



Children playing at sunset in Aousserd refugee camp, southwest Algeria. ©Tineke D'Haese/Oxfam

# 40 YEARS OF EXILE

Have the Sahrawi refugees been abandoned by the international community?

Forty years after the Sahrawi refugee crisis began the social pressure on the men and women who live in these camps and the problems concerning their humanitarian situation are becoming ever more unbearable. The refugees have reached an impasse in regards to the status quo. Today, their voices must be heard. In order to bring about a definitive resolution to the crisis, the international community must increase its efforts to ensure dignified lives for these people and to see that international law is respected.

# SUMMARY

Sahrawi refugees are forced to live in very insecure humanitarian conditions. This situation in and of itself is a source of serious concern. It is, however, the exceptionally long duration of this crisis and the total lack of any prospects which is making this situation all the more unbearable for the men and women living in the Sahrawi refugee camps.

The Sahrawi refugees – especially the young – are desperate to take control of their own lives. Even if they are particularly well informed and well educated, their options are severely limited. The frustration which stems from this is exacerbated by the sheer uncertainty of what their future holds. The words of young Sahrawis are growing sharper, and their views more critical, faced with an international community they consider incapable of ensuring that their rights will be respected. The majority we have spoken to are openly questioning whether their cause would not make more progress if they took up arms once again.

Much of the responsibility for reaching a just and lasting resolution lies with the parties of the conflict, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Polisario Front. However, in view of the two parties' inability to find such a solution, the cards are now in the hands of the international community, in particular the United Nations (UN) and the member states of the UN Security Council. Today, these bodies must demonstrate to the Sahrawi refugees that they are fully engaged in defending their rights.

This report calls attention to the responsibility of the international community. The Security Council and members of the Group of Friends must do more to foster conditions conducive to bringing the decolonization process to an end and finding a solution to the conflict, in accordance with international law. They must also persuade the parties in the conflict to make changes to their positions, which are currently irreconcilable. Only a solution such as this can put an end to the refugee crisis and strengthen stability in the region.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Current and future donors must:**

- Provide funding for the humanitarian response to meet the level of needs outlined by UN agencies and International NGOs in cooperation with the refugees' authorities, as well as for programmes aiming to respond to additional needs due to the prolonged nature of the crisis, particularly for the youth.
- Make sure that funding mechanisms are multiannual and flexible, taking into account the prolonged and protracted nature of the refugee crisis. This will enable implementing agencies to respond more efficiently to the needs of the refugees and adjust interventions according to the evolving situation.

## **The UN Security Council must:**

- Give new momentum to the negotiation process to overcome the deadlock, publically recognizing that the status quo is not an option. This momentum must lead to an understanding on the substance of a potential solution, as well as on the means of achieving self-determination for the people of Western Sahara.
- Demonstrate the political will to reach a lasting solution that is in accordance with international law. The actions of the members of the UN Security Council must be steered by the commitments made to the Sahrawi people and their prosperity, rather than the national interests of the member states.
- Complement the UN Security Council's private consultations with public briefing sessions, at least once a year. These meetings must feature presentations from the personal envoy and the special representative of the Secretary-General.
- Reaffirm the role and the mandate of the MINURSO, making sure it can fulfil the standard functions of peacekeeping, which include monitoring, evaluation and reporting on local developments which affect the situation in Western Sahara and the refugee camps in southwest Algeria. This involves appointing personnel responsible for civil affairs to the MINURSO to work systematically and directly with the communities concerned.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Though ongoing since 1963, the process of decolonization of Western Sahara has yet to be completed. That same year, it was added to the United Nations (UN) list of non-self governing territories. It was only in 1975 that Western Sahara saw the departure of their colonizer, Spain. But, as they left the country, Madrid ceded control of the Territory to Morocco and Mauritania.

The arrival of these two nations claiming sovereignty over the Territory triggered an armed conflict with the Polisario Front, a liberation movement that the UN has considered the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people since 1979.<sup>1</sup> This conflict marked the beginning of the refugee crisis.



In Smara refugee camp, in southwest Algeria. © Eric de Mildt/Oxfam

Following the withdrawal of Spain and the arrival of the warring parties, the Polisario Front declared the creation of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) on 27 February 1976.<sup>2</sup> Beginning in 1975, the war only ended in 1991 following an agreement between the Polisario Front and Morocco, which was brokered by the UN. Mauritania had already withdrawn from the Territory in 1979. On the basis of this agreement, the UN Security Council set up the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) in 1991, with the aim of monitoring the ceasefire and organizing a referendum.

Ever since the UN established MINURSO and declared a future referendum on self-determination, Sahrawi families in the refugee camps still prepare and keep a suitcase for 'the return journey'. For them, this deadline signified a return home in the near future. But to this day, no referendum has yet taken place. Without renewed commitment from the international community, this referendum is highly unlikely to happen.

At the end of April 2015, the UN Security Council will address, as they do every year, the issue of Western Sahara, and in particular the renewal of

the MINURSO mandate. The members of the Security Council, in particular the members of the Group of Friends of Western Sahara (the United States, France, Spain, the United Kingdom and Russia) must remember their commitments to the Sahrawi people. These same key players must assume their responsibilities with respect to honouring international law and defending peace and international security.

The humanitarian situation within the camps is precarious, and feelings of anger and frustration, especially amongst young people, are growing in the face of the international community's inaction. It is all the more vital that the latter respects its commitments as the Sahara-Sahel zone is threatened by instability, the ready availability of firearms and surrounding conflicts.

Oxfam has worked in the Sahrawi refugee camps since the 1970s. Over the past four decades, the organization has observed the ways in which the refugees face the extreme conditions and the isolation imposed upon them by the Sahara desert. Although other communities have also been affected by the conflict and its consequences, this report is focused on the refugee population with whom Oxfam works daily, and who pay a very heavy price for the status quo. The report is based on studies and interviews with organizations and individuals from Sahrawi civil society and UN agencies in the camps between January and April 2015.

*The comments and opinions expressed by the persons cited in this report do not necessarily reflect Oxfam's positions.*

## 2 REFUGEES FOR 40 YEARS

Caught in the crossfire from the start of the hostilities, the first Sahrawi families began to flee to southwest Algeria in October 1975, in the hope of one day returning to their homes. By the beginning of 1976, the Algerian government was hosting around 165,000<sup>3</sup> Sahrawis in refugee camps near the town of Tindouf. Following the self-proclamation of the SADR by the Polisario Front in 1976, Algeria ceded de facto administration of the camps to them.<sup>4</sup> A decade later, in the absence of a solution to the Sahrawi crisis, Algeria sought support from the international community to help protect and assist the refugees. Since then, the UN has provided humanitarian aid to refugees in the camps, in collaboration with numerous local and international NGOs.

### Structure of the Sahrawi refugee camps

#### Geographic situation

The camps are spread out over an area of 6,000km<sup>2</sup> – the size of a French department or a Spanish province – in the Algerian southwest. Each camp bears the name of a key town in Western Sahara. They are situated between 30 to 180kms away from the Algerian town of Tindouf.

#### Administrative structure

The Sahrawi refugees are divided into five camps, or *wilayas*: Aousserd, Boujdour, Dakhla, Laâyoune and Smara. In addition to these five locations, there is the 'administrative and political capital' Rabouni, where the different institutions for the Sahrawi refugees' authorities are located. The *wilayas* are divided up further for administrative purposes and comprise of 29 districts or *daïras* as well as 116 neighbourhoods or *barrios*.



The oversight of the *dairas* and *barrios* is carried out by officials elected in popular elections by the inhabitants of each *daira* or *barrio*. In turn, each *wilaya* is led by a governor nominated by the president of the self-proclaimed SADR, who is himself elected by local delegates at the Congress of the Polisario Front.

In spite of the traditionally nomadic nature of Sahrawi society, following the armed conflict, refugees were forced to settle in an arid desert environment, where opportunities to be self-sufficient are all but non-existent. The extreme heat – up to 55 degrees Celsius in July and August – the sandstorms, the constant drought and the rare but devastating torrential rains are just a few examples of how hostile the environment in this part of the Sahara desert is.

# 3 A FRAGILE HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT

## A prolonged crisis

Over the years, the Sahrawi crisis has progressively developed, advancing from an ‘emergency’ humanitarian situation to a ‘prolonged crisis’ – masking a reality that is both fragile and complex. Sahrawi refugees have managed to survive for the last 40 years thanks to the help of the international community and their own well-organized internal structures. As such, the authorities established within the refugee camps have been able to set up a number of basic services. There are at present 49 nursery, primary and middle schools, and several training centres. In 2013, there were almost 27 clinics, one central hospital and four regional hospitals. However, these basic services face a severe lack of human and financial resources.



Alinday Deh, 33 years old, Sahrawi refugee.

*‘We have suffered the cold, the heat, the sandstorms, and yet we are still here. 40 years on, there are still just as many refugees, we still live like animals. This is not a place to call home – this is a hostile land.’*



At a health centre in Aousserd refugee camp. © Eric de Mildt/Oxfam

Remittances and the development of a micro-economy through the gradual emergence of private socio-professional initiatives – mainly small stalls – have progressively changed the landscape of the camps. Some of the population have been able to acquire new material goods, such as mobile telephones, televisions, solar panels or gas fridges. It should be pointed out that only a minority of the refugees have access to all of this new technology, and electricity is only available in one of the five camps.

In spite of this, the refugee population continues to live in the most inhospitable environmental conditions. The humanitarian situation they face is becoming more unstable and is at risk of deteriorating further, as

a direct result of the continuation of the conflict. Having the same food basket of dried produce to eat over the course of many years has serious consequences on physical as well as psychological health. Combined with the lack of future prospects, this situation has all the ingredients required for a dangerous and potentially explosive cocktail.

## A vulnerable food situation

Since it began its intervention in 1986,<sup>5</sup> the World Food Programme (WFP) has been distributing nearly the same basket of dried goods every month – normally composed of nine commodities, it has been reduced to seven since January 2015 due to a reduction in the available funds. The items include oil, sugar, lentils, rice, soya, wheat and flour. In terms of calories, the package meets the international standard of 2,100kcal. This leads many observers to conclude that the situation is acceptable. But the amount of calories cannot be the only criterion: in theory, this figure could be met by including even just two products, but that would not then be considered a balanced food basket. The problem of diversification is therefore still an on-going issue, most notably in terms of vitamin intake.

Over the years, the international community has supplemented this monthly dried food basket by distributing the equivalent of 3kgs of fresh produce (fruits and vegetables) a month. While this is a significant step forward, the recommendation of the World Health Organization (WHO) for a healthy diet is 12kg a month,<sup>6</sup> not including tubers, which is not the case with the 3kgs per month distributed at the moment.

In the end, some essential nutritional requirements are still lacking. For example, monthly distributions of animal proteins – provided via supplies of tinned mackerel – were stopped in 2015 for economic reasons.



Oxfam distributes fresh produce (fruit and vegetables) in Smara refugee camp. © Eric de Mildt/Oxfam

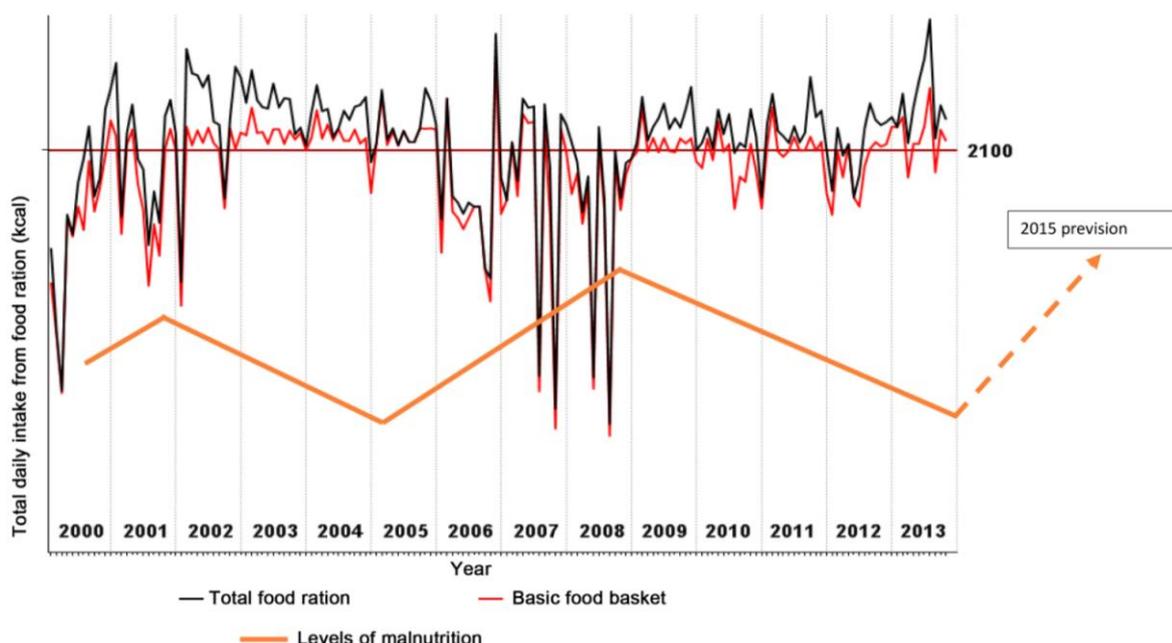
The lack of food variety over a period of many years has negative consequences on populations' food security and nutritional status. According to a study by the WFP, 7.6 percent of children under the age of five and females of child-bearing age (between 15-49 years of age) suffer from acute malnutrition. Health issues such as hypertension and diabetes are also very common.<sup>7</sup> The numbers of those suffering from anaemia and impeded growth – the main health problems in the camps for many years – are growing at an alarming rate. In 2015, levels of anaemia amongst women reached almost 60 percent.<sup>8</sup> For Sahrawi children, the high level of anaemia is a problem from birth. According to UNICEF, 20-30 percent of children in the camps experience poor growth, which leads to an underdevelopment of the brain that is impossible to recover.



Aichatu Wadadi, nutritionist

*'Among the most common illnesses here are anaemia, diabetes, blood pressure disorders. When we examine all these illnesses, we realise that they are linked to diet. A balanced diet would mean better state of health.'*

For the majority of the refugee population, supplementing these food baskets with their own personal savings is a massive challenge. Although a budding local economy has developed over the course of the last few years, it remains largely inadequate. In this isolated part of the desert, supply and buying power are still extremely limited. One of the only solutions to the deficiency in vitamin intake is the development of kitchen gardens amongst families, which also offers an opportunity to overcome the limits of the local economy. But the extreme environment and the lack of agricultural practices amongst these traditionally nomadic people make it difficult to carry out these initiatives that nevertheless would have enormous potential.



This graph shows the link between shortages in the basket distributed monthly and malnutrition. The line marked 'total food ration' corresponds to the WFP's dried goods basket and the fresh food supplement.

## Children – the first victims



Children in a class for 7-8-year-olds in a primary school in Aousserd refugee camp. © Tineke D'Haese/Oxfam

Last September, the children in the refugee camps went back to school after the summer break– 32,028 returned to primary and middle school (up to the age of 16)<sup>9</sup> and 6,990 to nursery school. Literacy rates in the camps are remarkably high, but there are nevertheless a number of obstacles that get in the way of a high-quality education.

First of all, because there are not enough schools, the number of over-enrolled classes is increasing. There is a shortage of basic equipment and electricity is not available in the vast majority of schools. There is one toilet per 100 students, whereas the international standard set by UNICEF is one toilet for every 50 pupils. Inadequate hygiene and lack of drinking water in schools also give major cause for concern.<sup>10</sup>

## Water – essential but scarce

The groundwater tables present in the region where the camps are situated provide enough for the entire Sahrawi refugee population.<sup>11</sup> Currently, it is estimated there are nine wells in Laâyoune, two in Smara and two in Dakhla.

The main problem with this subterranean water is its high level of salinity. The water also contains high levels of fluoride and nitrates that are well above<sup>12</sup> the standards set by the WHO.<sup>13</sup> So if this water is of a high quality on a bacteriological level, it is exactly the opposite at a physical chemistry level. Today, this water is increasingly being treated by organizations specializing in water and sanitation.

In the absence of a system for piping water, tanks (80 percent of which are metal) are used for water storage. According to the WFP and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), four in ten metal tanks render the water they contain unfit for consumption. According to the same estimations, 62 percent of the population in the camps are drinking



Ghalia Mahfud, principal of a primary school in Aousserd refugee camp.

*'There is lots of sand inside the schools, the outer windows don't have any glass – this leads to problems with asthma for some children. And the roofs are badly insulated – when it rains in winter, water trickles onto the exercise books. When there is a sandstorm, it just whips through, we cannot do any work.'*

water at risk of contamination, due in particular to the poor conditions of the tanks. The direct consequences of this situation are evident from the rise in infectious disease, which is currently a major concern for matters of public health.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, the required minimum level of 20 litres per person per day is not always guaranteed in the Sahrawi camps. In 2015 the UNHCR has reported only 15 litres per person per day.<sup>15</sup> By comparison, in the United States, daily consumption could reach 380 litres.<sup>16</sup>

## A worrying lack of funding

After a steady and continual decrease in funding over the last few years, 2015 presents a real challenge. Humanitarian workers have estimated the cost of humanitarian needs to be \$37m, besides the basic food baskets distributed by the WFP. By November 2014, 75 percent of the needs identified – worth \$28m – were not yet accounted for.



Oranges distributed by Oxfam in Boujdour refugee camp. ©Tineke D'Haese/Oxfam

In February 2015, several UN agencies, including the WFP, called for donors to continue supporting their response to the food situation facing the refugees. Since 2012, the WFP's funding has dropped steadily, falling from \$21m in 2012 to \$15m in 2015, according to WFP predictions. The lack of funding for the second half of 2015 is extremely worrying: the agency estimates that it would require at least \$6.5m extra just to be able to meet the basic needs up until the end of the year, and nearly \$8m to be able to pay for the full food ration of nine commodities. According to the WFP's deputy director for Algeria, 'the prolonged deficit in the food aid budget poses a major threat to the refugees' way of life'. This deficit could have 'a serious impact on the food security of the refugees, with unforeseeable political and security consequences'.<sup>17</sup>

While certain donors, such as the UNHCR and the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), have managed to balance their allocations for the time being, the general tendency towards decreasing funds is extremely alarming. From 2012 to 2014, bilateral contributions dropped from €5.2m to €3.57m, which represents a reduction of 31 percent (42 percent for food aid).<sup>18</sup> In the space of six years, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo, or AECID) – one of the primary donors for the camps – saw its budget drop from €10m in 2010 to €4.7m in 2015.

Another obstacle is the approach of primary donors of Sahrawi refugees. In fact, with only a few exceptions, the great majority of donors continue to see the state of affairs in the camps solely as an emergency situation. Therefore the funding made available by donors is exclusively to fund humanitarian and short-term projects.

Yet this approach is too simplistic within the framework of a prolonged crisis such as this. Humanitarian actors struggle nowadays not just to mobilize donors to fund humanitarian projects, but also to secure the finances for projects that deal with new problems emerging in the camps, particularly in response to the expectations of young people who want to take control of their own lives. A broader perspective of the situation, from donors and from humanitarian organizations, would mean a better response to the reality of the situation in the Sahrawi camps. That being said, this vision alone would not be enough to put an end to dependence on humanitarian aid. That will instead require a lasting solution, and one that abides by international law.

## Growing Moringa: extraordinary trees in the middle of the desert

In spite of the challenging context, it is important that the local population can take control of their own lives. Some NGOs have launched pilot projects for growing fresh produce locally. This is particularly evident in the production of Moringa – a plant with exceptional nutritional properties that also stands out for its ability to endure the extreme environment of the Sahara.

According to Wadad Iemrabet, an agronomist and local Oxfam officer responsible for setting up the Dakhla Moringa project, *'Cultivating the land is not part of Sahrawi tradition. Here in the desert, when we see a tree, it is a rarity. By educating people, we show them that they can grow trees themselves. It's important for us as refugees to learn how to work the land and produce something of our own.'*



Fatma Mohamed Bachir (photo) was given two Moringa trees in 2013 as part of this project, which benefits her family of six:

*'I take the biggest leaves, I wash them, and once they have dried, I crush them into a very fine powder. This powder is put into a soup at the last minute – that means we can give it to the whole family. It helps combat against anaemia, which many people suffer from here. In the beginning, I used to think that this project was not going to work, given the extreme temperatures, the wind, the sun, the sand. But today, a tree has well and truly sprung up from the ground!'*

# 4 YOUTH WITHOUT A FUTURE

## Conscious of the world that surrounds them

Forty years after the arrival of the first refugees, Sahrawi demography has slowly changed. Today, roughly 60 percent of refugees are young people.<sup>19</sup> They have heard their parents' and grandparents' stories about the time of Spanish colonization and about the armed conflict time and again, but their reality is totally different.

From childhood, the vast majority of young Sahrawis have been exposed in one way or another to the 'outside world'. For example, the programme Holidays in Peace<sup>20</sup> has given children aged between 8 and 12 years old an opportunity to spend a summer with host families, particularly in Europe (Spain). Subsequently, some of the Sahrawi youth have had the chance to receive a secondary and higher education abroad. However, as with the Holidays in Peace programme, momentum in this area has slowed as a result of the economic crisis in Europe.

Along with these travels, there is also the fairly recent development of access to television and the internet. Access to these resources does exist within the camps, even though it remains limited. The amount of information that is available to part of the population has therefore reached a level never before seen. Thanks to social media sites, the internet is as much a hub for information as it is for expression.

For Sahrawis keen to take back control of their lives, this also provides a new source of information for discussions and debates to accompany the tea ritual. They pay particular attention to their situation at international level, to the positioning of the UN and any potential impact on the decolonization process and the resolution of the conflict.



Ladiba Lehcene Ahmada, mother to Said et Sidahmed

*'With the holiday abroad programme and the increasing number of exchanges, young people see more and more of what goes on elsewhere, but the gulf between that and their own situation grows wider, which leads to a lack of understanding. Making comparisons with the outside world only causes pain and hurt. It's a world apart.'*



At a viewpoint above Laayoune refugee camp. ©Tineke D'Haese/Oxfam

## Qualified, motivated, unemployed

According to estimates, between 500 and 700 young Sahrawis graduate from high school and university every year. Those who have studied medicine or teaching have a better chance of finding work in the camps, though they would receive a minimal salary. Other graduates, whether they are engineers, political scientists or architects, are forced to look for other jobs as they are not able to use their qualifications in the camps.

If the number of small businesses has multiplied in the last few years, it is because they are nothing more – according to their managers – than a way of keeping busy and coping with the lack of prospects. The remaining options are very limited: a post within an international NGO, a civil service position, joining the army of the self-proclaimed SADR or the haunting spectre of the black market.

Given the lack of professional prospects, a considerable number of young male graduates do decide to join the army each year. It is, in fact, the only sector that has the capacity to take on a significant proportion of these unemployed youths. For its part, the black market has largely been developed in the camps over the past few years, dealing mainly in petrol, cigarettes or ‘new consumer goods’, such as mobile telephones.

## Frustration and anger amongst young people

The frustration at the socio-economic situation within the camps grows all the more when faced with the struggle to understand the status quo at the international level – from which the UN cannot seem to emerge.

The patience of many young Sahrawis is wearing thin. Their words grow sharper, their views more critical. Their society now struggles to convince them of the validity of a peaceful approach, as favoured by the international community and the leaders of the Polisario Front since 1991. This has been evidenced within the camps by the Sahrawis themselves, who have continued to assert their rights *de manière citoyenne* up until now.

Yet at the close of the last national congress for the Union of Sahrawi Students, held in August 2014, there were calls for young people to join the national army and reconsider the option of armed combat– an appeal that caused a real shockwave.

According to the head of the camps’ police force, these increasingly violent words are manifesting themselves through the rise of trends that have not previously been seen in Sahrawi society: petty delinquency, illicit alcohol shops or drug use (mainly hashish). While the scale of these phenomena is still fairly minimal for now, he believes that they reveal ‘an increasing weariness amongst a generation of young people who see no substantial changes in their future.’



Fahda Bachir Mohamed, 27 years old

*‘I was born here and for my entire life, I have relied on foreign humanitarian aid. During middle/high school, I got the chance to study in Algeria and go to university, where I studied political sciences. But in any case, whether you study or not, there are no prospects, no work. All this knowledge, and we cannot do anything with it.’*

## Mobilized for change

Organizations such as the UJSARIO (the Sahrawi Youth Union), the UESARIO (Sahrawi Students' Union) or the UNMS (National Union of Sahrawi Women) are some of the pillars of Sahrawi civil society. With each day that passes, they increase in importance within the camps. They aim to create a space for dialogue, to develop awareness-raising activities, to provide training and to create regional networks.

The last decade has seen an increase in the number of initiatives among young Sahrawis. These projects all deal with issues like the promotion of the 'Sahrawi cause' in their pursuit for the right to self-determination, active citizenship, or bringing relief to the everyday suffering of the refugees.

The number of social support initiatives has similarly increased: assistance to the elderly, support for those with disabilities, raising awareness amongst women on the harmful effects of certain practices (the use of products to whiten skin, for instance). The platform *Gritos contra el muro marroquí* (Cries against the Moroccan wall) highlights the role of Sahrawi youth in the non-violent struggle to find a political solution to the conflict. The group Active non-violence, known as Nova (see below), one of the more recently established youth associations, seeks to maintain and promote non-violence within Sahrawi society.

Such initiatives offer these youths a chance to express themselves and encourage them to do something about their current existence. But for how long will this be enough?



Mahjub Udu, 22 years old

*'Anger is growing here as we see what's happening at the international level. Here, there is physical suffering, poor living conditions, and the uncertainty of not knowing whether we will one day be able to regain our land. And this suffering is immeasurable. All young Sahrawis are ready to go to war for the Sahrawi cause.'*

## Nova: a youth organization for the promotion of non-violence



Abida Mohammed Buzaid (right) – a young woman of 28 from Boujdour refugee camp who lives with her parents, her two brothers and her two sisters – was elected as president of the youth organization Nova in 2014.

'Nova was formed in 2012 at a very tense time in the region: the Arab Spring had just taken place and was still on-going in certain areas, there was the war in Mali. Tensions were building here as well. Nova was therefore set up in response to a general lack of motivation amongst the youth, a kind of resignation caused by a sense of rebellion against the level of violence in the Territory and the lack of action from the international community.

'Our aim is to reflect and to act without resorting to confrontation. We consider ourselves to be one tool in a universal struggle, with an attitude of representativeness at youth level, and also as a tool for innovation (Nova). As such, we aim to find a just way to contribute to the cause of our people. More specifically, our objective is to promote non-violence in Sahrawi society whilst also appealing for the organization of a referendum, whatever the result (independence, integration with Morocco or autonomy), in accordance with international law.

'But there is very strong resistance within the community – it is very difficult to persuade anyone who believes in the war. Many young Sahrawis are on social media sites, saying, "I am a Sahrawi and I am preparing for war", or "I am a Sahrawi and I'm in favour of war".'

# 5 A VITAL POSITION FOR WOMEN



During an awareness-raising session on nutrition organized by the National Union of Sahrawi Women in Dakhla refugee camp. © Tineke D'Haese/Oxfam

In Sahrawi society, women traditionally play an important role in both the private and public spheres, a feature made evident by their role during the war for the Territory of Western Sahara – whilst men took part in armed combat, it was primarily women who established and organized the refugee camps. This historical factor has had direct repercussions on how public life is managed locally: today, all of the barrio leaders are women.

Nevertheless, the role of women in public life still involves many challenges. In order to face up to this, women have been organizing and mobilizing themselves for many years. Indeed, the struggles of these women have led to a number of achievements, both on a legal level as well as in daily practices. A quota stipulating the minimum of 25 per cent female representation in the Parliament of the self-proclaimed SADR has also been adopted. This now means that women are represented in the political sphere, with 16 female members of parliament out of a total of 53 (30 percent), and the same proportion of female leaders at daïra level (7 out of 29).

Nevertheless, Fatma Mahdi Hassam, president of the National Union of Sahrawi Women (UNMS), claims that ‘the weight of tradition is still strong. More and more women have access to secondary education, they have a presence in numerous organizations within civil society, but they are less visible in the few socio-professional positions available.’ As a matter of fact, there are fewer women working in administrative posts, within the NGOs, or in small-scale private sector (stalls, taxis, etc.) This being so, they are often more active in grassroots programmes, whether it involves the distribution of aid (raising awareness, inspections), health (midwifery) or education.



Fatma Mahdi Hassam, president of the National Union of Sahrawi Women (l'UNMS)

*‘Male-female equality is a recognized right here. The problem is that women do not make the most of this right: they do not take part in elections, they do not want to vote, they do not add themselves to the electoral registers...’*

# 6 A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

## The last colony in Africa

The international community added Western Sahara to the UN list of non-self-governing territories under Chapter XI of the UN Charter in 1963. In this context, the Territory was placed under the responsibility of the UN, through an administering power, to monitor and guide the process of decolonization, in accordance with the principles of the UN. Today, Western Sahara remains the only territory of this status on the African continent.

Moreover, Western Sahara is a non-self-governing territory without an acting administering power.<sup>21</sup> According to the UN Charter, such a power must 'recognize the principle that the interests of the inhabitants of these territories are paramount' and accept 'as a sacred trust the obligation to promote to the utmost, within the system of international peace and security the well-being of the inhabitants'.<sup>22</sup>

Oxfam is concerned about the absence of an acting administering power. Without it, the international community has fewer opportunities to receive information and suggestions on the best way to ensure the well-being of the Sahrawi people.

## A status quo with endurance

The agreement proposed by the UN Secretary-General and the Organization of African Unity (the precursor to the African Union) between Morocco and the Polisario Front is clear. It is composed of settlement plans and an implementation plan. The parties agreed on a ceasefire and the organization of a referendum with a view to allowing the people of Western Sahara the opportunity to make a free choice on the future status of their Territory, thereby exercising their right to self-determination.<sup>23</sup> While the parties' perceptions concerning this referendum may have changed, they both continue to view it as the means of satisfying the prerequisites for self-determination.<sup>24</sup>

As such, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN and Head of MINURSO would have sole and exclusive responsibility for everything in connection with the referendum, its organisation and its management.<sup>25</sup> However, negotiations regarding the terms and conditions for this referendum soon turned out to be a source of contention. Identifying and registering voters, and the options to include in a referendum, became the focus of talks. Therefore, in 1997, the UN Secretary-General nominated a personal envoy to assist the Special Representative in negotiations.



Mohamed Lamin Sabut, 26 years old:

*'As a young Sahrawi, all I want from this life is personal freedom. Can you imagine 40 years in a refugee camp, 40 years of dietary problems...? We are fed up of it, enough is enough! It has to be said – there is only one colony left in Africa, and that is Western Sahara.'*

Since then, a succession of UN representatives have attempted to accomplish this mission under the auspices of the UN Security Council. However, the Security Council has systematically failed to provide a clear framework for political talks, especially with regards to so-called 'troubling problems'<sup>26</sup> and '[the parties'] unyielding adherence to mutually exclusive positions',<sup>27</sup> which are hindering progress towards the organization of a referendum on Western Sahara.

According to a former UN official involved in the negotiations between 1994 and 2004, the Security Council rarely seemed to take a firm approach with the parties involved in the conflict.<sup>28</sup> The language used by the Security Council was ambiguous, sometimes even contradictory. In fact, its members based their positions on fluctuating national or bilateral interests rather than systematically seeking a lasting solution in the interest of the communities involved.<sup>29</sup> Other personal envoys to the UN Secretary-General have made mention of facing similar challenges.<sup>30</sup>

This has marred the credibility of the UN Security Council on this issue and it has contributed to the on-going impasse.<sup>31</sup> The continuation of the impasse could bring about a security risk for the region as a whole.<sup>32</sup>

# 7 HOPE, AGAINST ALL ODDS



Children playing at sunset in Aousserd refugee camp, southwest Algeria ©Tineke D'Haese/Oxfam

Neither the extreme humanitarian situation nor the growing frustration in the face of the status quo have succeeded in dispelling the refugees' ultimate hope of one day being able to return 'home'.

Nevertheless, there is a slight difference between generations. For the younger generation, they can imagine a return, but not likely in the near future given the complexity of the political issues. The older generation, on the contrary, have always held onto the hope that the next day would bring good news.

There are many families where the elderly still listen constantly to the radio, hoping for some announcement, some progress, or even just a step forward in the peace process.

Humanitarian agencies also notice that older beneficiaries are wary of interventions that could be seen as anchoring their presence in the camps. Thus when humanitarian agencies want to implement activities that promote resilience, no matter how essential they may be within the context of a prolonged crisis, such measures may be negatively perceived, as though they are a 'indicator' that a return will not happen.

Alexander Therry, Oxfam's regional coordinator, affirms this: 'In 2010, I spoke with an older lady, a beneficiary of one of our projects. This project consisted of improving building techniques in order to ensure living quarters were more resistant to bad weather (such as sandstorms, wind and rain). She told me that she didn't want to fix the zinc roof to the beams it sat on with wire. In actual fact, she didn't want to damage the sheet metal, because she wanted to be able to take it with her, intact, once it came to going back.'

Whether or not the vision of different generations focuses more or less on the long-term, hope itself is still deep-rooted in society and remains the source of every refugee's strength.



Mariam Mahfud Nujem, 31 years old:

*'For me, the 40-year mark is perhaps a breaking point – perhaps with this anniversary, things will start to happen. I always have hope that I will return home one day.'*

# 8 LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT OF THE CRISIS

## ‘The April lie’

The UN’s yearly examination of the Western Sahara situation falls in the month of April. As the years go by, Sahrawis are gradually losing all hope in this process, to the point where they now call it ‘La mentira de Avril’ (‘the April lie’).<sup>33</sup>

For years, negotiations were based on plans put forward by the UN,<sup>34</sup> until the international community took a step back in 2007 and handed that responsibility to the parties involved in the conflict. Based on recommendations made by the UN Secretary-General and his personal envoy, the UN Security Council asked the parties involved ‘to enter into negotiations without preconditions’.<sup>35</sup> This development marked a shift in the role of the UN towards that of facilitator and convenor of the negotiation proceedings.

Sahrawi refugees follow the negotiation process very closely and they are aware that informal meetings are all that have taken place since 2007. Since 2014, the personal envoy to the Secretary-General has struggled even to execute his proposed tactic of ‘shuttle diplomacy’ between the two parties. Whilst these informal meetings or endeavours at shuttle diplomacy might potentially be worthwhile, these strategies should not be any substitute for frank negotiations that closely examine the real issues, namely: the substance of a political solution that respects international law and the way in which the people of Western Sahara would exercise their right to self-determination. It should be pointed out that Washington, Madrid and Paris have all expressed their understanding of the need ‘to address both the substance of a political solution and the means of achieving self-determination’.<sup>36</sup>

The current trend of the negotiation process suggests that the international community is becoming continually and progressively less engaged in the search for a solution. This development is not reflective of the role and responsibilities of the UN, and in particular of the Security Council, in bringing about an end to the decolonization process and a resolution of the Western Sahara conflict. The UN, and particularly the Security Council, must therefore avoid maintaining ‘an outward show’ of a negotiation process.

## The Group of ‘Friends’ of Western Sahara

Historically, negotiations at the UN Security Council level have been dominated by the informal Group of Friends of Western Sahara, which was founded by the United States in 1993.<sup>37</sup> The group is comprised of



Ahmed Aam Mohamed Salem, 35 years old

*‘We have reached out our hand to the international community. But that hand is becoming heavy and tired. Our peaceful approach is not working. Will anyone take our hand in order to find a solution? Personally, I don’t really think so.’*

four permanent members of the Security Council (the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Russia) and Spain, given its historic links to the Territory.

In addition to discussions with neighbouring states, the personal envoy to the UN Secretary-General traditionally consults these five nations when planning new proposals or strategies to keep the dialogue between the parties in the conflict going. The group defines the content of the Security Council resolutions and determines the course of negotiations. As such, it has a direct impact on events on the ground. Yet the group and its members remain largely unknown to Sahrawi refugees.

In 2012, the Security Council requested that the situation in Western Sahara be examined twice a year from then on – a welcome development. But the UN Security Council only meets behind closed doors where Western Sahara is concerned.

Save for the annual report by the Secretary-General, local and international stakeholders have little or no access to any direct information. In spite of the laudable efforts made by the current personal envoy to the UN Secretary-General, particularly in meeting the people and the civil society groups within the refugee camps, those local stakeholders largely depend on media coverage and information received from their own authorities.

## Taking MINURSO seriously

2015 marks the mission's 24th anniversary. Whilst the ceasefire has generally been respected, there are no expectations as to the capacity of MINURSO to organize a referendum in the near future. However, MINURSO is still the most tangible expression of the international community's commitment to ensuring the people of Western Sahara exercise their right to self-determination.

In light of the growing frustration amongst the youth in the camps, the mission should be capable of establishing a dialogue with ordinary men and women, as well as civil society groups. In this context, it is important to note that Sahrawis of all persuasions in the Territory have expressed renewed frustration over what they see as 'the inadequate representation', or even 'the exclusion of indigenous Sahrawis', whether in the Territory or in the refugee camps, from the negotiations process.<sup>38</sup>

In the unstable region that is the Sahel-Saharan zone, the UN Security Council should be making the most of the advantages tied in with the presence of MINURSO, especially in increasing its capacity of working with local communities. No solution will be achievable or sustainable without the active engagement of the communities concerned.



Abida Mohammed Buzeid, 28 years old, president of Nova

*'Really? There is such a thing as a Group of Friends of Western Sahara? Why have they not come to see us?'*

# 9 RECOMMENDATIONS

Oxfam is alarmed by the international community's acceptance of the status quo. This situation is becoming more and more unbearable for the men and women confined to living their lives as refugees. The continuation of the current conditions could have a destabilizing effect in an already unstable region.

When Oxfam engages in dialogue with political leaders and decision-makers concerning the Sahrawi refugee crisis, nobody questions the role that the UN has to play in the quest for a solution that will end the deadlock. However, the UN lacks support from key players within the international community, in particular from the members of the Group of Friends of Western Sahara – the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Spain and Russia – as well as other members of the Security Council.

It is thus urgent that the negotiation process receives a boost in momentum, recognizing that the parties in the conflict are unable to reach an agreement alone. The international community must respect international law and ensure that the voices of the people involved find a place at the heart of such discussions.

## **Current and future donors must:**

- Provide funding for the humanitarian response to meet the level of needs outlined by UN agencies and International NGOs in cooperation with the refugees' authorities, as well as for programmes aiming to respond to additional needs due to the prolonged nature of the crisis, particularly for the youth.
- Make sure that funding mechanisms are multiannual and flexible, taking into account the prolonged and protracted nature of the refugee crisis. This will enable implementing agencies to respond more efficiently to the needs of the refugees and adjust interventions according to the evolving situation.

## **The UN Security Council must:**

- Give new momentum to the negotiation process to overcome the deadlock, publically recognizing that the status quo is not an option. This momentum must lead to an understanding on the substance of a potential solution, as well as on the means of achieving self-determination for the people of Western Sahara.
- Demonstrate the political will to reach a lasting solution that is in accordance with international law. The actions of the members of the Security Council must be steered by the commitments made to the Sahrawi people and their prosperity, rather than the national interests of the member states.

- Complement the UN Security Council's private consultations with public briefing sessions, at least once a year. These meetings must feature presentations from the personal envoy and the special representative of the Secretary-General.
- Consider the organization of Arria-Formula<sup>39</sup> meetings, during which Sahrawi men and women are invited to speak and give their opinion to the UN Security Council.
- Reaffirm the role and the mandate of the MINURSO, making sure it can fulfil the standard functions of peacekeeping, which include monitoring, evaluation and reporting on local developments which affect the situation in Western Sahara and the refugee camps in southwest Algeria. This involves appointing personnel responsible for civil affairs to the MINURSO to work systematically and directly with the communities concerned.
- Visit the camps as well as the Territory on a regular basis ahead of the discussions regarding MINURSO's mandate, so as to gain a better level of information for the decision-making process.

**The members of the Group of Friends of Western Sahara must:**

- Actively support the work of the personal envoy to the UN Secretary-General, especially in asking the parties in the conflict to make the difficult decisions required to resolve the conflict and ensure the well-being of the people of Western Sahara.
- Visit the refugee camps, individually or collectively. This will allow the group to rebuild trust amongst those concerned and take into account on real-life situations during negotiations.

**Other states must:**

- Actively look at options to support the work of the personal envoy to the UN Secretary-General and motivate the parties in the conflict to make the difficult decisions required to resolve the conflict and ensure the well-being of the people of Western Sahara.
- Travel to the region, especially to the Sahrawi refugee camps and the Territory of Western Sahara.

**The personal envoy and the special representative to the UN Secretary-General must:**

- Continue in their efforts to maintain a dialogue with civil society groups, in particular with women's groups and youth organizations, so as to ensure that their views are taken into consideration during discussions.

# NOTES

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, resolution adopted following the 75th plenary session of the Fourth Committee, 21st November 1979 [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/34/37&Lang=E&Area=RESOLUTION](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/34/37&Lang=E&Area=RESOLUTION) [Last checked April 5<sup>th</sup> 2015]

<sup>2</sup> The SADR is not recognised by the United Nations. However, it is recognised by the African Union, which has considered it as a member state since February 1982. The number of states who recognise the SADR – around 30, it is estimated – varies with different sources.

<sup>3</sup> As estimated by the Algerian government and the Polisario Front. There has never been a public, internationally recognised census.

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch, Off the Radar, Human Rights in the Sahrawi Refugee Camp, October 15th 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/algeria1014web.pdf> [Last checked 13th April 2015]

<sup>5</sup> World Food Programme, <https://www.wfp.org/countries/algeria/overview> [Last checked 13th April 2015].

<sup>6</sup> World Food Programme, *Stratégie mondiale pour l'alimentation, l'exercice physique et la santé* <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/fruits/fr/> [Last checked 7th April 2015]

<sup>7</sup> World Food Programme, *Nutrition Survey*, May 2013, page 7: "The overall prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM) was 7.6% (95% CI 6.4 – 8.8) ranging from 6% in Awserd to almost 11% in Laayoune." [http://www.vastsaharaaktionen.se/files/2012\\_nutrition\\_survey\\_report\\_final\\_eng.pdf](http://www.vastsaharaaktionen.se/files/2012_nutrition_survey_report_final_eng.pdf) [Last checked April 7th 2015]

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR, Information Session in Algiers organised by the WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF, 25th February 2015. Levels of anaemia in 2013 were at 50% for pregnant women and 36.4% for non-pregnant women. World Food Programme, *Nutrition Survey*, May 2013, page 7 and 8 [http://www.vastsaharaaktionen.se/files/2012\\_nutrition\\_survey\\_report\\_final\\_eng.pdf](http://www.vastsaharaaktionen.se/files/2012_nutrition_survey_report_final_eng.pdf) [Last visited 7th April 2015]

<sup>9</sup> Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP) in partnership with the Ministry of Education for the Sahrawi authorities. [Interview on March 18th 2015]

<sup>10</sup> World Food Programme and the UNHCR, *Joint Assessment Mission*, November 2013, page 34 <http://home.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp265783.pdf> [Last checked April 7th 2015]

<sup>11</sup> Solidaridad [Interview on March 17th 2015]

<sup>12</sup> Ingenieros de Minas. The level of fluoride in untreated water is 2.5mg/L. The level of nitrates according to this study was up to 150mg/ (page 13). <http://ingenierosdeminas.org/documentos/61213-abastecimientos-campamentos.pdf> [Last checked April 5th 2015]

<sup>13</sup> World Health Organisation, guidelines on fluoride: [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/dwg/chemicals/fluoride.pdf](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/dwg/chemicals/fluoride.pdf) Guidelines on nitrates: [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/dwg/chemicals/nitratenitrite2ndadd.pdf](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/dwg/chemicals/nitratenitrite2ndadd.pdf) [Last checked 7th April 2015]

<sup>14</sup> World Food Programme and UNHCR, *Joint Assessment Mission*, November 2013, page 30 <http://home.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp265783.pdf> [Last checked 7th April 2015]

<sup>15</sup> UNHCR, Information Session in Algiers organised by the WFP, the UNHCR and UNICEF, February 25th 2015.

<sup>16</sup> U.S Geological Survey's Water Science School, <http://water.usgs.gov/edu/qa-home-percapita.html> [Last checked March 30th 2015]

<sup>17</sup> World Food Programme, Information Session in Algiers organised by the WFP, the UNHCR and UNICEF, February 25th 2015. These comments came from a written document shared by the WFP with participants at this session.

<sup>18</sup> Sahrawi Red Crescent, Information Session organised in Algiers by the WFP, the UNHCR and UNICEF, February 25th 2015.

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR, *Une plus grande autonomie pour les réfugiés sahraouis*, January 30th 2014 <http://www.unhcr.fr/52ea7e31c.html> [Last checked March 26th 2015]

<sup>20</sup> In Spanish, "Vacaciones en paz". Five years ago, there were 10,000 children between the ages of 8-12 years old. There were only 5,000 during the summer of 2014 (4,500 in Spain, 500 in other European countries, as well as a small group in the United States). General Secretariat for Youth and Sports for the Sahrawi authorities and the Refugee Study Centre, *Protracted Sahrawi displacement – Challenges and opportunities beyond encampment*, University of Oxford, May 2011, page 25 <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4e03287b2.pdf> [Last checked April 5th 2015]

<sup>21</sup> On February 26th 1976, Spain informed the Secretary-General that it considered its presence in the territory as having ended from that date onward. Spain thought it necessary to affirm publicly that it considered itself de facto exempt of all international responsibility as regards the administration of the territory.

<sup>22</sup> United Nations, *United Nations Charter, Chapter XI – Declaration regarding non-self-governing territories*, article 73 <http://www.un.org/fr/documents/charter/chap11.shtml> [Last checked April 10th 2015]

<sup>23</sup> Secretary-General of the United Nations, Report S/21360, June 18th 1990, paragraph 1

<sup>24</sup> From the point of view of the Polisario Front, the parties must accept the possibility of there being several options as well as a referendum which presents these options to the people of Western Sahara before any decision can be made. Morocco believes that the current doctrine and practice of the UN allows for self-determination by means of negotiation and a confirmatory referendum – in this case, with regards to the kingdom's proposition for advanced autonomy. Secretary-General of the United Nations, Report, S/2012/197, April 5th 2012, paragraphs 100 and 101.

<sup>25</sup> Secretary-General of the United Nations, Report S/21360, June 18th 1990, paragraph 8

- 
- <sup>26</sup> Secretary-General of the United Nations, Report S/1998/849, September 11th 1998, paragraph 21  
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/1998/849&referer=http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/sgreports/1998.shtml&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/1998/849&referer=http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/sgreports/1998.shtml&Lang=E) [Last checked April 7th 2015]
- <sup>27</sup> Secretary-General of the United Nations, Report S/2013/220, April 8th 2013, paragraph 25  
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2013/220](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2013/220) [Last checked April 7th 2015]
- <sup>28</sup> United States Institute for Peace, Anna Theofilopoulou, *The United Nations and Western Sahara A Never-ending Affair*, July 2006, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr166.pdf> [Last checked March 23rd 2015]
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> Secretary-General of the United Nations, Report S/2006/249, April 19<sup>th</sup> 2006, paragraph 39. The personal envoy Peter van Walsum indicated that the consideration of bilateral relations between Security Council member states and Morocco and Algeria hindered finding a way out of the impasse: "It goes without saying that no country will state, or admit, that it favours a continuation of the impasse. But there seem to be two factors at play in most capitals: (a) Western Sahara is not high on the local political agenda; and (b) great store is set by continuing good relations with both Morocco and Algeria. These two factors combined constitute a powerful temptation to acquiesce to the continuation of the impasse, at least for another number of years."  
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2006/249](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2006/249) [Last checked April 24th 2015]
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>32</sup> Secretary-General of the United Nations, Report S/2013/220, April 8th 2013, paragraph 110 "The Western Sahara conflict has long been a matter of disunity within the international community, but the rise of instability and insecurity in and around the Sahel requires an urgent settlement of this long-standing dispute."  
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2013/220](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2013/220) [Last checked April 24th 2015]
- <sup>33</sup> "La mentira de abril" in Spanish
- <sup>34</sup> Secretary-General of the United Nations, Rapport S/2006/249 and S/2006/817 from April 19th 2006 and October 19th 2006 [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2006/249](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2006/249)  
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2006/817](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2006/817) [Last checked April 7th 2015]
- <sup>35</sup> United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1754 of April 30th 2007 [S/RES/1754]  
<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20S%20RES%201754.pdf> [Last checked April 7th 2015]
- <sup>36</sup> Secretary-General of the United Nations, Report S/2014/258, April 10th 2014, paragraph 25-26.  
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/258](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/258) [Last checked April 7th 2015]
- <sup>37</sup> United States Institute for Peace, Anna Theofilopoulou, *The United Nations and Western Sahara A Never-ending Affair*, July 2006, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr166.pdf> [Last checked March 23rd 2015]
- <sup>38</sup> Secretary-General of the United Nations, Report S/2014/258, April 10th 2014, paragraph 22
- <sup>39</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Working Methods Handbook*  
<http://www.un.org/en/sc/about/methods/bgarriformula.shtml> [Last checked April 3rd 2015]



© Oxfam International April 2015

This document was written by Baptiste Chapuis, Soazic Dupuy and Liesbeth Goossens.

Oxfam acknowledges the assistance of Alexander Therry, Jean-Patrick Perrin, Nicolas Vercken, Sally Chin, Eveline Rooijmans, Mariam Kemple, Manal Warde, Julie Theroux-Seguín, Paula San Pedro, Richard Stanford and Esther Favre-Felix in its production. Oxfam would also like to thank the Sahrawi refugees. It is part of a series of papers written to inform public debate on humanitarian and development policy issues.

For further information on the issues raised in this publication, please e-mail [advocacy@oxfaminternational.org](mailto:advocacy@oxfaminternational.org)

This publication is copyright but the text may be used free of charge for the purposes of campaigning, education and research, provided that the source is quoted in full. The copyright holder requests that all such use be registered with them for impact assessment purposes. For copying in any other circumstance, or for re-use in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, permission must be secured and a fee may be charged. E-mail [policyandpractice@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:policyandpractice@oxfam.org.uk).

The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

Published by Oxfam GB for Oxfam International under ISBN 978-1-78077-856-3 in April 2015. Oxfam GB, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY, United Kingdom.

## OXFAM

Oxfam is an international confederation of 17 organizations networked together in 94 countries, as part of a global movement for change, to build a future free from the injustice of poverty.

Oxfam America ([www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org))  
Oxfam Australia ([www.oxfam.org.au](http://www.oxfam.org.au))  
Oxfam-in-Belgium ([www.oxfamsol.be](http://www.oxfamsol.be))  
Oxfam Canada ([www.oxfam.ca](http://www.oxfam.ca))  
Oxfam France ([www.oxfamfrance.org](http://www.oxfamfrance.org))  
Oxfam Germany ([www.oxfam.de](http://www.oxfam.de))  
Oxfam GB ([www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk))  
Oxfam Hong Kong ([www.oxfam.org.hk](http://www.oxfam.org.hk))  
Oxfam India ([www.oxfamindia.org](http://www.oxfamindia.org))  
Oxfam Intermón (Spain) ([www.oxfamintermon.org](http://www.oxfamintermon.org))  
Oxfam Ireland ([www.oxfamireland.org](http://www.oxfamireland.org))  
Oxfam Italy ([www.oxfamitalia.org](http://www.oxfamitalia.org))  
Oxfam Japan ([www.oxfam.jp](http://www.oxfam.jp))  
Oxfam Mexico ([www.oxfammexico.org](http://www.oxfammexico.org))  
Oxfam New Zealand ([www.oxfam.org.nz](http://www.oxfam.org.nz))  
Oxfam Novib (Netherlands) ([www.oxfamnovib.nl](http://www.oxfamnovib.nl))  
Oxfam Québec ([www.oxfam.qc.ca](http://www.oxfam.qc.ca))

Please write to any of the agencies for further information or visit [www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org). E-mail [advocacy@oxfaminternational.org](mailto:advocacy@oxfaminternational.org)

[www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org)



**OXFAM**