

*Algeria - Angola – Botswana - Cuba - Mozambique - Namibia –Nicaragua
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**GENERAL DEBATE AGENDA ITEM 2
ORAL UPDATE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S ANNUAL REPORT**

43RD SESSION OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

27 / 02 / 2020

Madame President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of a cross-regional group of states*.

The obstruction of the referendum in Western Sahara is the real cause of the ongoing systematic and serious violations of human rights and continuous breaches of International Humanitarian Law in Western Sahara. It should be recalled that the Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights considers the denial of the right of self-determination a violation of human rights and underlines the importance of the effective realisation of this right.

Since the 2010 mass protest of Gdeim Izik, hundreds of international observers, parliamentarians, jurists, human rights defenders and journalists have been expelled or deported by the Occupying Power from the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara, about which the world is ignorant and silent.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in October 2015 and the Human Rights Committee in November 2016 expressed their concern about the failure to find a solution to the issue of the right to self-determination of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara.

Since then, the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of the Judiciary has publicly declared that “the Government of Morocco has not been able to ensure a programme of work in accordance with the needs of the mandate and the terms of reference for country visits by special procedures”. The Committee Against Torture and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention dealt with several complaints lodged by Sahrawi human rights defenders.

In its Opinion 23/2019 concerning a Sahrawi journalist the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found that he was targeted for his association with the movement for self-determination in Western Sahara, and recalled its previous opinions in which it found similar discriminatory practices used against Sahrawis.

Madame President,

In the context of the illegal military occupation of Western Sahara, we express our deep concern about the malicious campaign concerning alleged human rights violations in the refugee camps administered by the Polisario Front.

While the Occupying Power is preventing the OHCHR from pursuing the technical mission initiated in 2015 in the Occupied Territory, the Polisario Front calls on the High-Commissioner to resume the mission in the liberated area of the Non-Self-Governing Territory and in the refugee camps, which will allow the Office to confirm the reality of the human rights situation there.

Madame President,

We strongly encourage the OHCHR to enhance cooperation with the Polisario Front, including through a visit to the liberated area of Western Sahara and the refugee camps¹; through implementation of a specific programme as requested by the General Assembly in Resolution 74/95; and through implementation of the commitments made by the Office at the first World Humanitarian Summit held in Istanbul in 2016.

We call upon the High-Commissioner to present the findings from such engagements in her Oral Update at the 44th session.

I thank you.

¹ PP20 of S/RES/2019/2494 (30-10-2019) reads “*Strongly encouraging* enhancing cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), including through facilitating visits to the region,”