



# Africa is not yet free!

This time the face of colonialism is no more the old European colonialism of Spain, but one maintained against all odds by a fellow African government, the Kingdom of Morocco.

---

By Malainin Lakhali

In his inaugural speech to the first Organisation for African Unity (OAU) Conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1963, the late President Nkrumah, a founding father of African unity said:

*How, except by our united efforts, will the richest and still enslaved parts of our continent be freed from colonial occupation and become available to us for the total development of our continent? Every step in the decolonisation of our continent has brought greater*

*resistance in those areas where colonial garrisons are available to colonialism. This is the great design of the imperialist interests that buttress colonialism and neo-colonialism, and we would be deceiving ourselves in the most cruel way were we to regard their individual actions as separate and unrelated.*

As African Heads of State gathered in Sandton for the 25th African Union Summit, 52 years after the formation of the OAU, this assertion by

Nkrumah is still relevant. Africa is still far from being freed from the yoke of foreign colonialism, neo-colonialism and barbarous exploitation, made even worse by the involvement and complicity in many cases of African collaborators acting on behalf of their old colonial masters, about whom Frantz Fanon warned us in his magnum opus *Wretched of the Earth*.

One of the most striking cases is the persistence of the colonial occupation of Western Sahara (officially known as the Saharawi Republic), a full-fledged

member State of the former OAU since 1982 and a Founding member of the African Union. This time the face of colonialism is no more the old European colonialism of Spain, but one maintained against all odds by a fellow African government, the Kingdom of Morocco.

Many will be shocked to realise that a fellow African nation is still fighting for freedom and full independence and that the people of Western Sahara are still suffering under brutal military occupation by another African country.

Saharawis under the Moroccan occupation are indeed living under a very similar type of military occupation to that endured by Palestinians, with all that it entails: mass human rights violations, oppression of all forms of peaceful political struggle for independence; activists suffer from disappearances, imprisonment, torture, harassment and assassination.

Still, the perpetrators of these crimes are enjoying impunity, because they enjoy the protection of Western powers such as France.

Morocco has in fact enjoyed unreserved support and protection from Paris since the beginning of its Western Sahara colonial adventure in October 1975. Without this external support it would not have succeeded in sustaining this illegal and brutal invasion and occupation. France even participated in the military confrontation between the Moroccan forces of occupation and the Saharawi liberation movement, POLISARIO Front, in 1976.

The Janus-faced French government, whilst pretending to champion human rights worldwide with their famous slogan *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*, (liberty, equality, fraternity), is, through the protection it is giving Rabat in the United Nations Security Council, tacitly supporting the Moroccan human rights violations in Western Sahara. France also shamefully opposes the wide international call to mandate the UN Mission in Western Sahara to monitor and report on human rights in that territory. It has repeatedly used its influence in the UN to protect its dauphin, Morocco, enabling it to ignore more than 67 Security Council

resolutions and 52 UN General Assembly Resolutions, in addition to many AU and other regional organisations' resolutions calling for the exercise by the people of Western Sahara of their inalienable right to self-determination and freedom.

But Africa, or at least a great part of free and proud Africans, has always expressed support to their brother and sister freedom fighters in Western Sahara. A few prominent names must be mentioned here: Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Thomas Sankara and Huari Boumediene. The foregoing is evident in a speech given by Oliver Reginald Tambo, then President of the exiled

**“Morocco has in fact enjoyed unreserved support and protection from Paris since the beginning of its Western Sahara colonial adventure in October 1975. Without this external support it would not have succeeded in sustaining this illegal and brutal invasion and occupation.”**

African National Congress, on a visit to the Western Sahara liberated zone in Tifariti, 22 July 1988, when he noted that “We...will continue to support your struggle by all means necessary, in order for both our just causes to triumph”.

Western Sahara is still colonised because it is rich in natural resources that are exploited by some countries and governments in complicity with Morocco. And the list of the guilty plunderers of this African country is huge. It comprises the European Union, in addition to multinational companies from dozens of countries from the five continents and even a few

African countries under the influence of France.

The only losers here are Africans. Their wealth is plundered in this North African territory as it is still plundered in other zones usually by the same suspects, with complete impunity of course.

Even in the African Union, which has recently adopted a stronger position in favour of the full independence of the territory, there are still a few countries who try every now and then to create divisions, speaking against freedom and full liberation for this colonised African nation, and in favour of the brutal and violent occupation of the last colony in Africa. They openly oppose all the principles and goals set forth by the founding fathers of the OAU and visionaries of Pan Africanism.

But progressive Africa has spoken since the eighties in favour of the Saharawi struggle when African leaders admitted the Saharawi Republic as a member of the Pan African organisation, while Morocco withdrew from it. Morocco is in fact the only African country that is at present not a member of the AU, and it should stay that way until it finally agrees to set the Saharawis free from its colonisation.

In fact, the African Union Peace and Security Council's 496th meeting, held in Addis Ababa on 27 March 2015:

- (i) *Appealed for an enhanced and coordinated international action towards the early organization of a referendum of the people of Western Sahara, in compliance with relevant OAU/AU decisions and UN resolutions; and*
- (ii) *Urged the UN Security Council to take all necessary decisions to ensure progress in the search for a solution to the conflict in Western Sahara, acknowledging its critical role and primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.*

Let us reiterate that Africa cannot be said to have entered a post-colonial phase as long as Western Sahara remains a colony. The Saharawi Republic will not be completely free until, through its own sovereignty, it controls its own resources and destiny. ■