



HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

MAIN TOPIC: SELF-DETERMINATION OF PEOPLES IN WESTERN SAHARA

Definitions to take into consideration for the correct development of the debate

- **Self-determination of peoples:** according to the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (1960), "all peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."
- **Non-Self-Governing Territories:** under chapter XI of the Charter of the United Nations, the Non-Self-Governing Territories are defined as "territories whose people have not yet attained a full measure of self-government" (United Nations, The United Nations and Decolonization. Non-Self-Governing Territories). Currently, 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories remain on the agenda of the Special Committee on Decolonization.

Reason for the summoning of the Human Rights Council

Granting world peace and security is one of the main Purposes of the United Nations, which is why the Human Rights Council intends to continually push forward the need for debate between Member States of the Organization with the objective of cooperating in the prevention and resolution of conflicts that jeopardize the harmony of the international system. Acting under article 1.2 of our Charter, which dictates "to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace", this year, the Human Rights Council summons its Members to touch upon the issue of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara, the need for its decolonization and the ongoing conflict in the region.

The United Nations have always strived to protect the most vulnerable populations around the world, specially those which are dependent on other administering powers for economic, political and cultural purposes. The case we hold today for examination represents a challenge of great magnitude as the ongoing Western Sahara conflict that started on June, 1970 is taking place in "Africa's last colony" (David Connett, The Independent, Western Sahara: Africa's last colony takes struggle for self-determination to European courts), which is being disputed between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, also known as the Polisario Front. The mandate of MINURSO (United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara) over the region ends on October 31, 2024, which is less than six months away and conjures the question of what will happen in the territory afterwards.



The mandate of MINURSO in Western Sahara has been extended for periods of months and years since the creation of the mission in 1991. Up until 2017, the Security Council called

upon “the parties to show political will and work in an atmosphere propitious for dialogue in order to resume negotiations” (United Nations, UN missions, MINURSO, Resources: Security Council Resolutions and Statements). However, the organization of the referendum that the mission intended to execute has not been possible to date, contextualized in a critical scenario for the population, where human rights are being violated, irregular migrants presence is increasing and remains prevalent, and there is a desperate need for humanitarian help.

The state of affairs in Western Sahara goes strictly against the Purposes of the United Nations and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which is the reason why the Human Rights Council summons its Members to session and demands from them full respect and addition to the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (1960) and other instruments and documentation regarding public and international humanitarian law.

Sources:

- United Nations, UN Charter. Retrieved from link: UN Charter | United Nations Welcome to the United Nations <https://www.un.org/about-us> > u...
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SECONDARY TOPIC: POPULATION DISPLACEMENT DUE TO CLIMATE CONFLICTS

Definitions to take into consideration for the correct development of the debate

- **Natural disasters:** a sudden and terrible event in nature (such as a hurricane, tornado or flood) that usually results in serious damage and many deaths.
- **Environmental degradation:** is the deterioration of the environment through depletion of resources such as air, water and soil; destruction of ecosystems and the extinction of wildlife.

Reason for the summoning of the Human Rights Council

In pursuit of the promotion and protection of human rights and respecting the Charter of the United Nations, where in the preamble it states that:

"We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and; to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small; and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained" (United Nations, 1945, p.2)

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This year, The Human Rights Council is calling on its members to discuss population displacement due to climate conflicts, based on art.1.3 of UN Charter which states the purpose "to achieve international co-operation

in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion”.

Population displacement due to climate conflicts can occur due to various factors such as natural disasters, gradual environmental degradation, loss of territory due to erosion and/or sea level rise that threatens their territories. This phenomenon poses challenges at the legal and development levels, and specially the one that brings us together: a great humanitarian challenge.

This form of displacement increases the vulnerability of affected populations and generates tensions in host communities. One of the problems is the official legal recognition that the displaced people have, as they do not possess the legal support that refugees have, regardless of the fact that climate change causes unsustainable living conditions. There is a growing recognition of the need to protect and assist these vulnerable populations, and some recent developments and proposals to address this gap to seek to protect the most vulnerable populations and bridge this gap. These initiatives are:

- **Nansen initiative:** It is an intergovernmental process led by Norway and Switzerland, focused on developing better protection for people displaced across international borders due to disasters and the effects of climate change. (International Organization for Migration, Environment and Climate Change (MECC) Division, n.d.).
- **Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration:** Although they do not create new legal statuses, these international agreements recognize climate displacement and seek to improve international cooperation and response. (General Assembly of UN, 2019).

- **Climate Refugees:** Although not a legally recognized term, it is increasingly used in academic and policy debates to describe people who are forced to leave their homes due to the impacts of climate change. (European Parliamentary Research Service et al., 2023).

To better align with the purpose and principles of the United Nations, the Human Rights Council convenes a session to address population displacement caused by climate conflicts. It calls on its members to fully respect the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other relevant international humanitarian and public law documents.

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