

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 4

SEZMUN III. HRD SYMPOSIUM

Ethics and Fundamental Rights

AGENDA ITEM: The Protection of Fundamental Rights and the Right to Self-Determination in Western Sahara

CHAIR: **ULAŞ AKBAŞ**

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Esteemed delegates,

I would like to welcome you to the third annual SEZMUN HRD Symposium and the Special Political and Decolonization Committee. My name is Ulaş Akbaş and it is a pleasure to be your committee chair.

The Special, Political, and Declonisation Committee aims to consider and develop recommendations about, but not limited to, human rights, political, and security issues.

In the committee, we will discuss the agenda item. I believe that the protection of fundamental rights and the right to self-determination in Western Sahara does not recieve enough attention. I encourage you to research, talk confidently, debate respectfully, and work as a team. Don’t be afraid to make mistakes during the session. I would be very pleased to help first-timers.

I am very excited to hear your opinions, discussions, and solutions to the issue. I hope to see you in GA4.

Sincerely,
Ulaş Akbaş

Dear Delegates of SPECPOL committee,

It is my greatest pleasure to welcome each and every of you to this years SEZMUN conference.I am thrilled to accompany you through this committee and journey.My name is Defne Tekin and im honored to be your co-chair at SEZMUN'26 in Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL)

This year's SPECPOL committee will focus on the protection of fundamental rights and the right to self-determination in Western Sahara. This topic raises important questions concerning human rights, political representation, and the right of peoples to determine their own future. The United Nations has long addressed this issue, calling for a peaceful and lasting political solution.

Throughout the sessions, I encourage delegates to approach discussions with critical thinking, demonstrate diplomatic conduct and remain open to different perspectives. Every delegate brings a unique perspective to the committee.I encourage you to actively participate, make your voices heard, and work towards finding common ground.

I am looking forward to meeting you all and witnessing the thoughtful discussions, negotiations, and solutions you will bring to our committee. I hope this conference will be both an enjoyable and meaningful experience for each of you.

Sincerely,

Defne Tekin

SPECPOL Overview

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL) is one of the six Main Committees of the United Nations General Assembly. The Committee considers issues related to decolonization, protection of human rights, political situations, and other special political matters, including Non-Self-Governing Territories. Within the United Nations framework, SPECPOL addresses issues related to decolonization and the protection of fundamental rights and the right to self-determination in 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories such as Gibraltar, the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), New Caledonia, and Western Sahara.



Agenda Item Overview

➔ After the Spanish forces withdrew from Western Sahara, Morocco claimed sovereignty over the region.
However, the Polisario Front wanted to be fully independent and have the right to self-determination in Western Sahara.

➔ The right to self-determination and fundamental rights are significant for individuals and communities today because they are fundamental elements of international law and human dignity.

➔This topic is important for SPECPOL because it addresses issues related to decolonization and political disputes.

➔ This unresolved issue continues to recquire international attention.
The Committee will discuss which solutions could be the most effective and how to find a middle ground.

Key Issues

1. The unresolved political status of Western Sahara.

2. The right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people.

3. The protection of fundamental rights and humanitarian concerns.

4. The role of MINURSO in the region and the challenges facing UN-led negotiations.

5. The right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people.

6. The situation of Sahrawi refugees and their access to humanitarian assistance.

7. The role of international organizations in supporting the decolonization process.

Definition of Key Terms

Self-Determination: Self-determination is having the right to determine your own political status and development.

Non-Self-Governing Territory: A Non-Self-Governing Territory is a region where the people have not yet gained full self-government.

MINURSO: The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) is tasked with “monitoring, investigating, and reporting on the ongoing situation” in the region.

Fundamental Rights: Fundamental rights are a group of rights that need to be protected by governments.

Decolonization: Decolonization is the process through which a region that has been occupied by a foreign nation gains autonomy and sovereignty

Polisario Front: The Polisario Front is a nationalist organization that wants to make Western Sahara independent.

Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic(SADR): The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) is a political entity proclaimed by the Polisario Front.

Main Parties Involved

Morocco: Claims sovereignty over Western Sahara and proposes autonomy for the reigon.

Polisario Front: Supports the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination and independence.

Algeria: Suppports the Polisario Front and defends the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination.

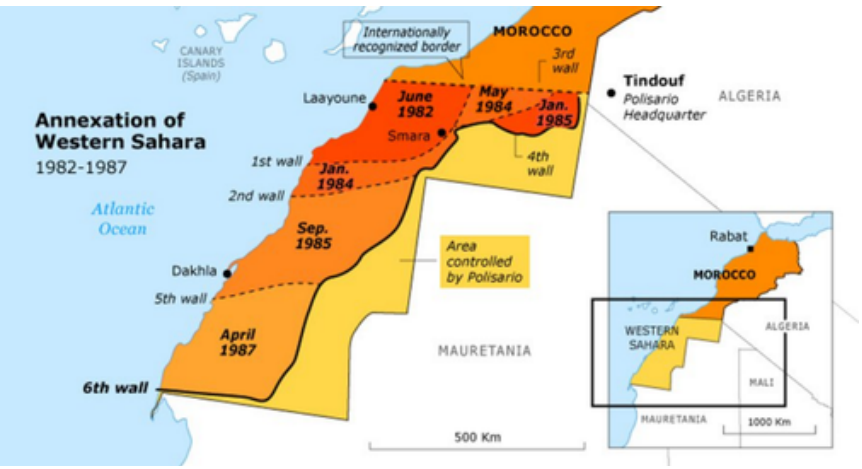
United Nations (UN): Supports efforts to reach a political solution and monitors thesituation through MINURSO.

Spain: Spain was the former colonial power in Western Sahara and withdrew from the territory in 1976.

Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR): A partially recognized state proclaimed by the Polisario Front in 1976 to represent the Sahrawi people.

Historical Background

The future political status of Western Sahara remains unresolved. When Morocco gained independence in **1956**, it claimed Western Sahara, which was under Spanish control. Western Sahara has remained on the United Nations' list of Non-Self-Governing Territories since **1963**. In **1975**, when Spanish forces began to withdraw from Western Sahara, Moroccan and Mauritanian forces entered the territory to assert control over it. In **1976**, the Polisario Front declared the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in the region. In **1979**, Mauritanian forces signed a peace agreement with the Polisario Front and withdrew from the territory.



In **1991**, the United Nations facilitated a ceasefire and established MINURSO to organize a referendum between Morocco and the Polisario Front. In **2001**, the referendum process remained unresolved due to disagreements between the parties. In **2007**, Morocco, under King Mohammed VI, claimed sovereignty over Western Sahara while proposing autonomy in the region.

Historical Background

In **2020**, Morocco joined the Abraham Accords, while the United States formally recognized Morocco's claim over Western Sahara. Israel recognized Moroccan sovereigty over Western Sahara in **2023**. The SADR is currently an exiled government and a member of the AU, and is recognized by approximately forty nations as of **2024**, including neighboring countries such as Algeria.



Current Situation

In 2020, the ceasefire was broken. There are small-scale conflicts between Morocco and the Polisario Front. The UN still recognizes Western Sahara as a Non-Self-Governing Territory. In 2025, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2797 extended MINURSO's mandate until 31 October 2026. Morocco proposes autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty in Western Sahara while the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic advocates for the right to self-determination and independence.

1) Shows current land distribution (BBC).



Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

1. **The 1991 Settlement Plan (1991):** The UN established MINURSO to support a settlement plan including a referendum on self-determination. The referendum was never held because of disagreements over key issues.

2. **The Houston Accords (1997):** The Houston Accords helped the referendum process move forward again and allowed the process of identifying eligible voters to continue. However, the referndum was never held because of disagreements about the future of Western Sahara.

3. **The 2007 Proposals and UN-Sponsored Negotiations:** Morocco proposed autonomy under its sovereignty, while the Polisario Front proposed a referendum that included ibdependence as an option. UN-led negotiations took place. However, the parties remained divided over the region's future.

Questions to be Addressed by the Committee

1. How can MINURSO’s effectiveness in stabilizing and supporting the political process be increased?

2. How can humanitarian aid to Western Sahara be improved?

3. How can the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara be upheld?

4. How can international organizations support the decolonization of Western Sahara?

5. How can the UN prevent the dispute from contributing to wider regional instability?

6. Through which mechanisms can the UN encourage both parties to return to negotiations?

Possible Solutions

Resuming UN-Led Negotiations: The United Nations could facilitate negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario Front.

Strengthening MINURSO: The UN could strenghten MINURSO's role in monitoring the security to prevent further escaslation.

Improving Humanitarion Aid: International organizations could improve humanitarian suppot.

Protecting Fundamental Rights: International organizations could strengthen efforts to protect the fundamental rights of the Sahrawi people.

Considering Autonomy and Self-Determination: Negotiations could consider Morocco's autonomy in the region while upholding the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination.

Summary

- The dispute over Western Sahara remains unresolved due to disagreements between Morocco and the Polisario Front over the future of the region.

- Despite several UN-led efforts, a lasting political solution has not been reached. The right to self-determination, the protection of fundamental rights, and humanitarian needs remain unresolved concerns. The committee should focus on promoting dialogue, supporting a peaceful political solution, and protecting the rights of the Sahrawi people.

- During the committee sessions, delegates are expected to examine the different perspectives of the Western Sahara dispute. We also expect the delegates to come well-prepared.

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