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SAHARAWI ARAB DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

By

Majid Abdullah

Introduction

The DASR is one of the few countries in the world which still remains a victim of colonization. The Saharawi people are fighting for their freedom not against the former colonial power, Spain, but against the invading army of Morocco. Morocco, attracted by the mineral wealth of the country, has illegally violated one of the most sacred principles of the United Nations--the right to self-determination. The United Nation's mission of inquiry, lawyers, the international media and outside observers have all agreed that the inhabitants of Western Sahara were not allowed to freely exercise this fundamental right to determine the fate of their homeland.

Another no less sacred principle for newly independent Africa, one enshrined in the charter of the Organization of African Unity, is that the boundaries inherited from the colonial era should be left intact to ensure the stability of the continent. Morocco, challenging both international law and the decision of the United Nations, is bogged down in a costly war in the Western Sahara against the forces of the Polisario Front. Because of the war, the Moroccans are finding themselves highly isolated in the capitals of Africa and all over the world. At the same time, the Saharawi people, backed by the international community, are today, more than ever, organized and mobilized for the defense of their sovereignty and independence.

The People

Population: Close to 1 million inhabitants in 1974 (refugees included).

Ethnically and culturally, the Saharawi people are Muslims, but they are distinct from the Moroccans to the north. The Saharawi people speak an Arabic dialect known as Hassaniya, which is closer to classical Arabic than any of the surrounding dialects. Due to their colonial relations with Spain, the Saharawi people speak fluent Spanish as well.

Traditionally, the Saharawi people were fishermen along the long coastline or camel herders in the desert interior. Since the 1950s, many people have settled in urban centers, engaging in commerce and other urban occupations.

Since the war against Morocco, many of the Saharawi people have been forced to flee their homeland and become refugees in neighboring countries. The attempts of the Moroccan aggressors to carry out a genocidal campaign throughout the country have been directed against the Saharawi people as well as their herds, disrupting the local economy.

Resources

The Western Sahara was of little interest to Spain or its neighboring countries until the discovery of vast mineral wealth beneath the desert sands. In 1947, phosphates were found by the Spanish Ministry of Industry and Commerce in Bu Craa (sixty miles east of El Aaiun, the capital). Phosphate reserves are estimated to be 1.9 billion tons.

In addition to phosphates, the Western Sahara contains iron ore (located in Agracha, near Dakhla, capital of Rio de Oro district). Reserves of iron ore are estimated to be 70 million tons. Uranium, copper and oil may also be found in the desert.

Along the 800-mile coastline are fertile fishing grounds which brought, in 1974, hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue to Spain through contracts with foreign interests. It is this new-found potential for mineral wealth which has attracted Morocco and is the underlying rationale for its annexationist policy.

The Country

The Western Sahara is almost the size of the state of Colorado (110,000 sq. miles). It is crossed by two main rivers: Sagui el Hamra in the north and Wadi-Dhabib in the south. The climate is generally hot and dry, but along the coast are fresh breezes which moderate the temperature extremes of the interior. The temperature may reach 120 degrees F in daytime and drop to freezing at night. Rainfall is sporadic, reaching less than ten inches per year.

History

The Saharawi people are the descendants of several tribes which migrated from the Arabian peninsula in the sixteenth century. They formed a political confederation under a democratic leadership called Ait Arbin. This assembly, composed of tribal chiefs, had the power to declare wars to defend the community and to settle internal disputes. It was from this confederation of desert tribes that the Almoravid Empire emanated to control the whole of northwest Africa for a hundred years. Historically there have been many wars between the Saharawis and their neighbors over the sovereignty of the territory. In

1767, the Moroccan Sultan Ahmed al-Mansour led an expedition to conquer Timbuktu. He was repelled and defeated before he could cross the Saharawi land of Saguia el Hamra.

The Colonial Period

Spain's original interest in the Western Sahara was only to establish military forts to defend the Canary Islands off the coast. In 1884, Spain claimed the coast of the Western Sahara as a protectorate, citing "documents signed by the Ait Arbin tribes...who have on various occasions asked for and obtained the protection of Spain." This was "legalized" at the Berlin Conference of 1885, where the European imperialist powers "carved up" the continent of Africa, dividing it among themselves.

In 1890, from the historical and holy town of Smara, the Saharawi people began to fight against the French, who were pressing in from Mauritania in the south, and the Moroccan Sultan in the north, who again tried to extend his hegemony beyond the Oued Draa River.

The occupation of the territory began in 1904, but the Spaniards could not establish "a real control over Western Sahara" until 1934, because of the resistance by the inhabitants of the territory. Spanish occupation became effective only with the help of the French colonial army.

The independence of Morocco, in 1956, fanned anti-colonial sentiments and the following year a more than five-thousand-man army, formed by the Saharawi tribes, attacked Spanish positions south of Oued Draa River and in the Rio de Oro. Spain immediately retreated to its coastal positions, leaving the control of Western Sahara to the Saharawi nationalists. The assault on the capital Aiun was planned by the beginning of 1959.

In 1958, during a combined campaign of heavy fighting called "Operation Ecouvillon," large units of the French army, stationed in Mauritania, gave support to the Spanish Foreign Legion and at last conquered Western Sahara the following year. The Moroccan forces and the Spanish colonizers took control over Western Sahara, ceded Tarfaya to Morocco, in recognition of Morocco's cooperation.

Ten years ago, the Spaniards discovered the immense phosphate riches and kept the discovery secret. The mineral wealth and the phosphates, as well as the fishing resources of the Saharawi coast, attracted the colonial appetites not only of Spain and France but also of Moroccan expansionism.

The Moroccan government, in preparation for the future

annexation of Western Sahara and Mauritania, published a "White Book," distributed it to all embassies around the world, in which the bases and objectives of Moroccan expansionism are self-explanatory. This "White Book" contains a map of the Greater Imperial Morocco.

According to this map, the kingdom of Morocco stretches from Tangier to Senegal, covering all the territory of Western Sahara, Mauritania, southwestern Algeria and the northwestern part of Mali.

Historical and Juridical Background

On December 14, 1960, the United Nations adopted resolution 1514 (XV) on decolonization and published a list of territories under colonial domination that should be decolonized in accordance with this resolution.

Western Sahara, a territory under Spanish colonial domination, was on the list in spite of opposition from the Madrid government, whose plans, dating back to 1958, were to transform the territory into a Spanish "overseas province."

In 1963, the "Committee of 24" debated the question of Western Sahara, in accordance with resolution 1514 (XV) and, in 1965, the General Assembly adopted resolution 2072 (XX) which would signal in letter the standpoint and principles of the United Nations on the question of Western Sahara.

In its resolution 2229 (XXI) of November 5, 1966, the United Nations called upon the administering power to implement a referendum, under the auspices of the Organization, in order to enable the people of Western Sahara to exercise freely their right to self-determination and independence.

Resolution 2229 (XXI) was the first in a series of resolutions with the same stipulations. Thus, subsequent resolutions 2354 (XXII) of December 19, 1967, 2428 (XVIII) of December 18, 1968, 2591 (XXIV) of December 19, 1969, 2711 (XXV) of December 14, 1970, 2983 (XXVII) of December 14, 1972, 3162 (XXVIII) of December 14, 1973, and other resolutions after 1975, the year Morocco and Mauritania invaded Western Sahara, all called on the administering power, Spain, as well as Morocco and Mauritania, to respect the right of the Saharawi people to self-determination and independence.

However, the administering power ignored these resolutions, while all its political and administrative steps in Western Sahara were aimed at perpetuating the colonial status, and the repression of all popular aspirations and claims.

The plans of the metropole were aimed at transforming Western Sahara into a state-province, associated with Spain and not at the respect for a free self-determination as prescribed in the United Nations resolutions. While colonial maneuvers were taking place, the ruthless exploitation of Sahara's natural resources, particularly the phosphates, was intensified. Puppet colonial institutions were established, such as the "General Assembly of the Sahara," or the Yemas, which the administering power intended to grant a role in its colonial plans.

This colonial policy and the Moroccan expansionist threats did not leave any other alternative to the Saharawi people but to struggle, with the most effective means, in order to assert their legitimate right to self-determination and independence: the armed struggle.

In 1967, as a continuation of historical resistance, the national liberation movement of Western Sahara was born clandestinely. In 1970, it surfaced, organizing mass mobilizations and demonstrations for independence. The demonstrations were bloodily suppressed with firearms by the Spanish Legion "Los Tercios."

The ruthless colonial suppression continued and intensified, filling the jails with Saharawi patriots. Many families were expelled from their homes, just as with Morocco in 1957; others were assassinated or died in jails from torture.

This colonial massacre shocked the General Assembly of the United Nations, leading to the adoption of a resolution "deploing the bloody incidents of June 17, 1970."

Since then, the Saharawi liberation movement has not ceased the political struggle and the preparation of the people for the inevitable armed struggle. As a result of this process, the Polisario Front--Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el Hamra y Rio de Oro--was born on May 20, 1973. On this same date Polisario began to wage an armed struggle against Spanish colonialism. Towards the end of 1975, almost all the territory of Western Sahara, with the exception of the towns of Smara, Aaiun and Dakla, was liberated area, under the control of the Polisario Front and a national administration was established.

The struggle for national liberation, waged by the Saharawi people, under the leadership of their sole legitimate representative, the Polisario Front, has been supported by the United Nations resolutions and by the OAU, as well as by the Non-Aligned Movement. It has been solemnly acknowledged also by Spain, as the administering power, as well as by Morocco and Mauritania, as neighbors and states concerned with their geographical contiguity, that the Saharawi people exercise freely

their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

During a meeting of the Special Committee on Decolonization, in Addis Ababa in June 1966, Morocco declared through its representative, invited as an observer, the recognition of the right of Western Sahara to independence.

The Moroccan delegate stressed during the meeting: "Since June 1966, Morocco has been asking with insistence that the native people of the territory be granted their right to independence and self-determination" (UN, GA, Special Committee on Decolonization, Doc.A/AL 109/SR 474 p. 12).

On the draft resolution introduced by the Special Committee, on November 17, 1966, the Moroccan delegate declared: "For Morocco, and for any African country truly independent, the native peoples must be enabled to choose freely their destiny..." (UN, GA, Special Committee, A/AL 108/SR 474 p. 7).

During the same meeting of the committee, the delegate from Mauritania, invited to the session as an observer, stated on behalf of his government that Algeria was "completely in agreement with Morocco on the right of Western Sahara to freedom. This territory must be totally independent from Spain, but also from Morocco" (UN, GA, Special Committee, A/AL 109/SR 436 p. 17).

During the twenty-first session of the UN General Assembly, Morocco reaffirmed the right of Western Sahara to self-determination and independence. In the course of the work of the fourth committee, Morocco affirmed the acceptance of immediate independence for all African territories, still under colonial domination, in accordance with resolution 1514 (XV). The Morocco delegate also said, "Spain is too generous to not retreat from a territory that doesn't belong to her and to not grant independence to its people. Morocco would be the first to applaud any initiative in this direction."

In the course of the twenty-seventh session of the United Nations, the delegate from Morocco, Mr Benhima, said: "On the day of independence of Western Sahara, Morocco would willingly respect the free expression of the will of the inhabitants of Sahara" (UN, GA, 4th Committee, 20005th session, November 27, p. 235). The Moroccan delegate was more explicit in these terms: "The day the territory becomes independent, its boundaries will be respected as the borders of all other independent countries."

Morocco and Mauritania not only recognized the right of the Saharawi people to self-determination and independence at the United Nations, but also in the context of the resolutions

of the Non-Aligned Movement and OAU, as well as in the joint communiques by Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania. However, Morocco and Mauritania, in complete disregard of the United Nations, the OAU and the Non-Aligned's resolutions, denied the people of Western Sahara the exercise of their right to self-determination and independence, by invading militarily the territory for its partition between the two states. The combined armed invasion, aimed at the liquidation of the Saharawi people by the Moroccan and Mauritanian troops, took place in the context of the Madrid trilateral colonial pact of November 14, 1975, on the basis of which the administering power, instead of living up to the United Nations resolutions and to its commitments to the Saharawi people, handed over the territory to Morocco and Mauritania, in a colonial transaction without precedent in the history of decolonization on the African continent.

The position of the United Nations and of Spain, as the administering power of the Saharawi territory, has been, however, of consistent adherence to the right to self-determination and independence, reaffirmed in numerous official declarations. Thus, in the course of the twenty-first session of the United Nations, the Spanish delegate stated in the fourth committee, "Spain, on the question of Western Sahara, has promised solemnly that it would apply the principle of self-determination" (UN, GA, 4th Committee, 1660 session, December 7, p. 1). Commenting on the vote on resolution 2229, the Spanish delegate said, "The purposes of the co-sponsors of this draft resolution coincide with the position of self-determination for Sahara. Spain will abide by this resolution, but the Saharawi people must have the last word" (explanation of vote on resolution, December 15, 1966).

In 1967, the Spanish government reaffirmed its position, through its delegate in the Special Committee: "As far as Sahara is concerned, I should insist, once again, on the fact that the will of the inhabitants constitutes the essential base for our policy on this matter. I wish to state that the principle of the right of all peoples to be masters of their own should be applied to the territory of Sahara" (UN, GA, twenty-second session, 1441 session, October 13).

The Spanish delegate in the fourth committee, twenty-sixth session, stated, "In 1966, Morocco declared that it was dropping its territorial claims over Western Sahara and called for the principle of self-determination, as stipulated by the United Nations." And, "Spain has received with satisfaction the declaration of the three heads of state, formulated in September 1970, in Nuadhibou (Mauritania), in which it was stated that the process defined by the UN would be respected and excluded any possibility of territorial claim, recognizing as the only valid criteria for decolonization the will of the people

of the territory..." (UN, GA, twenty-seventh session).

United Nations Mission

In this context and with a view to avail itself of more information on the territory in order to enforce a quick action that might enable the people to exercise their legitimate rights to independence and freedom, the General Assembly was able to send, finally, a fact-finding mission to the territory. This mission completed its report on October 14, 1975 and stated that the people of the territory had opted for independence. "In the territory, the commission asserted that the population or, at least, almost the whole of the peoples interviewed, was categorically for independence and was against the claims by Morocco and Mauritania" (report adopted by the GA, October 14, 1975). During the commission's stay in Western Sahara, the people demonstrated throughout the territory their will to live freely. "The commission attended huge demonstrations in its support"(UN Chronical, Vol. 7, No. 4, 1975).

During its visits to the liberated areas, the UN fact-finding mission was able to meet with Spanish POWs captured during the numerous clashes between the Saharawi People's Liberation Army and the Spanish colonial troops. The UN mission, which had visited the Saharawi territory in May 1975, recommended to the General Assembly the strict respect for the legitimate rights of the Saharawi people and asked Spain to fulfill its responsibilities as the administering power. During its visit, the mission witnessed that "no other political movements were deemed to be remotely as significant an expression of Saharawi opinion as the Polisario Front and that the Spanish Sahara was manifestly in favor of independence."

International Court of Justice

On its part, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at the Hague announced its opinion on October 16, 1975. The governments of Morocco and Mauritania had called for an ICJ opinion in 1974. Their objective was to buy time and impose the armed invasion as a *fait accompli*. They also hoped to create confusion, distorting the essence of the problem, making it a bilateral legal issue instead of a decolonization problem. The ICJ concluded its consideration: "The elements and facts available to it (the court) do not establish any ties of territorial sovereignty between the territory of Western Sahara and the Kingdom of Morocco, on the one hand, or with Mauritania entity on the other." The court stated that it did not "find any legal basis, whose nature might modify the application of resolution 1514 (XV) of the United Nations General Assembly, related to the implementation of the principle of self-determination, through

the free and authentic expression of the will of the peoples of this territory...."

The futility of the Moroccan and Mauritanian claims were such that the court, without even hearing the representatives of Western Sahara, rejected the expansionist thesis, recognized the historical independence of Western Sahara and reaffirmed with vigor the right of the people to be their own masters. The resolutions of various international bodies, the report of the UN commission and the decision of the International Court of Justice at the Hague were a reaffirmation of the just struggle of the people of Western Sahara to independence and a clear demonstration that the Moroccan and Mauritanian objectives could not be disguised by a nonexistent territorial claim.

Moroccan Invasion

The purely colonial objectives were the exploitation and partition of a country and its wealth and the transaction of the right of its people to freedom, sovereignty and independence. On October 31, 1975, the Moroccan army invaded the Saharawi territory, thus initiating a policy of total destruction and the physical extermination of the Saharawi people. The Spanish troops, stationed at the border between Morocco and Western Sahara, retreated and turned against the civilian population, preventing them from leaving for the liberated areas controlled by the Polisario Front.

The Spanish government, having asked for a meeting of the Security Council to deter the "invasion march," instead of informing the United Nations about the armed invasion, announced that "in accordance with the principles of the United Nations" it had signed a treaty with Morocco and Mauritania, in which the territory was to be partitioned between the two states, both of which would compensate Spain economically with a part in the exploitation of the Saharawi wealth. Moroccan and Mauritanian troops replaced the Spanish colonial forces, and the signatories of the Madrid Tripartite Agreement tried to impose on the world, and on the United Nations, the argument that the dossier of the "decolonization of Western Sahara" was now closed.

Proclamation of the Democratic Arab Saharawi Republic

The Polisario Front, while trying all means possible to save the civilian population that had begun the exodus before the armed invasion by Morocco and Mauritania, organized the resistance to launch the second war of national liberation against the new colonial occupation. On February 27, 1976, in the heat of this just and heroic struggle, the Saharawi people proclaimed the birth of their state.

The Saharawi Democratic Arab Republic (DASR) established the first Saharawi government on March 4, 1976, and at the same time, began the summer military offensive with the historic battle of Nouakchott (Mauritanian capital), in the course of which the secretary general and founder of Polisario, el Uali Mustafa Sayid, fell on the field with honor. On September 26, 1976, the Third People's General Congress--the Congress of the Martyr El Uali Mustafa Sayid--was held and a political manifesto was prepared. A Programme for National Action and the constitution of the republic were adopted culminating the generalized offensive Chahid el Uali. The DASR is the historical result of the struggle of the Saharawi people for their national independence and sovereignty. It constitutes also the realization of the will of the Saharawi people and the resolutions of the United Nations, OAU and the Non-Aligned Nations Movement which have affirmed and reaffirmed the inalienable right of the Saharawi people to self-determination and independence.

The solidarity with the just struggle of the Saharawi people has its logical expression in the recognition of DASR. To this day, thirty-six countries have officially recognized the DASR; in chronological order of their recognition they are Madagascar, Angola, Algeria, Benin, Burundi, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Rwanda, Togo, The Peoples' Democratic Republic of Korea, Seychelles, the Peoples' Democratic Republic of Yemen, the Peoples' Democratic Republic of Congo, Panama, Sao Tome and Principe, Tanzania, Equatorial Guinea, Viet-Nam, Laos, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Grenada, Ghana, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Guyana, Santa Lucia, Dominica, Jamaica, Uganda, Nicaragua, Mexico, Lesotho, Zambia, Cuba and the Islamic Republic of Iran

Fourth Congress

On September 25 to 30, 1978, the Fourth Congress of the Polisario Front was held in honor of the martyr Sidi Ould Haidong under the slogan "the struggle continues to impose national independence and peace." It took place at an important and decisive moment, when the Saharawi people were holding out against the colonial and expansionist forces. The Congress noted its satisfaction with how the different institutions and organs of the state were evolving by raising the level of the education, health, organization and unity of the Saharawi people. The Congress saluted the Popular Liberation Army for its combative spirit and its success in liberating the large majority of the territory of the DASR. The Congress fixed and reaffirmed the key principles for any just solution to the decolonization question which constitutes the return of the aggressor country to the tenets of international law: recognition of the national sovereignty of the people over the whole of their territory and respect for their legitimate rights to self-determination and inde-

pendence and, recognition of the territorial integrity of our homeland in accordance with the principle of the respect for the historical frontiers of our country inherited from the colonial era and internationally recognized.

Peace Progress

July 12, 1978, the Polisario Front took the historical decision to create new conditions and a drive towards peace, by a unilateral proclamation of ceasefire with Mauritania. This courageous and historic initiative has created a dynamic of peace in all the area. The Moroccans sent a delegation to Bamako, Mali, and met with the representative of the Polisario Front. On August 5 a peace treaty, transmitted to the general secretaries of the UN, OAU and the Non-Aligned Movement, was reached between the DASR and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania in which the Mauritanian government "declared it no longer had any territorial claim over the Western Sahara, and decides to withdraw completely from the unjust war in the Western Sahara," and "recognizes the Polisario Front as the representative of the Saharawi people."

The Non-Aligned Nations' conference, held in Havana from September 3 to 9, 1979, welcomed the peace agreement between the Polisario Front and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, and urged Morocco to join the peace process and to terminate its occupation of the territory of Western Sahara.

The UN Thirty-Fourth General Assembly "recalls the inalienable right of the Saharawi people to self-determination and independence, welcomes the peace agreement between the Polisario Front and Mauritania and considers that this agreement constitutes an important contribution to the process of achieving peace and a definitive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Western Sahara." The UN also "urged the Moroccans to join the peace process and to terminate the occupation of the territory of Western Sahara." The General Assembly further "recognizes the Polisario Front as the representative of the Saharawi people and should be considered as a full partner for any search for a just, lasting and definitive political solution to the question of Western Sahara."

This UN Resolution 3437 was not only a recognition of the fact that the question is a political one and that the Polisario Front is the sole legitimate representative of the people of Western Sahara, but that the Moroccans should put an end to its illegal occupation of the territory of Western Sahara by a direct negotiation with the Polisario Front.

The Organization of African Unity voted in July 1979 in Monrovia in favor of an immediate ceasefire and the right to

the free exercise of self-determination for the Saharawi people. In the OAU Ad Hoc Committee of Heads of State on Western Sahara, December 5, 1979, the "OAU regrets the absence of Morocco and warmly congratulates the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for its decision to withdraw all its claims on the territory of Western Sahara, and its signing of the peace agreement with the Polisario Front. The OAU further "urges Morocco to withdraw all of its forces from the territory and to cooperate with the OAU as regards the decolonization of Western Sahara." And in an appeal directed particularly to the United States, which was debating an arms sale to Morocco, the OAU "calls upon the international community not to take any action that would impair the work of the OAU Ad Hoc Committee in the discharge of its responsibility of finding a peaceful solution to the question of Western Sahara."

Switch in the United States Policy

On February 2, 1980, the United States government asked congressional approval for the sale of sophisticated counter-insurgency weapons and increased quantities of conventional military equipment for Morocco. These weapons, which include twenty F5 E/F jet fighters, twenty-four Hughes helicopters and reconnaissance planes (OV 10) are intended not for the defense of Morocco's internationally recognized borders, but for the maintenance of the Moroccan occupation in the annexed part of Western Sahara. This US decision is a clear challenge to the United Nations and Organization of African Unity decisions to seek a political solution to the question and is also a blow to the peace process which the international community supports.

The United States has taken a far-reaching decision by intervening to reinforce militarily an aggressive and expansionist regime, and to escalate to internationalized dimensions what is in fact a pure and simple question of decolonization. This new defiance against the Saharawi people and this region of Africa will be countered and overcome by the inalienable will and determination of the Saharawi and the peace-loving international community.

The UN Commission on Human Rights, meeting in Geneva, February 15, 1980, once again reaffirmed the rights of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and denounced the Moroccan occupation as the only cause of a violation of human rights in Western Sahara. It recommended "the exercise of the people of Western Sahara of the right to self-determination and independence and describes this as the sole means of putting an end to the violation of their fundamental rights resulting from foreign occupation and of restoring their dignity."

Conclusion

The Polisario Front maintains official relations with dozens of other countries, as well as with other political parties from Europe, Africa and Latin America, and has been welcomed as the legitimate representative of the Saharawi people everywhere.

The Madrid Tripartite Agreement and the aggression by Moroccan troops forced the people to stand up with arms to this barbarian and hideous colonial expedition, aimed at the extermination of the people and at robbing them of their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

The war has extended and now covers the territory of DASR, and southern Morocco, with all its procession and death and suffering, caused by this aggression upon the peoples of the region, threatening security on the continent and peace in the world.

The struggle of the Saharawi people, under the leadership of their sole legitimate vanguard, the Polisario Front, has experienced many successes as a result of the important military and diplomatic victories seized by the people, who will continue with greater determination until the reestablishment of their sovereignty over the whole territory of DASR.

The question of Western Sahara cannot be diverted from its genuine nature--i.e., a question of decolonization--and any attempt to settle this problem must take into consideration these real concerns: 1) the victimized people and their political leadership, the Polisario Front and, 2) Morocco, the occupying aggressor.

Majid Abdullah is the representative to the United Nations from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el Hamra y Rio de Oro (Polisario).