

# Saharawi Technical Team



Geneva, September 2024

Joint report to the UN Committee on Enforced  
Disappearances (CED) 27th session

## Report on **Western Sahara Non-self- governing Territory**

(under Moroccan occupation  
since 1975)

The issue of Enforced Disappearances in Western Sahara represents a grave violation of international human rights law, reflecting a systematic practice by Moroccan authorities aimed at silencing Sahrawi voices and pressure the Sahrawi people into abandoning their quest for self-determination.

Despite numerous UN resolutions calling for a referendum on self-determination, the Sahrawi people continue to face severe repression. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) lacks a human rights mandate, leaving human rights violations largely unmonitored. Furthermore, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and other international observers have been denied entry to the region, exacerbating the plight of the Sahrawi people.

## **Committee of the mothers of the 15 Sahrawi abductees since 25/12/2005**

An example of the violation of international law by Morocco with regard to enforced disappearances is the case of the 15 Sahrawi disappeared in 2005. In Annex I of 2008 and Annex II of 2022, there is a description of this case, where the 15 disappeared individuals remain in such condition.

In late 2005, 15 Sahrawi men were arrested by Moroccan authorities following protests in El Aaiún, the capital of Western Sahara, where they were advocating for respect for U.N. international law. These protests were part of a broader movement known as the "Sahrawi Intifada," which began in May 2005. Moroccan authorities cracked down on the demonstrators, leading to widespread arrests.

The 15 men who disappeared after their arrests were reportedly taken to secret detention centers. Their families and human rights organizations began campaigning for information about their whereabouts, accusing the Moroccan government of forcibly disappearing them. Human rights groups, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, called for investigations and raised awareness of the case internationally.

In subsequent years, Moroccan authorities provided little information about their fates, and the issue remained unresolved, with ongoing demands for justice and accountability. The case of the 15 disappeared Sahrawis has come to symbolize the broader human rights abuses faced by Sahrawis under Moroccan rule, including forced disappearances, arbitrary detention, and suppression of pro-independence activism. The victims' families created the Committee of the Mothers of the 15 Disappeared Sahrawis in 2005 to demand justice.

## **Morocco : a Culture of Impunity**

Despite international outcry, Morocco has refused to release these prisoners or improve their conditions. The failure to address these abuses highlights the broader issue of impunity that prevails in Western Sahara. The lack of accountability is exacerbated by the absence of international human rights monitoring in Western Sahara. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) does not have a human rights mandate, leaving a significant gap in oversight. As a result, Moroccan authorities operate with near-total impunity, with Sahrawi activists and human rights defenders bearing the brunt of this repression.

The situation is further complicated by the denial of visas to victims and their families, preventing them from attending international forums, such as the Human Rights Council, to testify about their experiences.

Through sustained international attention and pressure can the cycle of enforced disappearance and impunity be broken, paving the way for justice and self-determination for the Sahrawi people.

We call upon to pressure on Morocco to comply with its international human rights obligations, including the implementation of recommendations made by international human rights bodies.