

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 22 May 2019 from the Permanent Representative of
South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of
the Security Council**

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter from the Secretary-General of the Frente POLISARIO, Brahim Ghali, addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (see annex). I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Jerry Matthews **Matjila**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 22 May 2019 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

It is with great alarm that I report to you on the rapidly deteriorating situation on the ground in occupied Western Sahara and the proliferation of Morocco's brazen violations of the ceasefire and its rampant human rights abuses in direct violation of Security Council resolution [2468 \(2019\)](#).

On Sunday, 19 May 2019, the Moroccan authorities prevented seven independent legal observers – including five Spanish lawyers accredited by the Spanish Bar Association and two Norwegian observers accredited by the Norwegian Rafto Foundation – from entering the occupied Western Sahara. These officially accredited international observers were expected to observe the trial of the Sahrawi Journalist, Nazha El Khalidi, who was arrested on 4 December 2018 for the “crime” of live-streaming the State-sponsored harassment of peaceful Sahrawi protesters in the occupied territories. Both Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have condemned Morocco's imprisonment of Ms. El Khalidi and called for her immediate release.

But Morocco's intransigence has not been confined to the occupied territories. Despite the recent adoption of Security Council resolution [2468 \(2019\)](#) and your report of 1 April 2019 ([S/2019/282](#)) in which you outline “significant violations” by the Moroccan authorities, Morocco maintains its presence and illicit activities across the illegal breach in Guerguerat in southern Western Sahara. Every day, hundreds of trucks and vehicles cross the illegal breach into the buffer strip, in direct violation of military agreement No. 1. Moreover, we have seen no tangible evidence that Morocco has dismantled any of the 110 km of newly built sand walls and dozens of illegal observation posts. As we have repeatedly underlined, the existence of the illegal breach across the buffer strip in Guerguerat and Morocco's construction of new militarized walls unilaterally alters the status quo and seriously exacerbates tensions in the territory. It also jeopardizes the United Nations-led political process.

Morocco's worsening ceasefire violations and rampant human rights abuses are deliberately designed to undermine the prospect of building trust and defer progress on the political track. If the international community is serious about supporting a credible peace process in Western Sahara, then it must demand an immediate end to Morocco's illegal and destabilizing actions and impose consequences for Morocco's continued intransigence.

In your capacity as Secretary-General, we urge you to ensure that the fundamental rights of Sahrawi people are at the forefront of the United Nations efforts on Western Sahara. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) remains the only modern peacekeeping mission to lack a human rights monitoring mechanism. As a first step, we ask that in your upcoming report on the situation in Western Sahara, you urge the Security Council to ensure that MINURSO operates in line with basic standards applicable to all other United Nations peacekeeping operations, including having a capacity to monitor the human rights situation as a fundamental and necessary element of its mandate. In the interim, we also urge you to work with United Nations concerned bodies to ensure that independent United Nations human rights monitors gain full, unfettered and continuous access to the occupied Western Sahara and that they report freely and openly on the situation of human rights in the Territory.

It is also vital that you speak strongly on the need to lift the long-standing restrictions imposed on MINURSO, which drastically hinder the Mission's ability to access local interlocutors in the Territory and inhibit its operation. The fact that

MINURSO vehicles continue to bear Moroccan number plates and that Morocco still affixes its stamps on the passports of MINURSO staff members upon entry to and exit from Western Sahara remain issues of great concern to us. These unacceptable practices cannot continue and must end as soon as possible for the sake of the impartiality and credibility of the United Nations.

Despite Morocco's intransigence, the Frente POLISARIO remains committed to engaging constructively in the United Nations-led peace process. We will continue to cooperate fully with you, your Personal Envoy, Horst Köhler and your Special Representative, Colin Stewart. We hope that the next round of talks between the two parties will produce tangible results with a view to achieving a peaceful, just and lasting solution that fully respects the inalienable right of our people to self-determination and independence. However, Morocco's ongoing military build-up along its military wall as well as its persistent violations of the ceasefire and rampant human rights abuses in the occupied Western Sahara seriously risk undermining any prospect of building trust and achieving progress in the United Nations-led peace process.

I should be most grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Brahim **Ghali**
Secretary-General of the Frente POLISARIO
