

# MAURITANIA

## Kewris

Activity: 1983-2015

### General notes

NA

### Movement start and end dates

- The Kewris rejected inclusion in Maure-dominated Mauritania, which for them meant a transformation from colonial rule to Arab domination. Increased repression and land reform laws to confiscate Kewri farm land led to an organized Kewri activism through the Forces de Libération Africaine de Mauritanie (FLAM) in 1983.
- According to Minahan (2002: 977), FLAM first advocated a separate state for the Kewris, “but later tuned down its rhetoric”. Other sources including Kinne (2001: 602) and Diallo (1993: 46) describe FLAM as federalist organization. 1983 is coded as the start date.
- FLAM was outlawed and exiled in 1984. Many of their subsequent activities were directed from Senegal (Kinne 2001). The movement remained ongoing in the 1990s (MAR; Minahan 2002). According to Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2006), FLAM suspended its armed struggle in 1991 and announced that it would resume its armed struggle in 2005. Furthermore, it is reported that FLAM was in decline at the end of the 1990s and then underwent a revival in 2000.
- Following the coup d'état of Col. Ely Ould Mohamed Vall in August 2005, the transitional junta announced that the incoming elected government would handle the question of the resettlement of previously displaced Kewri refugees once in power. In response, a reformist wing of the FLAM (FLAM-Renovation) split off from the main organization to participate in Mauritania's political transition.
- The movement appears to have petered out in more recent years. The last evidence of separatist claims we could find is FLAM's 2005 announcement that it would resume its armed struggle. We code the the movement's end date as 2015 in keeping with the ten-years rule. [start date: 1983; end date: 2015]

### Dominant claim

- According to Minahan (2002: 977f), FLAM first advocated a separate state for the Kewris, “but later tuned down its rhetoric”. Furthermore, Minahan reports that in 1996 FLAM split into two factions, with one promoting autonomy and the other independence.
- Other sources we consulted provide no corroborating evidence for Minahan's claim that FLAM was secessionist: Both Kinne (2001: 602) and Diallo (1993: 46) describe FLAM as federalist organization. [1983-2015: autonomy claim]

### Independence claims

- No further information on Kewri independence claims could be found beyond Minahan (2002: 977f), so no independence claim is coded. [no independence claims]

## **Irredentist claims**

NA

## **Claimed territory**

- It is unclear to which territory the Kewris' claims are tied. The group is settled predominantly in their homeland, called Chemama, which stretches along the Senegal River in southern Mauritania, north to the Senegalese border (Minahan 2002: 973). Lacking a clear definition of this territorial claim, we flag it as ambiguous and code it based on the group's ethnic settlement area as indicated by GeoEPR, which we use as an approximation. In GeoEPR, the Kewris are referred to as "Black Africans".

## **Sovereignty declarations**

NA

## **Separatist armed conflict**

- UCDP/PRIO does not suggest separatist violence, but MAR's annual rebellion score is 4 in 1985-1986 ("small-scale guerilla activity"), 3 in 1987 ("local rebellion") and again 4 in 1988-1990, pointing to a possible separatist armed conflict.
- We investigated this further using qualitative sources. Minahan (2002: 977) suggests that FLAM attempted a coup in 1987, but it failed. The officers involved were subsequently executed and the army purged of its Afro-Mauritanian troops (Prézar & Glatz 2010: 8). Violence escalated in 1989 in relation to land rights along the Senegal River. The Senegalese government backed the Kewris in the violence and there were riots in the capitals of both Senegal and Mali. According to Minahan (2002: 977), hundreds were killed in this violence, with some Kewris claiming up to 3,000 deaths. This account is confirmed by Pazzanita (1992: 281), who suggests that tensions between Kewris had increased from the mid-1980s, which led to serious violence in April 1989 and a near-war between Senegal and Mauritania. Pazzanita suggests hundreds of Mauritania had died from the mid-1980s onwards, though the narrative would suggest that most deaths were in 1989. More than 70,000 Kewris were subsequently expelled from Mauritania and forced into Senegal (Minahan 2002: 977).
- On this basis, we code LVIOLSD in 1989. The evidence for 1985-1988 and 1990 is too thin and the 25-deaths threshold was likely not met. Note: the LVIOLSD code is somewhat ambiguous because some of the violence was clearly inter-ethnic and not state-based.
- Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada notes that there has been limited violence associated with FLAM activity in subsequent years, but we found no reports of violence above the threshold. [1983-1988: NVIOLSD; 1989: LVIOLSD; 1990-2015: NVIOLSD]

## **Historical context**

- The Kewris are the black African inhabitants of the largely Arab and Berber State of Mauritania. Historically, evidence suggests that Berbers and Black Africans lived in relative peace until the spread of the desert that drove Berbers towards the Black African's territory in 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. As Arabs moving from the south newly conquer North Africa, they further push Berbers into the black tribal territories in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century. Arab tribes bring both slavery and Islam to the area (Minahan, 2002: 974).
- European contact begins in 15<sup>th</sup> century. Berber and Arab slavers raid black tribes for slaves to sell to Europeans. Many of the Kewrie tribal peoples are also engaged in the slave trade. In 1920 Mauritania becomes a French colony. French occupation brings back sedentary black farmers that

were expelled in previous centuries. The Kewri tribes, more amenable to French rule are recruited into the colonial administration and military, this further separates them from Arab-Berber majority. (Minahan, 2002: 975).

- After WWII the French introduce administrative decentralization and increased local autonomy. In 1957 the role of elected officials increases, giving the Maure majority a dominant role. Mauritania enters the French community. The Kewris reject the inclusion in the Maure-dominated Mauritania. Their protests are ignored by the French (Minahan, 2002: 976).
- The French favour the Maure control and aid their mobilization in the 1958 elections. Maures win and declare the Islamic Republic of Mauritania within the French Community in 1958 and full independence in 1960. The Kewris are excluded from government, local and regional governments in all Kewri areas are put under aggressive Maure prefects and governors. The Kewris are excluded from civil service posts they previously occupied (Minahan, 2002: 976).
- In 1966 government bans the discussion of racial problems. (Minahan, 2002: 976).
- Between 1968-1971 demonstrations of students and unionists break out. They are harshly repressed by the government. (Minahan, 2002: 976).
- The droughts of the 1970s and 1980s increase the conflict between nomadic Maures and sedentary Kewris. (Minahan, 2002: 976).
- The droughts of the 1970s and 1980s increase the conflict between nomadic Maures and sedentary Kewris. Land reform laws introduced in 1983 and 1988 were used as a legal cover up to confiscate Kewri lands along the Senegal River. Tens of thousands of Kewris were deported to Senegal or Mali and their lands were distributed to Maure instead (Minahan, 2002: 976). Based on Wikipedia, FLAM was formed only in November 1983, making it likely that the 1983 restriction occurred prior to the movement's start date. [1983: autonomy restriction]
- Prézard & Glatz (2010: 8) suggest that sharia law was introduced by Col. Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidallah, who was in power from 1980 to 1984, to strengthen the Arabization of the country; however, since the Kewris are also mainly Muslim, we considered this too ambiguous to code a restriction.

### **Concessions and restrictions**

- See above. [1988: autonomy restriction]
- In 1989, violence breaks out. Senegal government supports the Kewris. Maure activists attack Kewri villages. Thousands of Kewris were fled or were expelled. The Maures forces over 70,000 Kewris across the river, claiming they were Senegalese nationals. In expelling them, the government often destroyed citizenship cards (Minahan 2002: 977; MAR). As this implied a denial to live in a given territory, we code an autonomy restriction. [1989: autonomy restriction]
  - o Note: this narrative suggests the restriction occurred after the outbreak of violence in 1989.
- In July 1991, a general amnesty for fighters is introduced as part of a new constitution that promised equal rights (Minahan 2002: 978). We found no evidence for specific concessions and restrictions as defined here, though.
- According to MAR, in 1995 the government introduced restrictions on political activity, seizes publications, and discriminated based on language (MAR). We do not code a restriction because MAR does not provide clear evidence of a new form of language repression.
- In 2000, the Mauritanian government agreed to implement an assistance program that is designed to facilitate the reintegration of the returning refugees (Minahan 2002: 978). We code an autonomy concession based on the idea that this facilitated the return of previously displaced Kewris (see above). Citizenship was returned to some including some reparations (MAR 2006). [2000: autonomy concession]

### **Regional autonomy**

NA

## De facto independence

NA

## Major territorial changes

NA

## EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Kewris
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Black Africans
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	43503000

## Power access

- According to MAR, the Kewri are composed of three black ethnic groups, the HalPulaaren (speakers of Pulaar, Toucouleur and Fulani (Peuls)), the Soninke (Sarakole) and the Wolof. According to Minahan (2002: 973), the Kewris are the "black African inhabitants of the largely Arab and Berber state of Mauritania." So there is a 1:1 match with EPR's "Black Africans" group. We adopt EPR's power access coding. [powerless]

## Group size

- We use EPR's relative group size. [0.3]

## Regional concentration

- EPR codes regional concentration, though EPR uses a lower bar. MAR also codes regional concentration while noting that >75% of Kewris live in their regional base where they make up a predominant proportion of the local population. Minahan (2002: 973) also suggests a regional concentration code. [regionally concentrated]

## Kin

- EPR codes kinship ties to a variety of groups including the Fula and the Wolof in Gambia, Blacks in Mali, the Wolof and the Pula in Senegal, the Peul in Guinea, the Fulani in Cameroon, the Hausa-Fulani in Nigeria, and the Fulani and northern Muslim groups in the Central African Republic. Several if not all of these groups cross the numeric threshold. MAR also codes (Toucouleur and Soninke in Senegal, the former number > 0.5 million per Senegal's 1988 census). In addition, Minahan (2002: 973) suggests that there are around 40,000 Kewris in neighboring Senegal, which does not meet our numeric threshold. [kin in adjacent country]

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## **Sahrawis**

Activity: 1975-1979

### **General notes**

NA

### **Movement start and end dates**

- According to Minahan (2002: 1624) the Saharawis first rebelled against Spanish colonialization in the early 20<sup>th</sup> 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 (Hewitt & Cheetham 2000; Marshall & Gurr 2003; Minahan 1996, 2002; MAR; UCDP/PRIO).
- In line with the above narrative, the movement’s start date is pegged to 1957. However, because we do not code anti-colonial movement, we only code activity in Mauritania and Morocco, in both cases as of 1975. We note prior activity. The conflict with Mauritania ended in 1978 with a cease-fire. 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. [start date: 1957; end date: host change (1979)]

### **Dominant claim**

- Ever since 1974, 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 and in negotiations, Saharawi leaders have repeatedly demanded independence (Minahan 2002; Stephan & Mundy 2006). [1975-1979: independence claim]

## **Independence claims**

- The Sahrawis claims for independence were sustained from 1957 through to 1979 (Minahan 2002: 1625; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000; Marshall & Gurr 2003; MAR; UCDP) [start date: 1957; end date: host change (1979)]

## **Irredentist claims**

NA

## **Claimed territory**

- The Saharawi wish to establish a state within the borders of the previous colony of Spanish West Africa (Roth 2015; Minahan 2002: 1623). This territory was divided between Morocco and Mauritania until 1979, when Morocco annexed the regions held by Mauritania. To code this claim, we use those parts of former Spanish West Africa that were part of Mauritania between 1975 and 1979 according to the CShapes 2.0 dataset (Schvitz et al. 2021).

## **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]  
Note: The declaration applies to both Morocco and Mauritania. At the time of declaration southern part of WS is under Mauritania. The declaration applies to that part of the territory as well. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Polisario Front)

## **Separatist armed conflict**

- 1975-1978 are coded as LVIOLSD in line with UCDP/PRIO. Marshall & Gurr suggest that POLIRASIO 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. 1979 is coded NVIOLSD. [1975-1978: LVIOLSD; 1979: NVIOLSD]

## **Historical context**

- The Western reaches of the Sahara desert were claimed by several “states” prior to the 8<sup>th</sup> century, though the area did not really engage their active interest. Western Sahara was then conquered by the Arabs. In the 10<sup>th</sup> 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.
- From 1900 to 1910 Sheikh Ma el Amin, a widely revered religious leader led the Saharawi resistance to Spanish rule in the NW part of the territory. The campaign was later passed to his son, and the movement he began became the basis of the nationalist movement in the 1950s (Minahan 2002: 1624) In 1957 Tekna and Regueibat tribes (both Sahrawi people) stage a rebellion, driving out the Spanish. While they are able to return in 1958 they are unable to spread across the desert, remaining confined largely to a few garrison towns. (Minahan 2002: 1625)
- During this time, Morocco (1956) and Mauritania (1960) gain independence and both lay down claims to the region, their claims are rejected by the Spanish government. Instead in 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).
- In response the Movement of Liberation is formed (Movement for the Liberation of Sanguia el-Hamra and Wadi el Dhahab) in 1969. The Sahrawi movement demonstrated against the Spanish rule in 1970, however the protest is bloodily suppressed. (Proyecto Desaparecidos)
- 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. In August 1979 southern regions were promptly annexed by Morocco, so we do not code a concession (Rothermund 2006: 125).

### **Regional autonomy**

NA

### **De facto independence**

NA



## 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>	43504000

## Power access

- Mauritania annexed part of the Western Sahara in 1975. SDM codes an active separatist movement from this year onwards, but EPR only codes the group as relevant from 1976 onwards. The EPR coding notes suggest that the Sahrawis were discriminated against and did not have meaningful regional autonomy in 1975: “Mauritania never managed to achieve de facto control of the Western Saharan territory and even struggled to defend its own state territory in the period from 1976-1979. In 1978 a truce was reached and in 1979 Mauritania pulled out its troops and recognized POLISARIO as the official representative of the Western Sahara, although it never recognized the state itself. Moroccan troops moved quickly into the former Mauritanian territory and holds it since 1979. Neither were Sahwari representatives ever included into a Mauritanian government nor were citizenship rights ever extended to Sahwari people. The political status of Sahwari people can thus be coded as discriminated.” [1975-1979: discriminated]

## Group size

- We adopt the EPR group size. [0.07]

## 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. [regionally concentrated]

## Kin

- Saharawis in Morocco (see Morocco). [kin in adjacent country]

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