

The Truth About the Polisario: Obstacle to Resolving the Western Sahara Conflict

- Throughout the decades-long conflict over the Western Sahara, the Polisario Front has proven that they are not interested resolving the dispute.¹ Rather than negotiating the compromise political solution urged by the United Nations, they maintain a hard-line position, and resort to violent rhetoric.
- The Polisario Front consistently undermines the efforts of the United Nations Mission for a Referendum in the Western Sahara (MINURSO), insisting that voter registration for a referendum be based exclusively on an out-of-date census conducted in 1974. They rejected more inclusive proposals for voter registration based on Sahrawi tribal membership, as well as another based on the actual population of the disputed territory.²
- 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 their own mistaken claim that views independence as the only expression of self-determination for the territory.³
- To date, the Polisario Front has not offered any kind of alternative plan or compromise.⁴ Moreover, they refuse 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."⁵
- Instead, the Polisario Front has repeatedly resorted to public threats of war, warning repeatedly that, "we will take up arms to liberate our territory."⁶
- 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.⁷
- Despite the clear lack of results, Secretary-General Mohamed Abdelaziz and the Polisario Front leadership have remained in power for 37 years.⁸

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¹ Claude Moniquet, "The Polisario Front: Credible Negotiations Partner of After Effect of the Cold War and Obstacle to a Political Solution in Western Sahara." *European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center*, November 2005

² Erik Jensen, *Western Sahara: Anatomy of a Stalemate?* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2012).

³ Moniquet.

⁴ Jensen.

⁵ "Western Sahara Initiative," *United States Department of State*, April 11, 2007, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2007/apr/82882.htm>.

Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Remarks with Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs Saad-Eddine Al-Othmani After Their Meeting" (remarks, Rabat, Morocco, February 26, 2012), <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2012/02/184667.htm>.

⁶ "Polisario chief warns of armed struggle," *Agence France Presse*, May 11, 2013, http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hLLnJChABRhgbyEU1Fypu5vsk_w?docId=CNG.481ac8aab6040095cc700e62c5d22c1b.731.

⁷ Alexis Arieff, "Western Sahara," *Congressional Research Service* (April 14, 2013), <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS20962.pdf>

⁸ "Western Sahara Profile," *BBC News*, April 18, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14115273>.