



His Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres  
Secretary-General of the United Nations

17th March 2020

Excellency,

The third International Decade for Eradication of Colonialism proclaimed by the United Nations will end in 2020. For forty-five years, the people of Western Sahara, the last colony in Africa, await to see their inalienable right to self-determination recognized in practice.

The human – as well as the political, economic, social, cultural and environmental – costs of more than four decades-old deadlock are beyond description: prolonged family separation, forced exile, an unaccountable number of persons affected by anti-personnel landmines, living in a provisional, precarious and inhospitable situation in the Tindouf Region, systematic violations of human rights in the occupied territories (including extra-judicial executions, forced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, torture, unfair trials, harsh prison sentences for political prisoners, intimidation and harassment, discrimination with respect to education, healthcare and employment, isolation from the outside world), generations living without hope, environmental destruction and looting of the territory's natural resources, political instability in the region, among other costs.

In the context of today's global turmoil, the issue of Western Sahara may seem as just one more among many other problems. **However, the people of Western Sahara retain their demand to decide on their own future – in relation to which International Law is unequivocal** and has been reiterated in several circumstances, including recently and repeatedly by the Court of Justice of the European Union. Further, there is no ambiguity as to the responsibility of the United Nations in relation to this issue. The precedents of the last decades, from Eritrea to South Sudan and, with greater similarity, East Timor, only reaffirm the fundamental principle that giving people a voice is an essential building block towards attaining sustainable regional and worldwide peace.

We are aware of the fundamental role Your Excellency played in resolving the situation of East Timor, and we recognize the role of the United Nations in that process. With this past experience, the United Nations can once again make a difference in the lives of many people, by engaging decisively in negotiations to get parties to agree on a free and fair referendum for the Sarahawi people, in accordance with the census already carried out. Should such action be taken, a ray of hope would shine across the many threats our humanity is currently facing, reasserting trust in the worth and value of International Law.

Two urgent measures are of high priority to unblock the situation of Western Sahara: the appointment of a new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General; and the inclusion of a mandate to monitor and report on the human rights situation as part of MINURSO.

On our part, citizens of Portugal and the World, you can count on all the support and mobilization of those whose belief is guided by the principle that in challenging times, effort, creativity and perseverance are key.

Yours sincerely,

Adelino Gomes	Journalist
Alfredo Caldeira	Legal expert
Alice Vieira	Writer
Ana Gomes	Diplomate
Ana Nave	Actress
André Freire	University professor
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António Delgado Fonseca	Armed Forces Movement (MFA) official
António Garcia Pereira	Lawyer
António Mota Redol	Engineer
António de Sousa Dias	Composer
Arménio Carlos	Union leader
Bebiana Cunha	Psychologist and member of Parliament
Boaventura Sousa Santos	University professor
Carlos Mendes	Singer-songwriter
Diana Andringa	Journalist
Eduardo Paz Ferreira	University professor
Emílio Rui Vilar	Manager
Eduardo Souto Moura	Architect
Fernando Nobre	Physician
Francisco Fanhais	Singer
Francisco Louçã	University professor
Francisco Teixeira da Mota	Lawyer
Helena Roseta	Architect
Joana Manuel	Actress
João Ferrão	University professor
João Ferreira	Member of the European Parliament
Jorge Silva Melo	Stage director
José Boavida	Physician
José Gusmão	Economist and member of the European Parliament
José Manuel Pureza	University professor and member of Parliament
José Reis	University professor
José Vítor Malheiros	Consultant and university professor
Lídia Jorge	Writer
Lúcia Gomes	Lawyer
Luís Cardoso de Noronha	Writer
Luís Manuel Farinha	Director of the Museum «Aljube – Resistance and Freedom»
Luís Moita	University professor
Luís Varatojo	Musicien
Luísa Ortigoso	Actress and stage director
Mamadou Ba	Leader of NGO «S.O.S. Racismo»
Manuel Carvalho da Silva	Sociologist, coordinating researcher
Manuel Martins Guerreiro	Armed Forces Movement (MFA) official
Maria Antónia Mendes	Musician and author

Maria do Céu Guerra	Actress and stage director
Maria João Luís	Actress and stage director
Nuno Lopes	Actor
Nuno Ramos de Almeida	Journalist
Rita Blanco	Actress
Rita Rato Fonseca	Political scientist
Samuel	Singer-songwriter
Sandra Monteiro	Director of «Le Monde Diplomatique» – Portuguese edition
Sandra Pereira	Member of the European Parliament
São José Lapa	Actress and stage director
Sebastião Antunes	Singer-songwriter
Sérgio Godinho	Musicien
Teresa Salgueiro	Singer
Tiago Carrasco	Journalist and writer
Tiago Mota Saraiva	Architecte
Vasco Lourenço	Armed Forces Movement (MFA) official
Vasco Pimentel	Sound director
Víctor Nogueira	Economist
Vítor Louro	Forestry engineer