

MOROCCO

Riffians

Activity: 1958-1959; 2010-2020

General notes

- The group's movement is also called Hirak. The Rif are related to the Kabyle (also a Berber group) in Algeria.

Movement start and end dates

- There is a history of Rif movement activity (anti-colonial in nature) before WWI and during the interwar period (Wyrzten 2015: 121-135). The early movement created the legacy of the Rif Republic and offered the Rif people "collective experience of autonomy, state formation, and military resistance" which in turn "reinforced a firm sense of separate Rif identity for subsequent generations" (Wyrzten 2015: 135).
- Promised autonomy, the Riffians (a Berber group) celebrated Morocco's independence in 1956, but this enthusiasm was short-lived as the Riffians were excluded from the government, pressured to assimilate, and subject to centralization. According to Mouline (2021), "[Riffian] elites and the local populations were disappointed with the ongoing integration processes: people with origins in the formerly French controlled zones monopolized high positions; people accustomed to autonomy resented the government's Jacobin politics; inflation due to reunification was unbearable, especially since many people were deprived of income due to the colonial army's dissolution, the closure of the borders with Algeria, and many years of drought." This report does not discuss whether or not there was political mobilization, but does imply that self-determination demands were visible in the public sphere. It is therefore possible that the movement started in 1957, but the evidence is too uncertain.
- In 1958 the Riffians rose in rebellion against the Moroccan state. Various demands were raised, including the return of al-Khattabi (a former Riffian rebel leader) to Morocco, inclusion in the national cabinet, more favourable economic policies and language rights, as well as regional autonomy. The uprising was crushed in 1959, hence the end of the first period of activity (Hart 2000; Lexis Nexis; Maddy-Weitzman 2011; Minahan 2002, 2016: 352f; Pennell 2000). Mouline (2021) suggests that claims were nonviolent initially, but soon escalated to violence. [start date 1: 1958; end date 1: 1959]
- In subsequent years the Riffians endured harsh repression. In the 1980s, the Riffians again rose in protest, but it seems that this time protest concerned cultural and language rights and not autonomy. Though demands continue to focus mainly on language rights, agitation towards territorial self-determination appears to have flared up again in the 2000s.
- According to Minahan (2016: 353), "[s]ince 2010 resurgent Rifian nationalism has mobilized, particularly since the brutal suppression of protests in 2013." One of the organizations involved is the Rif Autonomy Movement (MAR); we were unable to establish the organization's exact date of formation. CRW Flags, a passion projects on flags, reports that the MAR flag was first found on July 31, 2005, which could suggest a start date of 2005. However, the evidence is weak, so we rely on the 2010 start date suggested by Minahan.
- Another organization is the Rif Independence Movement, which, according to its Facebook page, was founded in April 2012 (Rif Independence Movement). In the same year, the Rif Independence Movement joined the Organization of Emerging African States (OEAS 2012).
- It is important to note that the Riffians' main claims are not related to territorial SD but to the economy, corruption, and democracy.
 - o The Rif movement has been described as the country's equivalent of the "Arab Spring" (Debackere & Akouh 2021). Protests involving general (non Rif-centred) demands emerged in Morocco on the 20th of February 2011 in urban areas, driven "by desires of

distributive justice and democratic change” as well as demands for constitutional monarchy (TMOC 2017; Jebnoun 2020: 51f). The protest movement came to be called “Hirak Shaabi” or simply “Hirak” (‘popular movement’), and was strongest in the Rif area (TMOC 2017). The protests were organized by a group called the “20 February Movement” on which we could not find any data – other than that Nasser Zefzafi (see below) was one of its leaders (Gaffey 2017). Demands for territorial self-determination were raised in the context of these protests, but these were notably not the most salient/frequent demands.

- In 2016-2017, a large protest movement emerged in the Rif region. The Economist (2017) describes the protests as related to corruption and economic neglect. The government described the protesters as separatists, but based on the information we could find, it is not clear to what extent claims for territorial self-determination and especially outright independence were made. It is likely that the Moroccan portrays the protesters as more radical than they actually are to justify repression. According to reports, in the protests in July, several demonstrators were injured (one reportedly in a coma) and 72 police officers were injured. The protesters were chanting “Long live Zefzafi” in reference to Nasser Zefzafi, the leader of the movement who was arrested in May 2017. Many demonstrators were arrested and many others prevented from participating in the protests (Jeune Afrique 2017).
 - o Additional information regarding the 2016-2017 protests: the protests began in October 2016 after the murder of a fisherman who was trying to retrieve his confiscated swordfish, who authorities threw and crushed inside a garbage truck. The early days of the protest were “limited to demanding a fully transparent inquiry into the death” but demands “progressively scaled up” with Rif people seeking justice, political resignations, reforms and probes into corruption, the end of the militarization of the Rif region (which the government denies is continuing), and increased economic, social, and cultural rights for the Rif people that had been deprived since their last form of independence in 1956. Beyond this, the group is also asking for a university and specialized hospital to be built, and the realization of economic projects to improve the high rates of unemployment (TMOC 2017; Jebnoun 2020: 54f).
- Minahan (2016: 352) describes the SDM as ongoing and growing. [start date 2: 2010; end date 2: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- In 1958 the Riffians rose in rebellion against the Moroccan state. Various demands were raised, including the return of al-Khattabi (a former Riffian rebel leader) to Morocco, inclusion in the national cabinet, more favourable economic policies and language rights, and also regional autonomy (Maddy-Weitzman 2011: 85-86). [1958-1959: autonomy claim]
- In the second phase both demands for autonomy and independence were made (in the latter case in particular by the Rif Independence Movement; El Ouali 2011), but claims for autonomy have been dominant (Masiky 2017: TMOC 2017; Rhani et al. 2022; Jebnoun 2020). [2010-2020: autonomy claim]
 - o The Autonomy for Rif Movement (MAR) was inspired by the proposed plan for the autonomy of Western Sahara. Accusations of outright secessionism are mostly the product of government propaganda, who describe the group’s claims as secessionist and accuse the movement of “being an instrument of ‘foreign powers’” – indeed “the ‘separatism’ [here understood as outright secessionism] charge is part of the Moroccan official discourse that has been used in the name of national security and territorial integrity to suppress Western Saharan activists and their right to self-determination” (Jebnoun 2020: 56). This is also substantiated by Rhani et al. (2022: 328, 333, 344f).

Independence claims

- While the “Kabyle [in Algeria] see independence as central to their quest for self-determination”, support for independence among the Hirak Rif is not well supported and the term is seen as having a “vague meaning” (Masiky 2017). Still, there has also been a movement for independence. Specifically, the Rif Independence Movement (formed in 2012; see above) seeks to restore the historic Rif Republic, which had existed between 1921 and 1926. [start date: 2012; end date: ongoing]

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- The territory claimed by the Riffians consists of the following areas: Al-Hoceima, Nador, and the northern districts of Taza and Tetouan provinces of Morocco as well as the Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta (Minahan 2002: 1587). We code this claim based on a map published by Levi (2021). We do not include Melilla and Ceuta, though, because these areas are in Spain and not Morocco.

Sovereignty declarations

NA

Separatist armed conflict

- Based on the sources we consulted, it is likely that the 1958-1959 rebellion resulted in over 25 deaths (Hart 2000; Lexis Nexis; Maddy-Weitzman 2011; Minahan 2002, 2016: 352f; Pennell 2000; Mouline n.d.). Precise information on casualties is hard to get by, but some sources suggest there were more than 1,000 casualties (Iskander 2010; Mouline 2016). 1958-1959 is coded LVIOLSD. Mouline (2021) suggests that claims were nonviolent initially, but soon escalated to violence. We do not code HVIOLSD because the war is not represented in Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl (2019). We found no reports of violence for 2012-2020. [1958-1959: LVIOLSD; 2010- 2020: NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- 1st phase:
 - o The Riffians are Sunni Muslims (like the Arabs) but speak their own language, Rifian, a dialect of the Berber language. At various times the Riffians had autonomous states, most recently under French colonial rule (Minorities at Risk Project). In 1904 Spain and France divided Morocco into spheres of influence. Much of the Riffian zone was assigned to the Spanish. Spanish rule was repressive and caused significant opposition (Minahan 2002: 1589). In the early 1920s the Riffians rose against the Spanish/French/Moroccans and proclaimed their own independent state. The rebellion was crushed in 1926 (Minahan 2002: 1590). Upon independence in 1956, Morocco’s government embarked on an Arabization policy. The autonomy the Riffians had enjoyed under the French was not continued. Morocco’s constitution forbids political parties based on language or region. Arab was adopted as the sole official language. Outsiders were appointed to head the Riffian region (Minahan 2002: 1590; Maddy-Weitzman 2011:

85-86). Thus, we code a (prior) restriction for the first phase. [1956: cultural rights & autonomy restriction]

- 2nd phase:
 - The 1958 rebellion led to harsh repression. A failed Riffian coup in 1971 again led to severe repression. The Riffian language was purged (Minahan 2002: 1590). In the 1990s repression became somewhat weaker. In 1990, the king announced that Berber will be taught in primary schools (Minorities at Risk Project; 1994 according to Minahan 2002: 1591). According to Minahan (2002: 1591) the program was never fully implemented, however. According to Minorities at Risk, Morocco's government commended Berber-language television and radio news broadcasts in 1994. 1997 saw a repressive backlash when the Moroccan government introduced new measures outlawing Berber names and restricting Berber children to approved Arab and Muslim names (Minahan 2002: 1592).
 - A new king came in in 1999. According to Minahan (2002: 1592) little changed. Minorities at Risk, on the other hand, notes that the pressure on the Riffians eased somewhat: "difficulties have subsided significantly since the turn of the century." "In 2003, the Moroccan government authorized Tamazight to be taught in the Moroccan schools; in 2004, the first Berber language textbook was introduced; and in 2006, the Moroccan Minister of Education announced that children as young as fourth graders would be taught the Berber language." In line with MAR, Minority Rights Group International reports that Morocco's government began introducing instruction in the Berber language to first-year pupils in 2003. [2003: cultural rights concession]
 - Note: there have been "regionalization" reforms (in 1997 in particular), but de-facto Morocco has remained highly centralized. Regional governors are appointed by the center. Under the 1997 regionalization law the Rif homeland became divided into multiple prefectures. There are no (prior) concessions on autonomy.

Concessions and restrictions

- The Moroccan state said it had invested an amount worth more than 1.2 billion euros in the Rif region since 2017 in an attempt to assuage some of the claims of the Hirak Protest movement.. That money went to health care, education, road construction and more, and – according to the government – has led to unprecedented development (Debackere & Akouh 2021).
- In response to the Arab Spring, the king ordered constitutional changes in 2011. The new constitution grants more powers to the prime minister and parliament, but the king still retains veto power over most government decisions (BBC Monitoring). Critically, the Berber language attained official status by way of the new 2011 constitution (Freedom House 2005-2016; International Business Times 2011). [2011: cultural rights concession]

Regional autonomy

NA

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

- Morocco attained independence in 1956, implying a host change. This was before the start date and is thus not coded.

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Berbers
<i>Scenario</i>	n:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Berbers
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	60001000

Power access

- The Riffians are a Berber group. Thus, they form part of EPR's Berbers. EPR codes the Berbers as powerless throughout. While there has been Berber participation in Morocco's government, the highest authority is clearly the (Arab) kings (Minahan 2002: 1591; Bertelsmann Stiftung 2020). [powerless]

Group size

- According to Minahan (2016: 352) the 2015 population of Riffians is an estimated 6-7 million, with a total Moroccan population of 34.6 million. [0.1879]

Regional concentration

- According to Minahan (2002: 1587), approx. 75% of the Riffians live in the Rif region of northern Morocco, where they make up approx. 75% of the local population. [concentrated]

Kin

- The Riffians are a Berber group and are thus subsumed under EPR's Berbers. For the latter, EPR codes several numerically significant kin groups in Algeria, Niger, Mali and Libya. In addition, Minahan (2002: 1587) reports "substantial" Riffian populations in Algeria and France. The number of Riffians in France is unclear, but even the lower numbers (128,000 as provided by Joshua Project) would cross the threshold. We found no estimate of the number of Riffians in Algeria, but it appears to be few. [kin in neighboring country]

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Sahrawis

Activity: 1975-2020

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- According to Minahan (2002: 1624) the Saharawis first rebelled against Spanish colonialization in the early 20th century. The campaign re-emerged in 1950s. The first evidence of activity we found is when two Saharawi tribes rebelled in 1957, driving out the Spanish authorities and soldiers. The Ifni War ensued. The revolution was helped considerably by Moroccan forces. Morocco and neighboring Mauritania both laid claim on Western Sahara. With French support, the Spanish returned in 1958 and “inflicted severe punishment on the rebel tribes” (Minahan 2002: 1625). The Moroccan forces were driven out; the ensuing agreement gave a small territory to Morocco but Spain remained in control of Western Sahara. Note: UCDP/PRIO codes the Ifni war as a low-level extrasystemic armed conflict in 1957/1958 involving France and Spain on the one hand and Morocco and Mauritania on the other.
- In 1969, Spain had to cede Ifni to Morocco, faced with international pressure. Meanwhile, Western Sahara agitation for self-determination continued, though at a much less intense level. For instance, Harakat Tahrir, a clandestine organization dedicated to Western Saharan independence, was formed in 1966. In 1966, Spain told the United Nations that it would allow Saharawi self-determination. However, this promise was not kept, which led to Saharawi mobilization for self-determination. In 1970, a demonstration for independence was violently repressed, involving several deaths (Zemla Intifada). This led the Saharawis to launch an armed struggle. In 1973, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia El Hama and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO) was formed and an insurgency began (Marshall & Gurr 2003: 61).
- In the waning days of General Franco’s rule the Spanish government signed a tripartite agreement with Morocco and Mauritania as it moved to transfer the territory on November 14, 1975. Subsequently, Morocco and Mauritania each moved to annex the territories. This was met by fierce resistance by the Saharawis and POLISARIO, in particular.
- In line with the above narrative, the movement’s start date is pegged to 1957. However, because we do not code anti-colonial movements, we only code activity in Mauritania and Morocco, in both cases as of 1975. In line with Marshall & Gurr, we note prior activity.
- In 1979, Mauritania withdrew from Western Sahara. Morocco extended its control to the rest of the territory. Thus, we code an end to the Saharawi movement in Mauritania in 1979. Later that same year United Nations General Assembly Resolution 34/37 was agreed which recognises the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and independence and considers the POLISARIO to be the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people (UNGA 1979 resolution 34/37).
- On September 6, 1991, POLISARIO and the Moroccan government signed the ‘Settlement Plan’, which resulted in a ceasefire, the creation of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), and the introduction of peacekeepers into the region. In the ensuing years plans were formed to hold a referendum such as the 1998 Baker plan, however, such efforts were consistently scuttled by the government (Ruiz 2005; Migdalovitz 2006). By 2020 no referendum had been held.
- The movement is ongoing. 2011 and 2020 saw flare-ups of separatist violence (Publico 2020). [start date: 1957; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- Independence has been the goal of POLISARIO, the major organization associated with the Saharawi movement (Hodges 1983: 53). In 1976, Saharawi rebel leaders declared independence. In negotiations, Saharawi leaders have repeatedly demanded independence (Minahan 2002; Stephan & Mundy 2006). The United Nations considers POLISARIO the legitimate representative of the Saharawis, and also supports the group's right to self-determination (United Nations 1979). Additional support for an independence claim can be found in Fokina (2019), Young Pioneer Tours (n.d.), and Migration News (2021). [1975-2020: independence claim]

Independence claims

- See above. [start date: 1957; end date: ongoing]

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- The Saharawi wish to establish a state within the borders of the previous colony of Spanish West Africa (Minahan 2002: 1623; Roth 2015). This territory was divided between Morocco and Mauritania until 1979, when Morocco annexed those regions held by Mauritania. We code two separate claims for the Saharawi in Morocco: The first claim consists of those parts of Spanish West Africa that were part of Morocco between 1975 and 1979, while the second claim includes all of Spanish West Africa, which has been under Moroccan control since August 1979. We code these territories based on the CShapes 2.0 dataset (Schvitz et al. 2022).

Sovereignty declarations

- On February 27, 1976, Saharawi rebel leaders declared the independence of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) (Minahan 2002: 1626). [1976: independence declaration]

Separatist armed conflict

- The HVIOLSD coding for 1975-1991 follows Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl (2019). Marshall & Gurr suggest that POLISARIO first took up arms in 1973 against the Spanish. This is confirmed by the UCDP/PRIO coding notes, but UCDP/PRIO does not include the armed conflict, suggesting they judged that there were less than 25 deaths. We could not find any evidence suggesting otherwise in qualitative sources. We do not therefore code prior violence.
- The MAR rebellion score is 3 in some subsequent years (1992-1995, 1999-2003), indicating a "local rebellion". We found no indications for substantial violence during those years, however.
- Tensions escalated in late October and November 2010 during UN talks – In October, one civilian was killed (Vanguard (Lagos) 12/7/2010; Lexis Nexis). In the first week of November 2010, the Moroccan government was accused of a raid and massacre in Western Sahara but subsequent news reports confirmed that 11 security officers were killed along with two or three accidental civilian deaths (The International Herald Tribune 12/9/2010, Lexis Nexis). Attacks on November 8th resulted in 6-11 deaths (ANSamed 11/9/2010, Lexis Nexis). On November 12th, Adnkronos International reports 12 deaths during separatist clashes as a result of tear gas and pressure hoses in Laayoune, Western Sahara (Adnkronos International, Rome 11/12/2010, Lexis Nexis). Based on this, we code 2010 as LVIOLSD.

- There were violent clashes in late 2020, but UCDP records just 6 casualties. [1975-1991: HVIOLSD (prior LVIOLSD); 1992-2009: NVIOLSD; 2010: LVIOLSD; 2011-2020: NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- The Western reaches of the Sahara desert were claimed by several “states” prior to the 8th century, though the area did not really engage their active interest. Western Sahara was then conquered by the Arabs. In the 10th century Western Sahara fell to Morocco. Though the Western Saharawis nominally were Moroccan subjects, there was little contact between the Saharawis and the Moroccans (Minahan 2002: 1624). In 1860, the sultan granted Spain rights to the region, and Spain established two protectorates in 1884. The colonial administration was confined to coastal areas and oases until 1934 Minahan 2002: 1624. Prior to 1934, the Saharawis de-facto had not known supratribal authority (Hodges 1983: 28). January 10, 1958, Western Sahara was made into a Spanish province with its own governor in El-Ayoun (Hodges 1983: 33). In response to growing pressure for decolonization, the Spanish government in 1966 promised the UN that it would eventually allow self-determination in the region, a promise that was never kept (Minahan 2002: 1625). The promise of self-determination was made to rebuff the Mauritanian and Moroccan claims on Western Sahara in the hope that they, the Spanish, could reap the benefits of Western Sahara’s phosphate wealth themselves. Evidence for the hollowness of the promise is that the same year (that is, 1966) the Spanish authorities “succeeded in persuading 800 *shioukh* to address a petition to the United Nations, in March 1966, supporting continued union with Spain” (Hodges 1983: 44). Spain continued to make meaningless ‘concessions’. In 1967, Spain established an all-Saharawi territorial assembly, which however had no real powers, in particular no legislative powers (Hodges 1983: 37). Given the Spanish unwillingness to implement their rhetoric commitment to Saharawi self-determination, from 1967-1973 the UN General Assembly called on Spain every year to conduct a self-determination referendum in Western Sahara. Spain did not take steps towards implementation until 1974, when the Spanish government unveiled plans for the installment of self-government in Western Sahara and only one month later announced that a referendum would be held in the first six months of 1975 (Hodges 1983: 43-44, 54). However, faced with fierce Moroccan opposition against the holding of an independence referendum, Spain shortly thereafter rowed backwards, shelved the autonomy statute and postponed the referendum.
 - o This sequence of events could be coded in different ways. We opt not to code an autonomy concession and subsequent restriction because there do not appear to have been steps towards implementation. We do, however, code a (prior) independence concession because of Spain’s promise to hold a referendum, plans for which were postponed but not abandoned. [1974: independence concession]
- In November 1975 Spain, Morocco, and Mauritania signed the Madrid Accords. In a radical reversal of its previous policy, Spain thereby transferred to Morocco the northern two-thirds of Western Sahara, and to Mauritania the southern third (Hodges 1983: 55). With the Madrid Accords, the Spanish promise for self-determination and the holding of a referendum on independence became obsolete. In August 1974 Spain had promised a referendum on independence to be held in the first half of 1975; shortly thereafter Spain had postponed (but not cancelled) the referendum (see Hodges 1983). [1975: independence restriction]

Concessions and restrictions

- In 1979, Mauritania gave up its claim to the southern territories. The southern regions were promptly annexed by Morocco (Rothermund 2006: 125). [1979: independence restriction]
- In 1980, Morocco began to build a border wall to separate the territories it controlled from the POLISARIO-controlled territories, protect its own civilians and important phosphate mining operations. By 1988, the wall was 1,000 miles long; today it is almost 2,000 miles long (Pazzanita 1994: 275; MRGI). In line with the codebook, blockades are coded as autonomy restrictions. [1980: autonomy restriction]

- In 1988, Morocco and POLISARIO agreed to hold an independence referendum (Stephan and Mundy 2006: 7). This constituted a very significant promise and there were steps towards implementation. Thus we code a concession on independence. [1988: independence concession]
 - o Note: Hewitt & Cheetham (2000: 320) claim the referendum agreement was in 1991, but this appears to be wrong.
- In August 1991, King Hassan called on the UN to delay the referendum, which had been planned for January 1992, for four months. The referendum has since been delayed over and over again. The Moroccan side has continued to reject the holding of an independence referendum ever since (Minahan 2002: 1626). [1991: independence restriction]
 - o 1991 coincides with the end of the end of a civil war (see above). MINURSO (United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara) was deployed in April 1991 and, according to Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl (2019), a May 1991 ceasefire was generally abided by. UCDP/PRIO records the last fatalities on August 4, 1991. Overall, the restriction therefore occurred after the end of major fighting.
- In 2000, Sahrawis founded the Western Saharan Section of the Forum for Truth and Justice (FVJ) in Al-‘Ayoun. This was a branch of the national Moroccan organization that focused on the issue of past political prisoners and “disappearances” of King Hassan’s regime. The FVJ’s Sahara Branch was the first ever Sahrawi-led organization dealing with rights issues - the Moroccan government banned it three years later, claiming it had committed acts of “separatism.” Since that time, the political space for Sahrawi activism in the Western Sahara has been extremely curtailed. (Stephan and Mundy 13)
- In June 2001, an autonomy plan introduced by the UN (the so-called “Baker Plan”) was accepted by Morocco, but not by the Saharawis (Minahan 2002: 1628). The plan was rejected by POLISARIO. A second version of the plan envisioned a five-year phase of autonomy followed by a referendum on independence. This was rejected by Morocco because it saw its territorial integrity threatened. In 2005, King Mohammed declared that Morocco was willing to offer the Western Sahara “enhanced autonomy” under Moroccan sovereignty. The offer was repeated, for example, in 2007 at the United Nations. According to Stephan & Mundy (2006: 18), the autonomy promises were largely rhetorical and there have not been steps taken towards implementation; hence we do not code a concession.
- In 2007, Morocco proposed a plan to grant Western Sahara autonomy, but the plan was rejected by the Sahrawis (Akouh 2022). While we do not code a concession, the autonomy offer is significant for the Riffian movement, which emerged after this and was encouraged by the autonomy offer to the Sahrawis (El Ouali 2011).
- In 2014, King Mohammed IV stated that the “Sahara will remain part of Morocco until the end of time.” (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2016). In addition, and as mentioned already above, the Sahrawis also continue to experience violations of their civil and political rights more generally (Freedom House 2005-2016): groups or individuals who question the legitimacy of Morocco’s claimed sovereignty over Western Sahara are not only excluded from the political debate but often also severely prosecuted (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2014). However, we do not code political or civic repression as a restriction as it does not directly pertain to the cultural rights of the group.

Regional autonomy

NA

De facto independence

- The government of Morocco controls ca 80% of western Sahara while POLISARIO controls the rest, which corresponds the area east of the Moroccan wall. (Girardin 2021: Minahan 2016). Only ca. 30-40,000 people live in the territory controlled by POLISARIO, which is mostly desert compared to 500,000 in the territory controlled by Morocco. We do not code de facto independence, but note that this decision is ambiguous.

Major territorial changes

- In 1975, parts of the Saharawi land came under Moroccan control. [1975: host change (new)]
- In 1979, Mauretania gave up its claim to the southern territories. The southern regions were promptly annexed by Morocco (Rothermund 2006: 125). [1979: host change (new)]

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Sahrawis
<i>Scenario</i>	No match/1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Sahrawis
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	60003000

Power access

- EPR codes the Saharawis only as of 1976; the 1976 code is also applied also to 1975 as there were no important differences in power access. We follow EPR in all other years. [discriminated]

Group size

- We follow EPR. [0.016]

Regional concentration

- Reliable data on the population of Western Sahara is very difficult to get by, as there has not been a census since the 1970s. According to a 1974 census conducted by the Spanish colonial authorities there were 74,000 Saharawis and approximately 20,000 Spanish. Most likely the actual number of Saharawis was considerably higher, yet even this deflated figure suggests that the Saharawis were territorially concentrated before Morocco's annexation. In subsequent years, the share of Western Saharawis decreased significantly, both due to Moroccan colonization and Saharawi refugees leaving the area. The first big refugee push came in 1975-1976 (about 50,000) (MRGI). Today, according to UNHCR estimates, it is more than 90,000, primarily in Algeria. In 1980, Morocco began to build the border wall to separate the territories it controlled from the sparsely populated POLISARIO-controlled territories. Morocco maintained a force of 100-200,000 there (MRGI). By 1995 more than 100,000 Moroccans had settled in the area (Minahan 2002: 1627). MRGI suggests that has been even more by 1991. According to Minahan, the Saharawis make up but 35% in recent years. In sum, it is pretty clear that the Saharawis lost their majority status at some point after the Moroccan annexation, though it is not clear when (this departs from MAR, but MAR appears to be wrong). Given the big refugee wave in 1975-1976 and that Morocco soon started to resettle Moroccans, some date in the mid to late 1970s or early 1980s appears to reflect the collected information best. [1975-1979: concentrated, 1980-2020: not concentrated]

Kin

- EPR codes ethnic kin in Mauritania during the Mauritanian occupation of parts of the Western Sahara; based on EPR figures the number of Saharawis in Mauritania was narrowly above the 100,000 threshold. Note, again, that reliable data is very difficult to get by. [1975-1979: kin in neighboring country]
- MAR also codes kin due to Saharawis in Mauritania, as well as Algeria (refugee camps). As noted above, the UNHCR estimates that the number of Saharawi refugees is approx. 90,000,

though the Algerian government and POLISARIO claim it is more than 150,000 (see Minahan 2002: 1623). Basing on the UNHCR figures, we do not code kin beyond 1979, the year Mauritania left the Western Sahara region. [1980-2020: no kin]

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