

The Truth about the Polisario

- The Polisario Front - the separatist movement fighting for independence for the Western Sahara - represents itself as the “sole legitimate representative” of the Sahrawi people and claims to best represent their rights and interests. The truth is that the Polisario violates the human rights of Sahrawi refugees living in camps under its control and has made little effort to achieve a compromise political solution that would end their plight.
- The Polisario operates as a one-party dictatorship under the rule of a small cadre of political leaders who have been in power for over 40 years. The previous Secretary-General of the movement, [Mohamed Abdelaziz](#), served in the position for nearly 40 years before his death in 2016. His successor is unlikely to bring dramatic changes in governance -- independent political parties, associations, and civil society groups are [forbidden](#) in the camps, and Sahrawis under Polisario Front control there are denied the most basic rights.
 - Freedom of expression is non-existent in the camps – the Polisario suppresses any form of dissent, labeling defectors and dissidents as pro-Morocco traitors.
 - Freedom of movement is [restricted](#) -- the Polisario and/or Algerian military maintain checkpoints at roadways leading to, from, and in between the camps.
 - The Polisario has consistently refused to allow the UN to conduct a census to better identify types and levels relief assistance to the refugees. Instead, eyewitnesses [report](#) that the Polisario routinely diverts food aid intended for the camp populations, selling it on the black market.
- The Polisario has consistently hindered efforts to promote durable solutions to the refugee crisis, [refusing](#) to allow the UN to conduct a census and register the refugees or conduct a voluntary repatriation program for those who wish to return to their homes and families in Morocco.
- Since 2004, when the Security Council acknowledged that conducting a referendum was unworkable and called for negotiating a mutually acceptable political solution, the Polisario Front has [rejected every proposal](#) that does not follow its mistaken claim that independence is the only expression of self-determination for the territory.
- To date, the Polisario Front has not offered any kind of compromise. Moreover, it refuses to negotiate on the basis of Morocco’s compromise autonomy plan, presented in 2007 and widely accepted by the [US](#) and much of the international community as a “serious, credible, and realistic proposal to provide real autonomy for the Western Sahara.” As a result of the Polisario’s intransigence, four formal rounds and nine informal rounds of negotiations have [failed](#) to resolve the Western Sahara conflict.
- Instead, the Polisario Front has repeatedly resorted to [public threats of war](#), stating that the continued stalemate leaves it with no other option but a return to armed conflict in order to achieve its aims of independence.

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