

H.E. Dame Barbara Woodward  
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the UN  
One Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, 885 Second Avenue  
New York, NY 10017

21 February 2021

Dear Ambassador Woodward,

Today, 21 February, marks 100 days since the collapse of the ceasefire between the Frente Polisario and the Kingdom of Morocco. The renewed clashes that broke out on 13 November near Guerguerat between the Frente Polisario and Morocco threaten regional stability and have renewed fears for the security and future of Sahrawi refugees – most of whom have been displaced since 1975.

Over 173,000 Sahrawis live in five refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria, and are almost entirely dependent upon aid to survive. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has only further exacerbated chronic hunger and poverty in the camps since March 2020.

Restarting political negotiations is essential for regional stability and is the best way to avoid any further escalation of the conflict. As members of the NGO Consortium in the Sahrawi refugee camps, we are writing to urge the UN Security Council:

- To publicly demand the parties to the conflict restore the ceasefire and return to political negotiations in pursuit of a peaceful resolution to the 45-year long Western Sahara conflict.
- To publicly call for the immediate appointment of a new UN Personal Envoy without any further delay and support the efforts of the UN Secretary-General in this regard. The failure by the UN Secretary-General to appoint a new Envoy for more than 20 months has left the negotiations between parties to the conflict completely stalled and has undermined momentum toward a political solution. This significant gap in diplomatic leadership has led, at least in part, to this volatile situation.

The perceived indifference of the international community continues to leave many Sahrawi refugees feeling frustrated and abandoned – in particular young people – and has led to an alarming trend to turn away from the peace process. Violence cannot be the answer. The UN Security Council must indicate its support for a political solution to the conflict and take urgent steps to provide hope to Sahrawi refugees and reaffirm the importance of peace.

Sincerely,

Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP)  
Centro de Estudios Rurales y de Agricultura Internacional (CERAI)  
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)  
Medicos del Mundo Spain (MdM)  
Medicus Mundi Mediterrània  
Oxfam