

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 26 August 2025 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the
Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations
addressed to the President of the Security Council**

I would like to transmit 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 latest developments related to Western Sahara (see annex).

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

(Signed) Marthinus **Van Schalkwyk**
Chargé d'affaires and Deputy Permanent Representative
of the Republic of South Africa to the United Nations



**Annex to the letter dated 26 August 2025 from the Chargé
d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of South Africa to the
United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council**

Bir Lehlou, 20 August 2025

The United Nations is celebrating this year the eightieth anniversary of the Organization, which provides an opportunity to reaffirm commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to highlight the crucial role of the United Nations as the backbone of the multilateral system, the guarantor of international peace and security and the promoter and defender of human and peoples' rights.

It is also a reminder that, as long as the remaining colonized countries and peoples have not gained their freedom, the role of the United Nations remains as crucial as ever for achieving this objective, in addition to fostering peace, security and stability in the world, ensuring respect for human and peoples' rights and defending the oppressed and realizing their right to freedom and a life with dignity.

More than six decades have passed since the General Assembly included Western Sahara on its list of Territories subject to a decolonization process. The General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies have ever since addressed Western Sahara within the scope of Chapter XI of the Charter of the United Nations, recognizing the international status of Western Sahara as a decolonization issue and the inalienable right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination and independence and to live freely on their homeland in accordance with General Assembly resolution [1514 \(XV\)](#).

In October this year, 50 years will have passed since Morocco, the occupying state, militarily invaded Western Sahara on 31 October 1975 in blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the inalienable right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination and independence. Fifty years in which the occupying state has been pursuing expansionism, annexing territories by force and waging a genocidal war against the Sahrawi people, whose sole objective is to exterminate our people, occupy their land and expropriate their natural resources and undermine their legitimate and internationally recognized rights.

The ongoing Moroccan illegal military occupation of Western Sahara remains the major violation of the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination, which has led to systematic and egregious abuses of the political, economic, social and cultural rights of our people. In its report dated 8 September 2006, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) concluded that almost all human rights violations regarding the people of Western Sahara stem from the non-implementation of their fundamental right to self-determination.

The gross violations committed by Morocco, the occupying state, against Sahrawis in Occupied Western Sahara have been documented and condemned by numerous international and African organizations, as well as various United Nations bodies, such as the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, and the Committee Against Torture, among others.

The reports of these organizations, as well as Sahrawi human rights associations, demonstrate that Morocco, the occupying state, continues to perpetrate egregious human rights violations against Sahrawis in Occupied Western Sahara who are being subjected to a systematic policy of collective punishment and to all sorts of physical and psychological violence because of their peaceful activism and public defence of the right of their people to self-determination and independence.

In particular, Sahrawi human rights activists and defenders, journalists, bloggers and media activists are constantly subjected to close surveillance, harassment, threats, physical assault, abduction, arbitrary arrest and detention, as well as house siege, house raids, demolition and confiscation of homes. The Moroccan occupying authorities continue to subject Sahrawi activists to retaliatory practices by firing them from work, withholding their salaries, depriving them of freedom of movement, and forcibly deporting them outside the Territory.

The Sahrawi political prisoners, including the Gdeim Izik Group, continue to live in tragic conditions inside the prisons of the occupying state where they are subjected daily to degrading and punitive practices, including denial of medical care and treatment, isolation and prohibition of communications. These humiliating practices and ill-treatment have often forced the Sahrawi prisoners to go on hunger strike to protest the denial of their basic rights as political prisoners.

We urgently call upon you, Mr. Secretary-General, to take all necessary measures to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of all Sahrawi political prisoners, including the Gdeim Izik Group, so that they can return to their homeland and reunite with their families. The Moroccan occupying authorities must also be demanded to account for the whereabouts of all Sahrawi victims of forced disappearance.

The Moroccan occupying authorities continue to pursue a scorched-earth policy with the declared aim of uprooting the Sahrawis from their homes and lands and settling more Moroccan settlers in the Territory as part of a systematic and intensive settler-colonial policy whose main objective is to change the demographic composition of the Territory and perpetuate Morocco's illegal occupation of Western Sahara.

In addition to its practices of oppression and violence, Morocco, the occupying state, continues to pursue a policy of impoverishment, deprivation, exclusion and racial discrimination against the Sahrawis in Occupied Western Sahara, while the occupying authorities keep on plundering Sahrawi wealth in collusion with foreign parties, in flagrant violation of the right of the Sahrawi people to permanent sovereignty over their natural resources.

In this regard, it is important to recall the judgments issued on 4 October 2024 by the Court of Justice of the European Union, which, in addition to reaffirming the "separate and distinct status" of Western Sahara in line with General Assembly resolution [2625 \(XXV\)](#), reaffirmed the illegality of European Union-Morocco trade and fisheries agreements involving Western Sahara because they were concluded in violation of – and in disregard for – the consent of the Sahrawi people and their right to self-determination and permanent sovereignty over their natural resources.

We need hardly recall General Assembly resolution [79/95](#) on economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, adopted on 4 December 2024, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, inter alia, "to continue, through all means at his disposal, to inform world public opinion of any activity that affects the exercise of the right of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to self-determination in conformity with the Charter, General Assembly resolution [1514 \(XV\)](#) and the other relevant resolutions of the United Nations on decolonization" (para. 13).

We once again call upon you, Mr. Secretary-General, to use all means at your disposal to inform world public opinion and the relevant organs of the United Nations of all the economic and other unlawful activities carried out by Morocco, the occupying state, in Occupied Western Sahara with a view to forcibly imposing a colonial fait accompli in the Territory and undermining the exercise by the Sahrawi

people of their right to freedom, self-determination and independence. In this context, we urgently call upon you, Mr Secretary-General, to ensure that the Security Council be apprised of the content of the judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Union, given their far-reaching economic, political and legal implications.

As we have underscored in previous communications, including the letter dated 15 October 2024 (S/2024/774), since their violation of the ceasefire on 13 November 2020, the Moroccan occupying forces have been using all types of weapons, including uncrewed aerial vehicles, to kill not only dozens of Sahrawi civilians, but also civilians from neighbouring countries as they cross the Liberated Sahrawi Territories. Between April and June 2025, several civilians were targeted by Moroccan uncrewed aerial vehicles resulting in the death of two nationals from Mauritania and the complete destruction and burning of seven cars.

It is an established fact that the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian objects constitutes a war crime in line with the Statute of the International Criminal Court. It is also a violation of the rules of international humanitarian law, including the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks and acts or threats of violence the primary purpose of which is to spread terror among the civilian population. We once again call upon the United Nations to hold Morocco, the occupying state, accountable for its crimes against Sahrawi civilians and others from the neighbouring countries and for its unlawful use of sophisticated lethal weapons.

To cover up their heinous crimes in Occupied Western Sahara, the Moroccan occupying authorities continue to impose a military siege and a total media blackout on the Territory and to deny access to United Nations bodies and rapporteurs, non-governmental organizations, international media and observers. Moreover, the occupying authorities have arbitrarily expelled scores of independent observers, journalists, lawyers and politicians from Occupied Western Sahara. Between January and July 2025, the Moroccan occupying authorities expelled journalists and observers from France, Finland, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

The Secretary-General pointed out in his latest report to the Security Council, dated 1 October 2024 (S/2024/707), that OHCHR was not able to visit Western Sahara for the ninth consecutive year despite multiple official requests and despite the Security Council, in its resolution 2703 (2023), urging enhanced cooperation, including through facilitating such visits.

It is utterly unacceptable that Morocco, the occupying state, is allowed to “veto” access by United Nations bodies to Occupied Western Sahara. The United Nations bodies and independent observers and media must have full access to Occupied Western Sahara. OHCHR, in particular, must be allowed to have unhindered access to Occupied Western Sahara and to Sahrawi human rights activists and defenders as called for by Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2756 (2024), which strongly urged enhancing cooperation with OHCHR, including through facilitating visits to the region.

The General Assembly has been emphasizing every year in its successive resolutions the responsibility of the United Nations towards the people of Western Sahara as a Territory that is still awaiting decolonization. It is thus incumbent upon the United Nations to shoulder and operationalize its moral and legal responsibility in all its dimensions towards the Sahrawi people, particularly Sahrawis in Occupied Western Sahara, until the Sahrawi people have exercised their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

This responsibility entails, among other things, the establishment of an independent and permanent United Nations mechanism for the protection of the political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Sahrawi people, including their

right to permanent sovereignty over their natural resources, and in situ and regular reporting on the situation in the Territory to relevant United Nations bodies.

In this regard, it is imperative that the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) be expanded to include a human rights component that would enable the “independent, impartial, comprehensive and sustained monitoring of the human rights situation” by the Mission in its area of responsibility, as called for repeatedly by the Secretary-General in his successive reports.

Mr Secretary-General,

The Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) recalls and underscores once again that the United Nations-Organization of African Unity Settlement Plan, which was mutually accepted by both parties, the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco, in 1988 and unanimously approved by the Security Council in its resolutions [658 \(1990\)](#) and [690 \(1991\)](#) is the only mutually accepted, compromise-based, practical and reasonable agreement for achieving a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the decolonization of Western Sahara.

The inability of the United Nations and its relevant organs to deal robustly with Morocco’s deliberate obstructionism and refusal to honour its commitments under the United Nations-Organization of African Unity Settlement Plan has emboldened the occupying state to entrench in its intransigence and defiance of international law. Moreover, the irresponsible and transaction-based positions taken recently by some governments have made the occupying state believe that it can “legitimize” the colonial *fait accompli* in Occupied Western Sahara and ultimately obtain what it had not been able to achieve by force.

Frente POLISARIO recalls that Member States of the United Nations have an *erga omnes* obligation not to engage in any act or in any form of assistance that may have the effect of consolidating Morocco’s illegal occupation of Western Sahara, which is a serious breach of cardinal rules of international law, including the prohibition on acquisition of territory by force. Therefore, countries that are genuinely committed to upholding the core principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law must no longer tolerate Morocco’s attempts to impose a colonial *fait accompli* in Occupied Western Sahara.

The time has come for the United Nations and the international community to realise that their failure to resolutely confront the Moroccan illegal occupation of Western Sahara is contributing to maintaining a dangerous situation that may have dire consequences for peace and security of the entire region. The United Nations and the international community are urgently called upon to exert pressure on Morocco, the occupying state, to end its illegal occupation of Western Sahara and allow the decolonisation of the Territory to be completed.

Frente POLISARIO has demonstrated time and again, through concrete deeds, its genuine commitment to just and durable peace. Whilst remaining committed to the full implementation of the mandate for which the Security Council established MINURSO, the Frente POLISARIO equally remains ready to work with the United Nations and the African Union with a view to achieving a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the decolonisation of Western Sahara based on full respect for the will of the Sahrawi people and their inalienable, non-negotiable, and imprescriptible right to self-determination and independence.

In this regard, the Frente POLISARIO reiterates its full readiness to enter with Morocco into direct, serious and credible negotiations in good faith and without preconditions or diktats, under the auspices of the United Nations, with a view to

reaching a peaceful, just, and lasting solution to the decolonisation of Western Sahara in accordance with relevant United Nations and African Union resolutions and principles of international law.

Fifty years of an illegal occupation of a Territory that is still awaiting decolonisation and subjecting its people to the most egregious human rights violations and denying their fundamental right to self-determination and freedom must no longer be tolerated. Ending Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara in all its forms and manifestations is therefore a litmus test of the credibility of the United Nations and the international community and their commitment to a rules-based international order.

It is therefore imperative that the United Nations and its relevant organs redouble their efforts to bring about the decolonisation of Western Sahara, the last colony in Africa, which is the only path to restore peace and stability in Northwest Africa.

I will appreciate if the content of this letter is reflected in your coming report to be submitted to the Security Council on the situation concerning Western Sahara.

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