



**Western Sahara Action Forum**

**info@wsaforum.org**

**[www.wsaforum.org](http://www.wsaforum.org)**

**German organisations**

**Open letter**

H.E. Ambassador Mr. Dang Dinh Quy  
Permanent Mission of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to the UN  
866 U.N. Plaza, Suite 428, New York  
NY 10017  
USA

April 14, 2021

Your Excellency,

As representatives of human rights organisations, civil society, and solidarity groups from Germany, we are writing to you to request that you and all members of the Security Council take the steps necessary to end the decades-long conflict in Western Sahara.

The Security Council's decades long failure to implement the referendum of self-determination on which the 1991 ceasefire was predicated has led to a resumption of hostilities.

The ongoing failure of the UN to appoint a new Personal Envoy of the Secretary General to Western Sahara, following the resignation of Horst Köhler in May 2019, had paralysed the peace process, and left MINURSO without political guidance.

With no referendum to organise and in the absence of a human rights mandate, monitoring the ceasefire was the one function left to MINURSO. Prior to the 13 November return to war, monitoring by the mission had already been compromised by Covid pandemic restrictions with the number of ground and air patrols cut, by 30% and 10%, respectively, by August 2020. When Moroccan forces entered the buffer zone at Guerguerat, in breach of the ceasefire, MINURSO did not intervene.

Currently, MINURSO personnel are not carrying out patrols along the Moroccan wall. In short, MINURSO is redundant.

With the resumption of hostilities, attacks on Sahrawi civil rights activists in the occupied territory have increased. There is growing instability; a worsening crackdown on freedom of information, on freedom of assembly, and on freedom of movement; and attacks on

*Western Sahara Action Forum is an international coalition of over 40 organisations dedicated to the protection of human rights and the implementation of international law in Western Sahara.*

Saharawi women. The plunder of the Western Sahara's economic resources is increasing and Morocco is adding to the infrastructure of exploitation. Colonisation continues.

We, the undersigned, call on the UN Security Council to immediately take the necessary steps to bring about a just and lasting peace for the people of Western Sahara.

We urge you to:

- Urgently appoint a credible and impartial new Personal Envoy of the Secretary General to Western Sahara to replace Horst Köhler.
- Uphold international law by maintaining the focus on self-determination, which is the legal right of the Saharawi people, and organise a referendum of self-determination according to a stated timetable.
- Monitor adherence to the timetable with more frequent Security Council sessions.
- Develop a robust plan under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to enforce the outcome of the referendum in the event that either of the parties does not respect the decision of the Saharawi electorate.
- Insist on immediate evacuation of Moroccan personnel and infrastructure from the buffer zone at Guerguerat, and the removal of all newly built lengths of wall.
- Immediately, send a fact finding mission to investigate the human rights of Saharawis in the occupied territory and in prisons in Morocco.
- Grant MINURSO the legal mandate to monitor and report on human rights in the territories controlled by both the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO. This mandate must remain in place until a referendum has been held, and findings must be reported directly to the UN Security Council.
- Demand an end to the illegal extraction of natural resources from Western Sahara, which disregards the interests and wishes of the indigenous Saharawi. Such action would serve to uphold international law and build on the recognition by courts around the world of the Saharawi's right to control their natural resources.
- Immediately combat the COVID-19 pandemic by advocating for Saharawi civilian prisoners in Moroccan prisons to be released. Moroccan prisons are notorious for overcrowding and appalling hygienic conditions. These dense and unsafe prison populations risk exacerbating the pandemic in both Western Sahara and Morocco.
- Immediately insist on unfettered media and humanitarian NGO access to the occupied territory.

Please circulate this letter to all members of the Security Council.

**Yours sincerely,**

**Association of Ethical Shareholders Germany,**  
Tilman Massa, Member of staff



**Aktionsgemeinschaft Solidarische Welt e.V.,**  
Christophe Mailliet, CEO



**Bremer entwicklungspolitisches Netzwerk e.V.,**  
Christopher Duis, CEO



**Bremer Informationszentrum für Menschenrechte  
und Entwicklung (biz),**  
Gertraud Gauer-Süß, CEO



**Freiheit für die Westsahara e.V.,**  
Tanja Brodtmann, Chair



**European Association of Lawyers for Democracy  
& World Human Rights (ELDH),**  
Thomas Schmidt, Secretary General



**medico international,**  
Karin Urschel, Executive Board: Head of Project Department



**terre des hommes Germany,**  
Beat Wehrle, Executive Board: International Programmes



**Western Sahara Resource Watch Germany,**  
Tim Sauer, Spokesperson



**Zentrum für Europäische und Orientalische Kultur e.V.,**  
Dr. Wolf-Dieter Seiwert, Member of staff



*Western Sahara Action Forum is an international coalition of over 40 organisations dedicated to the protection of human rights and the implementation of international law in Western Sahara.*