

14<sup>th</sup> September 2020

## 45<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

### Oral Statement

#### ITEM 2 - Oral update by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

#### General Debate

Thank you, Madam President.

The Right Livelihood Foundation is deeply concerned about the situation in Western Sahara, where sustained and systematic violations and abuses of the rights of the Sahrawi people, including the right to self-determination, continue to take place in the context of the illegal occupation by the Kingdom of Morocco.

Sahrawi activists, journalists and human rights defenders are routinely subjected to torture, arbitrary detention, unfair trials, forced deportation, and other violations which are met with total impunity. We are also concerned that Moroccan occupation forces keep banning and expelling international observers from the territory.

Despite a number of calls from the international community for proper monitoring of its human rights situation, Western Sahara seems to be off the radar of the UN system. MINURSO remains the only UN peacekeeping mission without a human rights monitoring and reporting mandate, and the premature resignation of the UNSG Personal Envoy is a concerning development that has put any hope of a successful negotiation process on hold for over a year.

Madam High Commissioner,

Last February, you met with Sahrawi human rights defender and Right Livelihood Laureate Aminatou Haidar, who requested that prompt and concrete measures be taken by your Office to address the situation.

We welcome your commitment to organise a new technical mission to the territory but we reiterate our call for a cooperation and capacity building programme to be implemented, without delay, together with the legitimate representatives of the Sahrawi people. We also urge the Council to seriously consider the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on Western Sahara.

I thank you.

*The oral statement was delivered by Mr. Gianfranco Fattorini, American Association of Jurists (AAJ), on behalf of the NGOs Geneva Support Group for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Western Sahara (NGOs-GSGPPHRWS)*

### Joint oral statement

## ITEM 2 - Oral update by the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### General Debate

I thank you Madame President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of a group of more than 240 organisations; including the Sahrawi National Commission for Human Rights.

Madame High-Commissioner,

Once more, we express our deepest concern about the persistent silencing of the Office concerning the breaches to International Humanitarian Law and the serious systematic violations of Human Rights in the Occupied Territory of Western Sahara.

While the Kingdom of Morocco is considered to be the third country in Africa for the number of Covid-19 victims, no reliable information is available about the situation in the Occupied Territory of Western Sahara.

The undersigned organizations call upon you again, Madame High-Commissioner:

- to resume, without delay, the technical missions to Western Sahara initiated in 2015 (at least eastern of the Berm) and the Sahrawi refugees' camps;
- to implement the commitments made by the Office at the World Humanitarian Summit, in particular by publicly condemning serious violations of International Humanitarian Law and serious and systematic human rights violations and by reporting on the impact of the frozen conflict on Sahrawi human rights defenders and journalists in view of ensuring the enjoyment of human rights ;
- to implement a programme of technical cooperation and capacity building with the legal representative of the people of Western Sahara, the Polisario Front.

I thank you for your attention.