

MILESTONES IN THE WESTERN SAHARA CONFLICT

- November 1884 – November 1885: At the Berlin Diplomatic Conference, Spain is recognised as the colonial power of present-day Western Sahara, considered as *res nullius*.
- 1963: UN Special Committee on Decolonisation declares Western Sahara a “non-self-governing territory to be decolonised” in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 Dec. 1960.
- December 1965: The UN General Assembly adopts its first resolution on Western Sahara, requesting Spain to decolonise the Territory (General Assembly resolution 2072 (XX) of 17 Dec. 1965).
- December 1966: The UN General Assembly requests Spain to organise, under UN supervision, a referendum on self-determination (General Assembly resolution 2229 (XXI) of 20 Dec. 1966). The demand is repeated each year from 1967 to 1973.
- 29 April 1973: The Frente Para la Liberación de Saguia Al Hamra y Rio de Oro (POLISARIO) is founded in Zouerate (Mauritania) with the purpose of obtaining independence for Western Sahara.
- 10 May 1973: first military operation of POLISARIO against a Spanish garrison in Western Sahara.
- December 1974: The Spanish census, a prerequisite for the self-determination referendum, registers 73, 497 inhabitants of Western Sahara.
- May – June 1975: A delegation of the UN Decolonisation Committee visits the Territory, Morocco, Spain, Algeria and Mauritania.
- October 1975: The Decolonization Committee issues a report requesting the UN General Assembly to enable the local population to choose their future in free and fair circumstances.
- 16 October 1975: The International Courts of Justice publishes its advisory opinion on the status of the Territory before colonization by Spain. “... the Court has not found legal ties of such nature as might affect the application of resolution 1514 (XV) in the decolonisation of Western Sahara and, in particular, of the principle of self-determination through the free and genuine expression of the will of the peoples of the Territory.”
- 6 November 1975: Morocco launches the “Green March” (Al Massira); some 350,000 Moroccans march a few kilometres across the border into the Territory of Western Sahara (Tah and Hagunia).
- 14 November 1975: Spain, Mauritania and Morocco sign the Madrid Accords. Spain agrees

to cede administrative control of the Territory to Morocco (northern two-thirds) and Mauritania (southern third), after a transitional tripartite administration period. The Saharan population begins to leave the cities to the open desert inland.

- 28 November 1975: 67 of the 102 members of the *djemaa* (an assembly of notables appointed by the Spanish Government representing the Saharan tribes) dissolve the assembly in the so-called Proclamation of Guelta Zemmour.
- 11 December 1975: The first Moroccan troops arrive in El Aaiún, (now known as Laayoune). Fighting erupts between Frente POLISARIO and Moroccan forces.
- 20 December 1975: Mauritanian troops take over the cities of Tichla and La Güera (South of the Territory).
- 27-29 January 1976 – First battle of Amgala between Moroccan and POLISARIO forces. Rabat denounces the presence, besides POLISARIO, of Algerian units. Algeria denies the allegations.
- 26 February 1976: Spain officially withdraws from the Territory.
- 27 February 1976: POLISARIO proclaims the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in Bir Lahlou. In Morocco-controlled Laayoune, a newly constituted *djemaa* votes for the integration of the Territory into Morocco.
- 14 April 1976: Morocco and Mauritania divide the Territory. Mauritania receive the southern third (Dakhla region) and Morocco the northern two thirds (Laayoune, Boujdour and Smara regions).
- May 1976: The first refugee camps are established in Tindouf, Algeria.
- October-November 1977: Operation *Lamantine*. French air and special forces launch an operation in support of Mauritania against POLISARIO. French troops will remain in Mauritania until 1980.
- August 1978: Military escalation between POLISARIO, Mauritanian and Moroccan forces.
- 1 August 1979: Gen. Lahbib Ayoub, leading a POLISARIO brigade, approaches Nouakchott and demands the unconditional surrender of Mauritania.
- 17-20 July 1979: At a Summit in Monrovia, Liberia, the Organisation of African Unity, OAU (currently African Union AU), launches a mediation initiative for a peaceful solution to the Western Sahara conflict by calling for a cease-fire and a referendum. The proposal is rejected by Morocco.
- 15 August 1979: POLISARIO signs a cease-fire with Mauritania, in Algiers. Morocco takes control of most of the southern part of the Territory previously occupied by Mauritania.
- 16 July 1980: The SADR formally applies for membership in the OAU.

- 1981: Morocco begin the construction of the first of a series of defensive sand walls, 'berms', stretching over 2,400 Km in order to protect the Western part of the Territory.
- 24-27 June 1981: At the 18th OAU Summit in Nairobi, King Hassan II expresses his willingness to hold a referendum, taking into account Morocco's historical claims to the Territory.
- February 1982: The SADR is admitted to membership in the OAU during the 69th Council of Ministers' Conference. Morocco suspends its participation in the OAU.
- 12 November 1984: Morocco officially withdraws from OAU.
- 1 July 1985 – 11 August 1988: A joint effort of good offices UN-OAU culminates in the presentation to Morocco and the POLISARIO of the 'Settlement Proposals' for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. These proposals are reiterated in the Secretary-General's report S/22464, of 9 April 1991, and adopted by Security Council resolution 690 of 19 April 1991. They became known as 'Settlement Plan'.
- 16 April 1987 – End of the construction of 6th line of *berm* by the Moroccan Armed Forces.
- 20 September 1988: Hector Gross Espiell (Uruguay) is appointed as first Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara.
- 7 October 1989 – POLISARIO launches a massive attack against Moroccan troops in Guelta Zemmour (Centre of Western Sahara) and Amgala (II).
- 9 April 1991: MINURSO is established by Security Council resolution S/1991/690. The Mission is mandated to implement the 'Settlement Plan': monitor the cease-fire, identify eligible voters for participation in the referendum, and create the conditions and modalities for the supervision and conduct of the referendum. The OAU is associated to the peace process.
- mid-August 1991 – Few days before the proclamation of the cease-fire, Morocco launches a heavy offensive against POLISARIO at Tifariti.
- 1 September 1991: The first contingent of 100 MINURSO military observers arrive in Laayoune.
- 6 September 1991: Following agreement with the parties, the UN Secretary-General announces the cease-fire. Both sides suspend the military operations.
- 28 August 1994: The IDC launches the identification process simultaneously in Laayoune and in the Tindouf area.
- 17 March 1997: The UN Secretary-General appoints James Baker III, former US Secretary of State, as his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara (S/1997/236).

- 14-16 September 1997: James Baker mediates the Houston Accords, which define the compilation procedures for the electoral body, troop confinement, refugee repatriation and a code of conduct for the referendum.
- 15 July 1999: The IDC publishes the first Provisional Voters List (PVL). An appeals process begins.
- 15 January 2000: The IDC publishes the second PVL. A total of 250,000 Saharans are identified; 86,425 are deemed 'eligible voters'.
- 28 February 2000: 131,000 appeals are lodged against the results of the PVLs. Differences between the two parties on the appeal process suspends *de facto* further activities of the IDC.
- 20 June 2001: The Secretary-General report (S/2001/613) submits to the Security Council the Personal Envoy's Draft Framework Agreement (a.k.a. the Baker Peace Plan, and then known as Baker Plan I). The plan envisages the integration, with a degree of autonomy, of the Territory within Morocco. Morocco accepts it, but Frente POLISARIO rejects it and the Security Council proposes further negotiations between the parties.
- 19 February 2002: The UN Secretary-General's report (S/2002/178) put forward four options to the Security Council: (1) implementation of 'Settlement Plan' without concurrence of the parties; (2) revision of Framework Agreement; (3) explore possible division of the Territory between the two parties; (4) termination of MINURSO, acknowledging that the UN "cannot resolve the problem without requiring one of the parties to do something it does not want to do." The Security Council does not endorse any of the 4 options and asks the Personal Envoy to continue in the talks with parties.
- 30 July 2002: The UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/1429 (2002) states that is ready to consider 'any approach which provides for the self-determination' of the people of Western Sahara.
- 23 May 2003: The Secretary General presents a Peace Plan (a. k. a. the Baker Plan II) (S/2003/565). The Security Council supports the plan, which provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara after a three-year period of provisional administration by a governing body elected by the people listed in the PVLs. A referendum would allow to an electorate formed by the members of the PVLs and the residents in the Territory since 1999 to choose among independence, integration or autonomy within Morocco. POLISARIO, after some reservation, accepts it.
- 31 July 2003: UN Security Council S/RES/1495 (2003) reaffirms the Baker Plan (II) as the 'optimal political solution'.
- 16 October 2003: UN Secretary-General, in his report (S/2003/1016), urges Morocco to accept and implement the plan.
- 30 March 2004: The IDC formally concludes its activities. The files are currently safeguarded in the UN HQ in Geneva.

- 23 April 2004: Morocco rejects the Baker Plan II by placing various limitations on it such as rejecting the transition arrangements and the option of independence. These are considered 'red lines', which can not be accepted by Rabat.
- 11 June 2004: James Baker III resigns as the UN Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara. The functions are assumed by MINURSO's SRSR, Alvaro de Soto until May 2005.
- 29 July 2005: Ambassador Peter van Walsum, a former Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the UN, is appointed as Personal Envoy for Western Sahara.
- 18 August 2005: Through the mediation of the US Government and under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the last 404 Moroccan POWs held by the Frente POLISARIO are released.
- 1 September 2005: Francesco Bastagli is the new Special Representative of Secretary-General for Western Sahara.
- 6 November 2005 On the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Green March, King Mohammed VI announces that a plan to grant autonomy to Western Sahara within Moroccan sovereignty, is under preparation.
- 25 March 2006: King Mohammed VI, visiting Laayoune, revitalizes the the Royal Consultative Council of Saharan Affairs (CORCAS) by including among its 140 members tribal notables, women and representatives of civil societies. Among the tasks of CORCAS is to make proposals concerning the autonomy of Western Sahara.
- 19 April 2006: Latest report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (S/2006/249). The Secretary-General, among other things, endorses his Personal Envoy's recommendation for direct negotiations among the parties, to be held without preconditions. The negotiations should work out a compromise that will produce a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, providing for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The Council and its individual members States should do all in their power to help negotiations get off the ground.
- 28 April 2006: The Security Council in its resolution S/1675 (2006) reaffirms its commitment to assist the parties to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in the context of arrangements consistent with the principles and purpose of the Charter of the United Nations. Furthermore, the Council reiterates its call upon the parties and States of the region to continue to cooperate fully with the UN to end the current impasse and to achieve progress towards a political solution. Finally, the Council decides to extend the mandate of MINURSO until 30 October 2006.
- Oct. 2006 - Morocco calls a UN OHCHR report critical of its human rights record in Western Sahara as biased in favour of the POLISARIO Front.

- Dec. 2006 - The Moroccan backed advisory council on Western Sahara (CORCAS) proposes autonomy, burying the prospect of independence, dismissed by POLISARIO
- 5 March 2007 - Julian Harston, SRSG for Western Sahara, arrives in the mission area
- 10 April 2007 - POLISARIO submits its proposal to the United Nations.
- 11 April 2007 - Morocco submits its proposal to the United Nations.
- 30 April 2007 - The UN Security unanimously voting the Resolution 1754, calls on the parties to open direct talks, "in good faith and without preconditions". In the preamble of the Resolution, the Security expressed appreciation for the Moroccan proposals and took note of the POLISARIO document.
- 18-19 June 2007- UN-sponsored talks between Morocco and POLISARIO delegations begin in Manhasset (New York).
- mid- August - second UN-sponsored talks between Morocco and POLISARIO (planned).
- 10 -11 August 2007 - second UN-sponsored talks between Morocco and POLISARIO delegations begin in Manhasset (New York).
- 7-9 January 2008 – third UN-sponsored talks between Morocco and POLISARIO delegations begin in Manhasset (New York).
- 16-18 March 2008 - fourth UN-sponsored talks between Morocco and POLISARIO delegations begin in Manhasset (New York)
- 21 August 2008 – Peter van Walsum, Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, ends his tour of duty.
- 7 January 2009- Christopher Ross is appointed Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara.
- 25-27 February 2009 – Christopher Ross visits the region (Rabat, Tindouf, Algiers), Spain and France.
- 28 February 2009 - Julian Harston, SRSG for Western Sahara, ends his tour of duty, Maj.General Jiming Zhao (China) is appointed OIC of MINURSO.
- 24-30 June 2009 - Christopher Ross visits the region (Algiers, Tindouf, Nouakchott, Rabat) and Spain.