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H.E. Mr Gustavo Meza-Cuadra
Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations
President of the Security Council

New York, 20 July 2019

Your Excellency,

It is with alarm that I would like to bring to your attention that Morocco's continued and escalating human rights violations against Sahrawi civilians are aggravating the situation on the ground and increasing tension in the occupied Western Sahara.

On Friday night, hundreds of Sahrawi civilians spontaneously took to the streets in El Aaiún, the capital of the occupied Western Sahara, to peacefully celebrate the victory of Algeria's football team against Senegal in the 2019 African Cup of Nations. Several cities in the occupied Western Sahara including Smara, Bojador and Dajla also witnessed similar acts of celebration.

As part of its systematic policy of repression in the occupied Western Sahara, the Moroccan security forces violently attacked the Sahrawi civilians using truncheons, tear gas, water cannons, rubber bullets and stones. Hundreds of Moroccan security agents including policemen in uniform and in plain clothes, gendarmerie and paramilitary and auxiliary forces took part in the brutal attack resulting in many Sahrawi civilians being seriously wounded, some of them remain in critical condition.

Among the victims was Ms Sabah Osman Hamida, a 24 years old Sahrawi young woman who was run over by a vehicle belonging to the Moroccan auxiliary forces on Smara street in the occupied city of El Aaiún. She died a few hours later from her wounds. The number of fatalities is likely to increase given that many of the civilians wounded remain in critical condition.

We strongly condemn the atrocious attack carried out by Moroccan security forces against innocent Sahrawi civilians in the occupied Territories of Western Sahara, who remain deprived of their basic human rights including their right to free expression and peaceful assembly. We urgently call on the Security Council to hold Morocco accountable for the consequences of this dangerous act and for the heinous crimes perpetrated by its security forces against the Sahrawi population.

The Moroccan forces of occupation have also arrested dozens of Sahrawi civilians whose whereabouts remain unknown. At the time of writing, several Sahrawi occupied cities, particularly El Aaiún, are still under tight siege by Moroccan security forces. The Moroccan forces of occupation have brought in massive reinforcements, and there are alarming signs that they are preparing to unleash a new wave of brutal repression.

Regrettably, Morocco's repressive actions against Sahrawi civilians take place in the presence of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) in the Territory, which remains under the full responsibility of the United Nations. We urge the Security Council to ensure that MINURSO operates in line with basic standards applicable to all other UN peacekeeping operations, including having a capacity to monitor, protect and report on the human rights situation.

We also strongly call on the Security Council to exert pressure on Morocco to end its escalating human rights abuses in the occupied Western Sahara, which seriously risk aggravating the situation on the ground and undermining any prospect of building trust and achieving progress in the UN-led peace process.

I would be most grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurance of my highest consideration.



Dr Sidi M. Omar
Representative of the Frente POLISARIO at the United Nations

