

# Polisario vows to keep up Western Sahara fight

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The New Arab Staff & Agencies 11 December, 2020

"Fighting will continue until the total withdrawal of the Moroccan occupation troops."



Western Sahara is a disputed and divided former Spanish colony. [AFP]

The Polisario Front vowed Friday to press on with its fight for Western Sahara, a day after President Donald Trump announced the US would back Moroccan rule over the area.

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"Fighting will continue until the total withdrawal of the Moroccan occupation troops," said Mohamed Salem Ould Salek, foreign minister of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), which the Polisario proclaimed in 1976.

Western Sahara is a disputed and divided former Spanish colony, mostly under Morocco's control, where tensions with the pro-independence Polisario have simmered since the 1970s.

The Algerian-backed movement holds a fifth of Western Sahara and has campaigned for a vote on self-determination through decades of war and deadlock.

The US decision was "null and void", Ould Salek said, emphasising that the international community "does not recognise and will not recognise any Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara".

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Sovereignty "belongs exclusively to the Sahrawi people," he told *AFP*.

A decades-old ceasefire collapsed in mid-November after Morocco said it had sent troops into no man's land there to reopen a road to neighbouring Mauritania.

The Polisario has since claimed that daily exchanges of fire have taken place along the sand barrier that separates the two sides.

Trump, whose mandate ends in January, said Thursday that he had agreed to recognise Moroccan sovereignty over the disputed territory, while also

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announcing that Morocco was normalising relations with Israel.

The United Nations said Thursday its position on Western Sahara was "unchanged" following the US move.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres believed "the solution to the question can still be found based on Security Council resolutions," his spokesman said.

During an African Union meeting last week, the body put the Western Sahara question back on its peace and security council's agenda.

The SADR is a member of the African Union, but controls just 20 percent of the territory, mostly empty desert.

The Polisario, which fought a war for independence from 1975 to 1991, demands a referendum on self-determination for Western Sahara.

UN-led talks between the two sides - also including Algeria and Mauritania - have been suspended for months.

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# Israel detains Palestinian writer Rasem

# Obaidat from his home in occupied East Jerusalem

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Israeli police patrol the Old City on 12 December 2023 in occupied Jerusalem. [Getty]

Israel's police arrested Palestinian writer and political commentator Rasem Obaidat, 65, from his home in Jabal al-Mukaber, occupied East Jerusalem, on Tuesday, 12 December.

Obaidat is a regular contributor to the widely circulated Al-Quds daily newspaper. He is also a frequent guest at Al-Mayadeen, the pro-resistance Lebanese television channel which [Israel](#) banned last month.

Malek Obaidat informed *The New Arab* that his father is now being interrogated in the Al-Maskoubia police compound in West Jerusalem.

"They searched our house, confiscated two laptops, an iPad and my father's phone, then they drove away with my father," Malek told *TNA*.

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In the previous month, Mirvat al-Azzeh, a freelance journalist, was also arrested by the Israeli police for allegedly mocking one of the abductees of the 7 October attacks. She has since been released during a seven-day truce that expired on 1 December in which Hamas released 105 hostages, including 80 Israelis, in exchange for 240 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

Additionally, on 9 November, the Israeli police detained former Arab Knesset member Muhammad Barakeh for attempting to stage an anti-war sit-in in the city of Nazareth. Former MKs Sami Abu Shehadeh and Hanin Zoabi were detained the same day.

Israel isn't only targeting Palestinians but is also persecuting Jewish Israeli citizens opposing the war or even calling for a ceasefire.

Dr Meir Baruchin, an Israeli activist against the war on Gaza, was recently detained and investigated for sedition and intent to commit treason. He was put in solitary confinement for four days for writing posts on Facebook sympathising with Palestinian victims of Israeli strikes on Gaza.

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On Tuesday, 12 December, Israeli forces killed four Palestinians in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin, the Palestinian health ministry reported.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said they were killed in a drone strike on the Old City and that Israeli forces "continue to storm Jenin camp and ambulance crews are prevented from entering... without prior coordination".

According to Palestinian sources, the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli soldiers and settlers in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has reached 488.

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# UN General Assembly set to demand Gaza ceasefire

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The New Arab Staff & Agencies 12 December, 2023

UN General Assembly set to call for immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza following US veto in security council.

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The UNGA meeting could see members vote for a ceasefire [Getty]

The UN General Assembly appeared set to demand on Tuesday an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in the two-month-long Israeli war on Gaza after the United States vetoed such a move in the Security Council.

No country has a veto power in the 193-member General Assembly, which is due to vote on a draft resolution that mirrors the language of one that was blocked by the United States in the 15-member Security Council last week.

General Assembly resolutions are not binding but carry political weight and reflect global views on the war in the

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Gaza Strip, as health authorities in the Hamas-run Palestinian enclave say the death toll from Israel's offensive had passed 18,000.

The assembly vote comes a day after 12 Security Council envoys visited the Egyptian side of the Rafah border crossing, the only place where limited humanitarian aid and fuel deliveries have crossed into Gaza. The United States did not send a representative on the trip.

"With each step, the U.S. looks more isolated from the mainstream of U.N. opinion," said Richard Gowan, UN director at the International Crisis Group (ICG).

The United States and Israel oppose a ceasefire because they believe it would only benefit Hamas. Washington instead supports pauses in fighting to protect civilians and allow the release of hostages taken by Palestinian militants in a deadly 7 October attack on Israel.

In October the General Assembly called for "an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities" in a resolution adopted with 121 votes in favor, 14 against - including the US - and 44 abstentions.

Some diplomats and observers predict the vote on Tuesday will garner greater support.

"The dynamics are different to those in October. The length and intensity of Israel's operations in Gaza have left many UN members convinced that a ceasefire is essential," Gowan said.

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Israel has bombarded Gaza from the air, imposed a siege, and launched a ground offensive in retaliation for a 7 October attack by Hamas that Israel says killed 1,200 people and saw 240 people taken hostage.

The draft General Assembly resolution to be voted on Tuesday also demands the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and that the warring parties comply with international law, specifically about the protection of civilians.

Most of the 2.3 million people in Gaza have been driven from their homes and the United Nations has given dire warnings about the humanitarian situation in the coastal enclave, saying that hundreds of thousands of people are starving.

*(Reuters)*

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