



INFORMATION NOTE THE CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT AND MILITARY AGREEMENT NO. 1 RELATED TO WESTERN SAHARA

Morocco has recently engaged in a media and diplomatic campaign of misinformation and propaganda in which it has threatened to take military action to forcibly annex the Liberated Territories of the Western Sahara, alleging that the Frente POLISARIO has violated the terms of the 1991 UN- supervised ceasefire in Western Sahara.

The misinformation campaign involved the dissemination of a series of fabrications and misrepresentations of the realities on the ground, particularly in terms of the geographical scheme enacted under the ceasefire and the related military agreement between the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco.

In light of the above, it is necessary to clarify the following:

1. Military Agreement No. 1, which regulates the ceasefire between the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco, establishes the Moroccan military wall as a line of separation between the Sahrawi and Moroccan armies pending the holding of the self- determination referendum to determine the final status of the Territory. The 2700km Moroccan military wall – lined with over five-million landmines – establishes a 5km wide “buffer zone” to the east and along the military wall.
2. The Agreement further establishes two restricted areas (25 km east and 30 km west of the Moroccan military wall respectively), where firing of weapons and/or military training exercises, redeployment or movement of troops, entry of arms and ammunition and improvements of defence infrastructures are not permitted.
3. Morocco’s claim that Bir Lehlou and Tifariti – where the UN has team sites – are located within the “buffer zone” is false. Bir Lehlou and Tifariti are located 55km and 84km from the Moroccan military wall respectively. The other localities east of the military wall situated in the Sahrawi Liberated Territories are at a distance of at least 90km from the Moroccan military wall, and therefore outside the “buffer zone”. Furthermore, it should be recalled that when the UN first established its presence in the Western Sahara in 1991, UN personnel were housed in preexisting Frente POLISARIO compounds in these localities. Mahbes, which Morocco has referenced, is located in the occupied Territory of Western Sahara west of the military wall.
4. Morocco’s allegations regarding violations of the ceasefire by the Frente POLISARIO were refuted by the United Nations itself on 3 April 2018 through the Spokesman of the UN Secretary-General, who said, “With respect to [the situation in the buffer strip], our colleagues in MINURSO [United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara] have not observed any movement of military elements in the northeast territory.”
5. Furthermore, Morocco has rejected the deployment of a UN expert mission to address the fundamental questions related to the ceasefire and related agreements in response to the call made by the Security Council in its Resolution 2351 (2017), Operative Paragraph 3, of 28 April 2017. As recognised by the UN Secretary-General in his latest report submitted to the Security Council on 29 March 2018, the Frente POLISARIO has already accepted the deployment of the UN mission of experts, which is a clear demonstration of its strong commitment to the ceasefire and the UN peace process. In this regard, it should be recalled that the intermittent presence of Frente POLISARIO members in the Guerguerate area is strictly civilian and non-military.

6. Since the entry-into-force of the ceasefire in 1991, the Frente POLISARIO has been administering and developing the Sahrawi Liberated Territories under its control. The military regions and units of the Sahrawi Liberation Army (SPLA) have always been present in Western Sahara since the start of the liberation war against Spanish colonial presence in 1973. The Frente POLISARIO has also built vital infrastructure (such as hospitals, schools and water sources, etc.) for the inhabitants of those areas who live in localities spread across the entire Liberated Territories, including, for the last 27 years, providing security and water for the UN team sites.
7. In recent decades, senior officials and high-level foreign delegations representing European, Pan-African and national parliaments, national governments, political parties, civil society organisations and international media, have been received by the Frente POLISARIO in the Sahrawi Liberated Territories. In addition, senior UN officials including UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara Christopher Ross, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara William Swing and numerous members of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) have been received in the area.
8. Western Sahara is a Non-Self-Governing Territory awaiting a process of decolonization; its status to be decided – democratically – through a referendum on self-determination. By giving credence to Moroccan allegations it is as if the status of the territory has already been decided.
9. The adoption of the UN Security Council resolution on Western Sahara on 24 April 2018 is therefore an opportunity to address the root cause of the current situation, namely that Morocco has systematically reneged on all international agreements it has signed, beginning with the refusal to implement the Settlement Plan in 1991 and the refusal to engage in negotiations since March 2012. Morocco has consistently and repeatedly violated the ceasefire agreement. This includes constant reinforcement of its military presence along the military wall; systematic violations of the human rights and plunder of the natural resources of the people of Western Sahara, in contravention of international law; transferring thousands of Moroccan settlers to Western Sahara to change the demographic nature and administrative configuration of the Territory; failure to adhere to the full range of standard UN peacekeeping functions; and crossing the military wall by building a road in the Guergerate area. Most recently, Morocco has engaged in incendiary threats of war and intimidation tactics. These have included the redeployment of troops to the occupied Territory of Western Sahara, as well as aerial reconnaissance missions.
10. It is clear that Morocco's misinformation and propaganda campaign regarding the UN-supervised ceasefire and the situation on the ground in Western Sahara is a diversionary tactic designed to divert the attention of the UN Security Council away from the real issues that underlie the current stalemate caused by Morocco.
11. The Frente POLISARIO calls urgently on the Security Council to ensure that such diversionary tactics do not distract it from the real issues that must be addressed for the negotiating process between the two parties to advance towards its ultimate objective, namely a peaceful and just solution providing for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The Frente POLISARIO also calls on the Security Council to use its authority to urge Morocco to engage seriously and constructively in the political process, to respect the terms of the ceasefire and Military Agreement No. 1, and to desist from taking any action that may increase tension in the region and threaten its stability and security.

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