



Security Council

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Letter dated 18 February 2021 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I would like to transmit to you a letter sent from Brahim Ghali, the President of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and Secretary-General of the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, concerning the catastrophic situation of human rights in the occupied territories of Western Sahara (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mathu Joyini
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 18 February 2021 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Bir Lehlou, 16 February 2021

It is with great urgency that I draw your attention and the attention of the members of the Security Council to the catastrophic situation in the territories of Western Sahara under the illegal Moroccan occupation, especially in the aftermath of the act of aggression carried out by the occupying State against the liberated territories of Western Sahara on 13 November 2020, thereby torpedoing the 1991 ceasefire and triggering a new war that could lead to the most serious consequences for peace, security and stability in the region as a whole.

As we warned in the wake of the Moroccan act of aggression that subsequently forced our people to resume their legitimate liberation struggle, the occupying State at the time seemed determined to launch large-scale reprisals against defenceless Sahrawi civilians, human rights activists and journalists. Using the restrictions associated with the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the occupying State immediately began to tighten its siege on the occupied Sahrawi territories in order to continue to suppress and terrorize Sahrawi civilians with impunity.

Nevertheless, it is the inaction of the United Nations Secretariat and the Security Council and their shameful silence in the face of Morocco's new act of aggression that has encouraged the occupying State to persist in its repressive, terrorizing and barbaric practices in the occupied Sahrawi territories. Today, an unprecedented situation is unfolding in the occupied Western Sahara where the Moroccan occupying authorities are employing all their security apparatus to wage a retaliatory war of aggression against defenceless Sahrawi civilians, in full view of the United Nations and its mission in the territory.

Despite attempts by the Moroccan occupying State to cover up the realities of the open war that it ignited in the region on 13 November 2020, well-documented reports and testimonies backed by photographic evidence demonstrate that the Moroccan occupying authorities have intensified their flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and have committed crimes against Sahrawi civilians in the occupied Sahrawi territories.

As enclosure I shows, over the past few months, the Moroccan occupying authorities have raided and broken into the houses of many Sahrawi civilians and subjected them to cruel, inhuman, immoral and degrading practices, particularly in the occupied cities of El Aaiún, Smara and Bojador. In the occupied city of El Aaiún alone, the Moroccan security forces stormed 19 Sahrawi houses, and they have continued to put another 16 houses belonging to Sahrawi human rights activists under constant police siege and close surveillance by Moroccan police in uniform and in plain clothes. Seven houses in the occupied city of Smara are now under police siege, while five Sahrawi houses in the occupied town of Bojador are under police siege and permanent surveillance by Moroccan security forces.

The threats and physical and psychological torture suffered today by the family of Sidi Brahim Jaya in the occupied city of Bojador is just one example of the brutality, ill-treatment and unspeakable cruelty to which Sahrawi civilians are being subjected daily in the occupied Western Sahara. On 13 February 2021, agents of the Moroccan security service brutally attacked and violated the sanctity of the home of the family of Sidi Brahim Jaya in the occupied city of Bojador, which has been put under tight police siege by the Moroccan occupying authorities for nearly three months. As enclosure II shows, the retaliatory attack resulted in human rights activist

Sultana Sidi Brahim Jaya being severely injured on the head and hit in her left eye by the torturer Abdelhakim Amer, head of the security zone of the Moroccan occupation in the occupied city of Bojador.

It should be recalled that Sultana Jaya lost her right eye, which was brutally poked out by a Moroccan policeman while she was participating in a peaceful student demonstration on a university campus in Marrakesh, Morocco, on 9 May 2007. Al Waara Sidi Brahim Jaya also suffered injuries to the mouth and various parts of her body as a result of severe beatings by a group of Moroccan security officers in front of her family's house. Many Sahrawis were similarly beaten, brutalized and arrested for trying to visit the family of Sidi Brahim Jaya to express their solidarity and support.

The Moroccan occupying authorities have also carried out a campaign of indiscriminate arrests targeting many Sahrawis, including minors, who have been subjected to all kinds of physical and psychological torture, with some of them being sentenced to 10 months' imprisonment. Many Sahrawis were also subjected to arbitrary dismissal from their jobs and to forced expulsion on account of their participation in peaceful activities calling for respect for their people's right to self-determination and independence and for ending the Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara.

The Moroccan occupying authorities committed a heinous crime against a young Sahrawi, Mohamed Salem Ayad Ali (Mohamed Salem Fahim), who disappeared in mysterious circumstances for more than 20 days. On 5 February 2021, his family discovered his decomposing body inside a refrigerator at the so-called "Hassan Ben Mehdi" hospital in the occupied city of El Aaiún. This is another case that reflects the negligence of the hospital staff and the retaliatory practices pursued against Sahrawis.

As we have drawn to your attention and to the attention of the Security Council in our previous communications, the situation of Sahrawi political detainees, including the Gdeim Izik Group, continues to be alarming as a result of the deplorable conditions in which they are being held in the prisons of the Moroccan occupying State and the degrading and retaliatory practices to which they are subjected by the Moroccan penitentiary administration. We call upon you once again to intervene urgently to end the suffering of all Sahrawi political prisoners and their families and to ensure their immediate and unconditional release so that they can join their homeland and reunite with their families.

In this regard, in protest against their continued illegal imprisonment and the degrading treatment to which they are being subjected, some of the detainees of the Gdeim Izik Group held in the Moroccan occupying State in both the Central Prison of Quneitra and the local prison of Tiflet, east of Rabat, went on successive hunger strikes while the Moroccan occupying authorities continued to ignore their legitimate demands. The family of Sahrawi political prisoner Yahya Mohamed Al-Hafiz Azza, who is being held in the local prison of Bouizakarne in southern Morocco, also confirmed that his health was seriously deteriorating because of total isolation and deliberate medical negligence.

The aggressive and retaliatory war waged these days by the Moroccan occupying authorities with all their security apparatus in the occupied Western Sahara adds to the record of genocide and killings that the Moroccan occupying State has been carrying out against Sahrawi civilians since the beginning of its invasion and military occupation of the territory on 31 October 1975. While we strongly condemn the terrorizing and retaliatory practices pursued by its security services against our defenceless civilians, we also hold the Moroccan occupying State fully responsible for escalating and extending the war that it has imposed upon our people.

In this context, it is needless to remind you and the Security Council of the responsibility of the United Nations towards the people of Western Sahara as a territory subject to a decolonization process. Every year in its successive resolutions, the United Nations General Assembly has been emphasising this responsibility, which includes, among other things, the responsibility of protecting Sahrawi civilians and ensuring their physical and moral integrity.

Therefore, we call upon you once again and urgently to operationalize the legal and moral responsibility of the United Nations towards our people, particularly Sahrawi civilians living in the territories under the illegal Moroccan occupation. This involves deploying international protection mechanisms and taking practical measures to ensure their safety and security, including the establishment of an independent and permanent United Nations mechanism for the protection of and regular reporting on human rights in occupied Western Sahara to the relevant United Nations bodies.

The Sahrawi people have remained committed to a peaceful solution for nearly three decades while the United Nations has remained shamefully silent in the face of the Moroccan State's continued illegal occupation of parts of our homeland and its oppression and terrorization of our defenceless civilians in the occupied territories, together with its obstruction of the self-determination referendum and its recent torpedoing of the ceasefire on 13 November 2020.

Therefore, just as the Moroccan regime has imposed upon us the resumption of our legitimate armed struggle as a means of attaining the sacred and non-negotiable rights of our people to self-determination and independence, we will not stand idly by as the Moroccan occupying State intensifies its brutality and terrorizing, aggressive and retaliatory war against Sahrawi civilians in the occupied Western Sahara.

We reserve our legitimate right to respond strongly and firmly to any action that is prejudicial to the security and safety of any Sahrawi citizen wherever they are, and we reiterate our call upon you and the Security Council to assume your responsibilities in protecting the Sahrawi civilians and ensuring their physical and moral safety as an essential component of the United Nations responsibility towards the Sahrawi people and towards the decolonization of the last colony in Africa.

I would be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Brahim Ghali**
President of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic
Secretary-General of Frente POLISARIO

Enclosure I

Moroccan human rights violations in the occupied Western Sahara after 13 November 2020

1. In the occupied city of El Aaiún, the Moroccan occupying authorities attacked and stormed the houses of the following Sahrawi families:

- Former political prisoner Mohamed Bani
- Ahmaniha at Zanqa al-Sharif Al-Radhi
- Moulay Ould Mohamed Sheikh at Zanqa Al-Sharif Al-Idrissi
- Balamesh at Zanqa al-Sharif Al-Radhi
- Al-Majahid in al-Batimat neighbourhood
- Activist and former political disappeared person Brahim Al-Sabbar in al-Batimat neighbourhood
- Activist Ali Al-Saadouni at Alhizam
- Ali Ould Zainadin
- Activist and former disappeared person Fatimatou Dahwar
- Dahba Sidamou in Dwairat neighbourhood
- Sid Brahim Amailiha
- Kaziza in al-Fath neighbourhood
- Journalist Mohammed Hadi
- Journalist Al-Sharif Bekhil
- Dahi in Maatalah neighbourhood
- Larabas Ould Lehbib in Maatalah neighbourhood
- Activist Majid Al-Lili
- Sheikh Maalainin in Colomina neighbourhood
- Ali Salem Tamek
- Maalainin Hadi

2. The Moroccan occupying authorities put the following Sahrawi houses under constant police siege and close surveillance by Moroccan police in uniform and in plain clothes:

Occupied El Aaiún

- The house of Aminatou Haidar
- The house of Ghalia Djimi
- The house of Mina Baali
- The house of Lahcen Dlil
- The house of Fatma Ayash
- The house of Almaalouma Abdullah
- The house of Brahim Al-Sabbar

- The house of Bashiri Bin Taleb
- The house of Leila Lili
- The house of Sidi Mohamed Dadash
- The house of Aziza Piza
- The house of Fatimatou Dahwar
- The house of Degdja Lashgar
- The house of Dahba Sidamou
- The house of Zeinaha Abdelhadi
- The house of Ahmed Al-Tandgi
- The house of Khatari Al-Khalidi

Occupied Bojador

- The house of human rights activist Sultana Jaya (the siege has lasted for nearly 3 months)
- The house of human rights activist Fatma Mohammed Al-Hafiz
- The house of Zeinabou Babi
- The house of human rights activist Hamdi Habadi
- The house of human rights activist Sidati Haymad

Occupied Smara

- The house of Fakou Buehi
 - The house of Sakina Jedahlou
 - The house of Nguia Al-Sheikhi
 - The house of Fekka Bdadi
 - The house of Hamadi Al-Nasseri
 - The house of Fatimatou Beiba
 - The house of Gabel Jouda
3. The Moroccan occupying authorities carried out the following detentions:
- On 14 November 2020, a Sahrawi youth, Ahmed Habdi Mohamed Fadel, was arrested and sentenced to 10 months in prison.
 - On 16 November 2020, the following young Sahrawis were arrested in Occupied Bojador:
 - Brahim Abdulwadud Beibat (granted provisional release)
 - Bukhari Mahmoud Lahmidi (released)
 - Nasrallah Baya (released)
 - Yahya Mohamed (released)
 - On 15 November 2020, in the occupied city of El Aaiún, the following youths were arrested and released after being tortured:
 - Khaled Al-Moumen (minor)

- Mohamed Alaiwa (minor)
- Khatari Bonaaj
- On 14 December 2020, the following youths were arrested:
 - Nasrallah Al-Mahfouz Al-Garhi was sentenced to 10 months.
 - Ali Al-Shigali Wadan was sentenced to 10 months.
 - Bukhari Dahi (granted provisional release)

Enclosure II

**Attack on the human rights activist Sultana Jaya and her family,
13 February 2021**



Sultana Jaya, February 2021



Sultana Jaya, May 2007