



# TTMUN'24

**FORUM:** UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

**QUESTION OF:** THE SITUATION IN WESTERN SAHARA



UNITED NATIONS

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Western Sahara, located in North Africa, has been a persistent source of geopolitical tension and human rights concerns. The core of the conflict revolves around the treatment of the Sahrawi people by the Moroccan government, drawing criticism for alleged human rights abuses, curtailment of autonomy, and the exploitation of natural resources in the region. Morocco maintains that its actions in Western Sahara are imperative for upholding stability and thwarting separatist aspirations, emphasizing the need to counter potential threats to its territorial integrity.

Despite Morocco's justifications, its policies in Western Sahara have faced widespread condemnation from human rights organizations and the global community. The actions are perceived as significant violations of human rights and international law, sparking concerns about the well-being of the Sahrawi people who constitute a substantial part of the region's population. International efforts to address the situation have encountered obstacles, with Morocco's economic and political influence hindering decisive action on the part of the global community.

The plight of the Sahrawi people has been exacerbated by challenges such as restricted movement, limited political freedom, and reported instances of torture and arbitrary detention. The United Nations have been involved in ongoing efforts to find a peaceful resolution, with various peace plans and proposals on the table. However, the situation remains complex, and a comprehensive resolution has yet to be achieved.

The international community faces a delicate balancing act, as the economic and political power of Morocco makes it challenging to enforce substantial measures against perceived human rights violations. As debates persist, advocates for the Sahrawi people continue to call for increased attention and action to address the multifaceted challenges in Western Sahara. The complexity of the situation underscores the need for diplomatic efforts, dialogue, and a commitment to upholding the principles of human rights and international law in the pursuit of a just and lasting resolution.

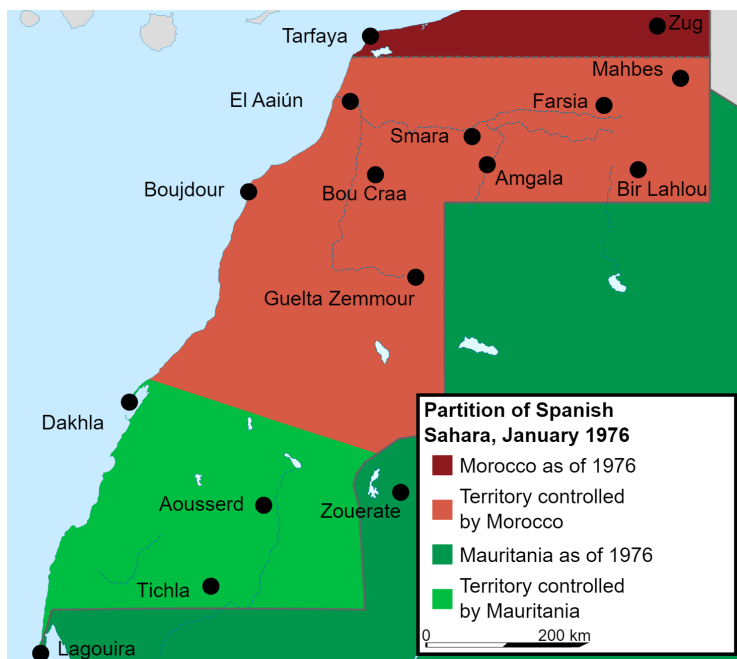
## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The situation in Western Sahara is characterized by a longstanding and complex geopolitical conflict, primarily involving the indigenous Sahrawi people and the Moroccan government. Western Sahara is a sparsely populated territory located in North Africa, bordered by Morocco to the north, Algeria to the northeast, Mauritania to the east and south, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west.

The roots of the conflict date back to the mid-20th century when Spain, the colonial power, withdrew from the region in 1975. This withdrawal led to a power vacuum, and both Morocco and Mauritania asserted territorial claims over Western Sahara. The indigenous Sahrawi people, led by the Polisario Front, declared the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and sought independence.

Morocco, however, contested the Sahrawi claims and initiated the "Green March," mobilizing civilians to enter Western Sahara in support of its territorial annexation. This triggered armed conflict between Morocco, Mauritania, and the Polisario Front. In 1979, Mauritania withdrew its claims, but Morocco continued to control most of Western Sahara, constructing a

defensive barrier known as the Berm. The Polisario Front maintained control over some eastern territories.



The United Nations brokered a ceasefire in 1991, establishing the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) with the aim of organizing a referendum for self-determination. However, the referendum has been repeatedly postponed, and a lasting

resolution remains elusive.



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Human rights concerns in Western Sahara include allegations of Morocco's restrictions on political freedoms, arbitrary arrests, and the reported use of torture. The indigenous Sahrawi population faces challenges related to limited economic opportunities and restricted movement. Natural resources, including phosphates and fisheries, further complicate the situation, with allegations of exploitation and benefit disparities.

Efforts to find a peaceful resolution continue, with ongoing diplomatic initiatives, peace talks, and UN-led processes. The situation remains a subject of international debate and concern, reflecting the complexities inherent in addressing the historical, political, and socio-economic dimensions of the Western Sahara conflict.

## **CURRENT SITUATION**

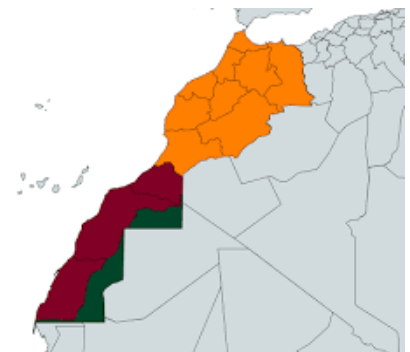
Today, the stalemate persists. Morocco controls roughly 80% of the territory, including key cities and phosphate-rich areas. It has poured investments into infrastructure and development, showcasing its vision of a prosperous, integrated Western Sahara within its borders. Meanwhile, the Polisario Front governs the remaining 20% along the eastern border, known as the "liberated territories." Operating from refugee camps in Algeria and maintaining a military presence in the desert, they hold fast to their dream of a Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).

### **A Precarious Peace**

A tense ceasefire, monitored by the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), has been in place since 1991. However, the sand berm separating the controlled areas remains a volatile flashpoint. Sporadic clashes erupt, and military build-ups raise fears of a wider conflict.

### **Divided Allegiances**

The international community remains majorly divided on the issue. Morocco is recognized by numerous nations, including the United States, which recently reaffirmed its support for Rabat's autonomy plan for the territory. But the SADR also garners backing from a handful of countries, primarily in Africa and Latin America.





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However, recent shifts have caused ripples. Spain, a former colonizer and long-neutral player, has thrown its weight behind Morocco's autonomy plan, drawing criticism from the Polisario Front and its supporters. This move adds a layer of complexity to the already intricate diplomatic landscape.

## **Humanitarian Concerns**

The decades-long conflict has cast a long shadow on the lives of the Sahrawi people. Tens of thousands remain displaced, living in precarious conditions in refugee camps across Algeria. Access to basic necessities like healthcare and education remains a constant struggle. Human rights concerns abound, with reports of restrictions on freedom of speech and movement in both Morocco-controlled and Polisario-governed areas.



## **Uncertain Future**

The future of Western Sahara hangs in the balance. Will the fragile ceasefire hold? Can a negotiated settlement emerge, or will the sands once again run red with conflict? The international community, the actions of Morocco and the Polisario Front, and the Sahrawi people themselves will all play a crucial role in determining the territory's fate.

## **MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED**

### **KINGDOM OF MOROCCO**

Morocco claims sovereignty over the entire territory of Western Sahara and controls roughly 80% of it. It has invested heavily in developing the region, particularly areas rich in resources like phosphates. They offer an autonomy plan for Western Sahara within Moroccan borders, but the Polisario Front rejects it.



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## THE POLISARIO FRONT

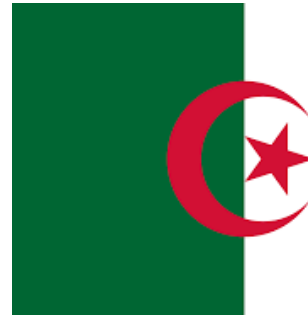
It includes the Sahrawi independence movement fighting for the establishment of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). It governs the remaining 20% of Western Sahara along the Algerian border, known as the "liberated territories." It maintains a military presence and

advocates for a self-determination referendum for the Sahrawi people. It is recognized by a smaller number of countries, primarily in Africa and Latin America.



## ALGERIA

It is a major supporter of the Polisario Front, providing diplomatic and military backing. It views Moroccan control of Western Sahara as illegal and supports its right to self-determination. It has tense relations with Morocco, contributing to regional instability.



## UNITED NATIONS

It plays a crucial role through the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). It monitors the ceasefire agreement and attempts to facilitate a peaceful resolution to the conflict. It pushes for a negotiated solution based on self-determination, but progress has been slow.



## SPAIN

Spain is the former colonizer of Western Sahara, recently shifted its position to support Morocco's autonomy plan.



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## **USEFUL LINKS**

<https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/nsgt/western-sahara>

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/western-sahara>

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