



Background Paper

Committee: Special Political and Decolonization Committee

Topic A: The Decolonization of Western Sahara

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Decolonization is defined as the process by which colonies become independent of the colonized country. Colonial dominance enfeebles the ability of political communities to apply their self-governing in a particular way. As of the invention of the United Nations, over 80 colonies have achieved self-governing. Up to the present moment, approximately 2 million individuals reside under colonial domination spread across 17 non-autonomous regions that prevail. In accordance with the United Nations Charter, non-autonomous territories are those “whose people have not yet attained full measure of self-government”. The remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories include French Polynesia and New Caledonia, both administered by France; United States Virgin Islands and Guam, both ruled by the United States of America; Western Sahara, without an established administering power, among others. Colonization and the spar for decolonization can have repercussions namely environmental degradation, the spread of disease, economic instability and dependency, and the violation of human rights.

As stated by Current Legal Problems by Oxford Academic, colonial rule has included subjecting innocent populations to inhumanities like murder, torture, and manipulation. The Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, approved by the General Assembly in 1960, recognized the right to self-determination of all peoples and affirmed that colonialism should come to an end rapidly and unconditionally. However, non-self-governing is an issue that needs to be addressed since it is threatening human rights, including the right to live; this affair can have devastating effects on societies. The decolonization of Western Sahara has recently become a major issue. It has been an ongoing conflict between the Polisario Front and Morocco, from 1975 to 1991, resuming in 2020. There has not been an initiative with a permanent solution. The Kingdom of Morocco along with Mauritania and the Front Polisario supported by Algeria, have not yet entirely respected any peace process at all.

In 1884, Spain colonized Western Sahara, occupied by Berber tribes. Later on, in 1957, Morocco claimed centuries of antiquity over the Western Sahara. Forcing the United Nations to request the decolonization of the region, in 1965. Consequently, Front Polisario was founded in May 1973. Popular Front for the Liberation of the Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro, abbreviated Front Polisario is a movement that emerged at the end of the Spanish colonization of the Sahara, intending to achieve self-determination and independence in Western Sahara. In 1979 the UN recognized the Polisario Front as the only authorized representative of the Western Sahara. Polisario Front wages a 16-year guerrilla war against Moroccan forces, ending with a UN negotiated ceasefire. Nevertheless, on November 14 of 2020, Front Polisario considered the ceasefire violated, urged the United Nations to intervene and declared a “state of war” all around the territory following the aggression by the Moroccan army carried out a day earlier, November 13 of 2020. The broken agreement resulted in an armed confrontation including bombing and fire baiting.

In 1991, The UN under the United Nations Security Council, established the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. It was an agreement settled to monitor the ceasefire; reduce Moroccan intervention in the region and seek the welfare of all. This referendum, in conformity with the Settlement Plan, agreed to allow the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic to decide between integration with Morocco or their independence. Nonetheless, it has been an arduous process since 1992 due to the disagreements on both sides. The United Nations has endeavored to attempt to reach a solution that suits either side.

The Front Polisario has been strongly backed up by Algeria, one of the border nations with Western Sahara. Algeria has been an unconditional ally to the Front Polisario since 1975. Supporting the movement for more than 30 years, by providing arms, training aid, financial assistance, and food supply. As well, Libya manifested it's support to the Front Polisario. In like manner, some nations that compose the African Union support the right of self-determination of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. By September 2021, the Sharawi Republic had been recognized by 41 out of 193 United Nation members.

Conversely, the Kingdom of Morocco is allied with numerous powerful countries. The United States of America is one of the country's greatest allies and is backing Morocco in the conflict with the Front Polisario. As well as Saudi Arabia, a nation that provided support, in return of Morocco's support in the war at Yemen. Turkey and Morocco have a strong relationship and both countries support each other. Additionally, part of the African Union backs Moroccan claims on Western Sahara.

The decolonization of Western Sahara is an issue that deeply harms society. It is a very complex problem that needs to be analyzed from different angles. The Western Sahara War is one of the consequences of the dispute between Morocco and Front Polisario. Currently, it is a real and active conflict that threatens and endangers Sahrawi people's lives. Several proposals around the world that aim to contribute to solving this issue, but certainly it is not enough. This committee needs to address this problem diplomatically in order to create a solution to protect the welfare of all the involved.

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