



Mission Viejo High School MUN
34th Annual Conference
Vox Populi



4th SPD-Western Sahara

Hello delegates! My name is Meaghan Holt-Hillis and I will be your vice chair for the MVHS MUN 2017 conference. I am in my third year of MUN. I used to do cross country and I am involved in the agricultural program. I am also junior in AP classes. Even though I have eight classes, I still find time for my hobby of playing bass. I look forward to seeing you all in committee. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us at mvhsmunspd@gmail.com

4th SPD, also known as the United Nations Fourth Committee of the GA, specializes in dealing with crucial political issues that cannot be specifically addressed by the General Assembly. 4th SPD has consequently merged with the Special Political Committee to focus on solving political issues of major importance. 4th SPD mainly focuses on the issues of peacekeeping, decolonization, Palestinian refugees and human rights, mine action, public information, outer space, atomic radiation, and the University for Peace.

I. Historical Background

Western Sahara is a former Spanish colony bordered by Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania. Although considered to be one of the most sparsely populated regions in the world, Western Sahara is still has the largest population of the non-self-governing territories, and is rich in resources, from its phosphate reserves and rich fishing grounds to its suspected offshore oil deposits.

Currently, a major conflict is underway between the indigenous Sahrawi people, led by the Polisario Front and Morocco, who annexed Western Sahara in 1975. Following the relinquishment of Spanish administrative control, both Mauritania and Morocco received some measure of control, but Mauritania renounced its claims in 1979. The Polisario Front has attempted to reclaim the territory, but after a 16 year long war, only about a third of the territory is under their control, now called the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Since the UN-sponsored ceasefire agreement in 1991, Morocco has de facto control of two thirds of Western Sahara, with most of its major cities and natural resources. Although both have received recognition from various states, no member state of the UN has acknowledged Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara as of 2006.

Since the ceasefire, several calls for peace have been issued, but none have led to substantive action. The referendum scheduled for 1992 was not able to continue and the Houston Agreement, an attempt to revive the referendum met no success as well. UN efforts have tried to find a common ground between both parties, but voting issues brought any progress to a halt. Shortly afterward, Morocco declared that independence should not be an option, and proposed autonomy instead.

A UN initiative, the Baker Plan, did attempt to grant Western Sahara the right to self-determination; however, no lasting impact has been noted and both parties still disagree on the future of Western Sahara: Morocco for autonomy and the Polisario Front for complete independence. To this day, tensions still remain high and all negotiations find little success in resolving the dispute.



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There have been many human rights violations to note, including the extensive use of chemical warfare on Sahrawi refugee camps and the treatment of Moroccan prisoners.

II. UN Involvement

The UN has had extensive involvement in the Western Sahara Crisis. The United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) attempted to negotiate for a ceasefire and peace treaty in the 1980s, as the conflict continued. In 1990, the UN Secretary General outlined the UN role in Western Sahara, with the establishment of a ceasefire, containment or withdrawal of troops of both parties, and the creation of an organization to hold a referendum for self-determination. That organization is MINURSO (*Mission des Nations unies pour l'organisation d'un referendum au Sahara occidental*), created through resolution 690 in 1991. Without Moroccan support however, neither the referendum or voter identification processes could continue any further. As the UN Special Envoy, former US Secretary of State James A. Baker did attempt to restart the referendum with his Baker Plan by considering autonomy as a solution, but the plan fell through on the grounds of the need for a decisive referendum, not a compromise. With the resolution 1429, the Baker Plan was redrawn, but the Morocco rejected the proposal and forced Baker's resignation. As of now, the conflict is continuously deteriorating with no intention of stopping, as both sides fail to reach an agreement.

III. Bloc Positions

- **European Bloc:** The countries of the European Union generally have varying positions on the issue. As a whole, they have not recognized SADR or Morocco's claims to the territory. However, some nations do have interests in Western Sahara (i.e. France). Recently, Morocco has suspended diplomatic relations to the EU, which may cause some tension.
- **Latin American Bloc:** Although split, much of the Latin American Bloc does recognize SADR as a legitimate governing body. Cuba and Venezuela do aid the Sahrawi people to a great extent.
- **Asian Bloc:** Nations of the Asian Bloc are far removed from the central issue; however, some nations such as China have not yet recognized SADR.
- **Western/North American Bloc:** The U.S fears Western Saharan independence may lead to a non-viable state and supports Morocco's autonomy plan. They have a vague position on the issue but have urged for peace and the respect for human rights. Much of the Western Bloc has followed suit.
- **African Bloc:** The African Union supports the self-determination of the Sahrawi people.
- **Middle Eastern Bloc:** The Arab League has backed Morocco in the past, but supports the efforts of the UN to reach a peaceful solution.

IV. Questions to Consider



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1. Is it viable for Western Sahara to achieve independence? Socially and economically?
2. What is Morocco's purpose for retaining control over Western Sahara?
3. How can the UN and other nations collaborate to provide the resources and policies necessary to provide the Sahrawi people self-determination, if possible?

V. Works Cited

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