



Security Council

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Letter dated 19 February 2024 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 by Brahim Ghali, 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 recent developments related to Western Sahara (see annex).

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

(Signed) Mathu Joyini
Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa
to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 19 February 2024 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Letter from 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 addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Bir Lehlou, 19 February 2024

It is with great concern that I am writing to you again to urgently draw your attention and that of the members of the Security Council to the increasingly dangerous situation in the Occupied Sahrawi Territories owing to the escalation by the occupying state of Morocco of its genocidal war waged against the Sahrawi people since its illegal military occupation of Western Sahara on 31 October 1975, which has intensified since the occupying state violated and torpedoed the 1991 ceasefire on 13 November 2020.

The latest reports from the Occupied Sahrawi Territories indicate that, since the beginning of last week, the Moroccan repressive forces, including the gendarmerie, police and auxiliary forces, have been demolishing and setting fire to many rural houses and huts owned by Sahrawis on the coast of the occupied city of El Aaiún. At the same time, the Moroccan occupying authorities continue to confiscate vast lands owned by Sahrawis and deliver them to Moroccan settlers and foreign investors to impose the Moroccan colonial *fait accompli*.

The Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) strongly condemns the new wave of escalation against the Sahrawis in the Occupied Sahrawi Territories, which is yet another episode of the systematic state terrorism and the heinous scorched-earth policy pursued by the occupying state of Morocco through the confiscation of land, the demolition of Sahrawi homes, the burning of their tents, the destruction of their livelihoods and properties and the killing of their livestock, converting Sahrawis into refugees and displaced persons in their own land.

Frente POLISARIO also reaffirms that, because of the violation and torpedoing by the occupying state of Morocco of the ceasefire since 13 November 2020, the entire Territory of the Sahrawi Republic, including its terrestrial, maritime and air space, remains an open war zone. Frente POLISARIO once again warns all the countries of the world and their nationals of the dangers of carrying out any activity of any kind in the Sahrawi national Territory and holds them responsible for the consequences that might result from their actions.

The recent wave of escalation against Sahrawis is also another form of a clear and targeted policy of ethnic cleansing carried out in flagrant violation of international law and international humanitarian law. Since the beginning of its illegal military occupation of Western Sahara in October 1975, the Moroccan occupying forces have used the most dreadful methods of mass killing, burying people alive in mass graves and dropping them off helicopters, in addition to its documented bombing of civilians with internationally banned weapons including napalm and white phosphorus munitions.

The occupying state of Morocco has not only flooded the Occupied Sahrawi Territories with thousands of Moroccan settlers, in blatant violation of international humanitarian law, but it has also pursued a genocidal policy aimed at forcibly uprooting the Sahrawis from their land, displacing them by force and settling more

Moroccan settlers in the Territory, with the declared aim of annihilating the Sahrawi people, confiscating their land, suppressing their right to exist and forcibly imposing a Moroccan colonial fait accompli in Occupied Western Sahara.

Together with the continued settlement policy and the full control of the Moroccan settlers over all aspects of life in the Occupied Sahrawi Territories, the occupying state has persisted in and even increased its atrocious crimes against Sahrawi civilians, including murder, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, extrajudicial executions, forced deportation, displacement and the destruction, looting, theft and confiscation of private property, in addition to military attacks against civilians.

These practices constitute grave violations of international humanitarian law and a full-fledged crime of ethnic cleansing, despite the attempt by the occupying state of Morocco to conceal its heinous crimes from the world by imposing a military siege and a complete media blackout on Occupied Western Sahara and preventing access to the Territory by United Nations bodies, rapporteurs, non-governmental organizations, international media and observers.

The Moroccan occupying authorities also continue to pursue policies of impoverishment and starvation, as well as terrorizing and retaliatory practices and acts of unspeakable cruelty against Sahrawi civilians and human rights activists, who are dismissed from work, deprived of freedom of movement and forcibly deported from the Territory on account of their peaceful defence of the right of their people to self-determination and independence.

In this regard, we draw your attention and that of the members of the Security Council to the critical situation of Sahrawi political prisoners, because of the deplorable conditions in which they are held in the prisons of the occupying state of Morocco and the degrading and punitive practices to which they are subjected by the Moroccan penitentiary administration.

We once again call upon you to act urgently to end the suffering of all Sahrawi political prisoners, including the Gdeim Izik group, and to ensure their immediate and unconditional release so that they can return to their homeland and be reunited with their families.

As reaffirmed repeatedly by the General Assembly, the United Nations and its relevant organs have a special responsibility towards the people of Western Sahara as a Territory subject to a decolonization process that has not yet been completed. We urgently call upon you once again to operationalize the legal and moral responsibility of the United Nations towards the Sahrawi people, including through the establishment of an independent United Nations mechanism for the protection of human rights in the Territory, where the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara continues to operate without any human rights monitoring capacity.

The persistence by the occupying state of Morocco in its heinous crimes against Sahrawi civilians, without being held accountable or punished, while the United Nations and the international community remain silent, seriously undermines the prospects of the already stalled peace process and closes the door on the desired peaceful solution.

The recent campaign of repression against the Sahrawis in Occupied Western Sahara indicates the intention of the occupying state of Morocco to escalate its policy of ethnic cleansing by overturning the demographic structure in the Territory, displacing the Sahrawis anew, and forcing them to live as a minority in their own country in ghetto-like neighbourhoods that the world has seen in similar settlement and colonial situations. The main stated goal, however, remains the annihilation of

the Sahrawi people and the undermining of the legal and international status of the question of Western Sahara.

Frente POLISARIO holds the occupying state of Morocco fully responsible for the consequences of its policies of forcible annexation in Occupied Western Sahara, as well as its ongoing war of aggression against the Sahrawi people, which – if left unchecked – will plunge the entire region into more violence and instability.

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
