning Western Sahara," UNSCR 690 (1991), April 29, 1991, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/690\(1991\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/690(1991)).

[xx] Durch, 151.

[xxi] "United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara," The United Nations, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minurso/background.shtml> (accessed June 30, 2015).

[xxii] Durch, 158

[xxiii] "Mandate." The United Nations. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minurso/mandate.shtml>. Accessed June 30, 2015.

[xxiv] Durch, 158

[xxv] Durch, 168.

[xxvi] "Background." The United Nations. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minurso/background.shtml>. Accessed June 30, 2015.

[xxvii] Dunbar, 523.

[xxviii] Dunbar, 537.

[xxix] S/2000/683 (July 12, 2000).

[xxx] Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, "Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the evolution of the peace process in Western Sahara and other related issues." <http://cpauc.au.int/en/content/report-chairperson-commission-evolution-peace-process-western-sahara-and-other-related-issues> (accessed August 30, 2015).

[xxxi] S/RES/2218 (April 28, 2015).

[xxxii] "Mandate"; and, "Confidence Building," MINURSO, <https://minurso.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=9558&language=en-US> (accessed August 30, 2015).

[xxxiii] "The Situation Concerning Western Sahara." Report by the Secretary-General. S/22464. April 19, 1991. http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/22464.

[xxxiv] "Resolution 2281." The United Nations Security Council. S/RES/2218 (2015). April 28, 2015. [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2218\(2015\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2218(2015))

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[xxxvi] "Background."

[xxxvii] Ibid.

[\[xxxviii\]](#) Durch, 158

[\[xxxix\]](#) Durch, 159

[\[xl\]](#) Dunbar, 538.

[\[xli\]](#) Durch, 159.

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