


The History of the Western Sahara

A Timeline

The sovereignty of the Western Sahara remains the subject of a dispute between Morocco and the Polisario Front, a separatist group based in southern Algeria. Morocco reasserted its sovereignty over the territory after Spain withdrew its colonial interests from the area in 1975. The Polisario Front has challenged Morocco's control over the Western Sahara.

The Moroccan Government has undertaken a sizable economic development program in the Western Sahara to provide economic, political and social infrastructure for the region's residents. Today, international efforts are underway to encourage a political settlement between Morocco, the Polisario Front, and Algeria that would resolve sovereignty over the Western Sahara through autonomy.

<p>1578 to 1727 Moroccan Kings rule over the territory currently known as the Western Sahara</p> <p>1884 Spanish colonization begins</p>	<p>"By giving the people of the Western Sahara a true voice in their future through the full benefits of autonomy as presented by Morocco, a credible political solution can be achieved."</p> <p>-Former U.S. Sec. of State Madeleine Albright, June 6, 2007</p>	<p>UN Security Council approves the establishment of Mission des Nations Unies pour l'Organisation d'un Référendum au Sahara (MINURSO)</p> <p>1991</p> <p>Cease-fire declared in the disputed Western Sahara region</p>
<p>1956 Morocco claims independence from France</p> <p>Morocco reclaims the Western Sahara at the UN for the first time</p> <p>1958 King Mohammed V formally lays claim to the Sahara</p> <p>1963 The UN includes the Western Sahara on the list of non self-governing territories</p> <p>1965 The UN General Assembly adopts its first resolution calling on Spain to decolonize the Sahara</p> <p>1973 The Polisario Front is founded and stages its first attack</p> <p>1974 Algeria begins to oppose Moroccan policy on the Sahara and trains Polisario guerrillas</p> <p>1975 The Green March takes place in which 350,000 unarmed Moroccans march South into the desert to reassert the sovereignty of the Sahara from the Spanish</p>		<p>Former US Sec. of State James Baker III appointed as UN Special Envoy in the Sahara region</p> <p>1997</p> <p>Houston Accord is signed between Morocco and Polisario establishing the implementation of a referendum to decide the future of the Western Sahara</p> <p>UN Sec. Gen. Kofi Annan presents the Security Council with four options to break the impasse in the Western Sahara: referendum, autonomy, partition, or complete withdrawal</p> <p>2000</p> <p>James Baker III announces the "new Baker Plan" for Self-Determination which describes a proposed Western Sahara Authority to administer the territory autonomously until 2007 or 2008, when the referendum would be held</p> <p>2003</p>
<p>Morocco signs Madrid Agreement which seeks to transfer control of the Sahara to a three party administration divided between Morocco, Spain and Mauritania</p> <p>Spain officially terminates its administration of the Sahara</p> <p>1976 The Polisario declares the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and raises the flag of "Western Sahara"</p> <p>1977 Spanish-Moroccan fishing agreement is signed; the Polisario begins attacks on Spanish fishing vessels</p> <p>1990 Morocco and the Polisario accept a UN peace plan, in which a referendum will be held</p>	<p>"[T]he Kingdom [of Morocco] has proposed a serious and credible autonomy plan as a basis of negotiation [...] and it constitutes a new proposal element after years of stalemate."</p> <p>-French President Nicolas Sarkozy, October 23, 2007</p> <p>"We believe the Moroccan proposal to provide real autonomy for the Western Sahara provides a serious and credible option, and we hope that the Polisario will engage in discussions on this proposal as a realistic starting point that could lead toward resolution of the dispute."</p> <p>- US State Dept. Deputy Spokesperson Tom Casey, January 11, 2008</p>	<p>Dutch ambassador Peter Van Walsum is confirmed as the new UN Sec. Gen. Special Envoy to the Western Sahara</p> <p>2005</p> <p>Morocco releases autonomy under sovereignty plan for the Western Sahara which is endorsed by the United States, Spain and France</p> <p>2007</p> <p>Morocco and the Polisario Front conduct first two rounds of negotiations</p> <p>The Polisario Front threatens a return to armed conflict with Morocco</p> <p>2008</p> <p>Third round of negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario Front takes place in January; a fourth round resumes in March</p> <p>Parties to the negotiations agree to a fifth round of negotiations to take place later in 2008</p>



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