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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Réseau Unité pour le Développement de Mauritanie, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 January 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Forced Disappearance in Tindouf Refugee Camps by Frente Polisario

I am writing to bring to the Council's attention the alarming issue of forced disappearances occurring in the Tindouf refugee camps, which are under the control of Algeria and the Frente Polisario. It has come to my attention that numerous individuals, including activists, journalists, and dissidents, have been subjected to enforced disappearances within these camps. The gravity of these human rights violations demands Council's urgent attention and action.

Forced disappearances are egregious violations of human rights that cause immense suffering to the victims and their families. These acts involve the abduction, arrest, or detention of individuals by state authorities or non-state actors, followed by a refusal to disclose their fate or whereabouts, placing them outside the protection of the law. The use of enforced disappearances as a means of suppressing dissent and silencing opposition is a flagrant violation of international human rights standards.

Numerous cases serve as evidence of forced disappearances in the Tindouf refugee camps. I would like to highlight a few prominent examples:

1. **Ahmed El Khalil:** Ahmed El Khalil, a human rights activist and member of the Sahrawi Initiative for Change organization, was forcibly disappeared on August 20, 2009, in the Rabouni camp. He was known for advocating for human rights within the camps and calling for greater transparency and accountability. His family and fellow activists have been denied access to information regarding his whereabouts or fate, and his case remains unresolved.
2. **El Kouri Mohamed Salem** a well know leader of Frente Polisario . He has been disappeared for more than 30 years in Tindouf refugee Camps and no one knows where he is . His daughter is searching for him and has made many communications Internationally, Regionally and Nationally, but still he has been kidnapped by the Frente Polisario according to his family and witnesses.

These cases represent just a fraction of the numerous forced disappearances that have taken place in the Tindouf refugee camps. The Algerian government and the Frente Polisario must be held accountable for these grave violations of human rights. The following actions are recommended to address this issue:

1. **Independent Investigation:** The United Nations Human Rights Council should establish an independent and impartial commission of inquiry to investigate the cases of forced disappearances in the Tindouf refugee camps. The commission should have unrestricted access to the camps, victims, and witnesses, and should aim to identify the perpetrators and hold them accountable.
2. **Protection of Human Rights Defenders:** Measures must be taken to ensure the safety and protection of human rights defenders, journalists, activists, and dissidents within the Tindouf refugee camps. The Algerian and Frente Polisario authorities should be urged to cease any acts of intimidation, harassment, or violence against individuals exercising their right to freedom of expression and assembly.

In conclusion, the forced disappearances in the Tindouf refugee camps committed by Algeria and Frente Polisario constitute severe human rights violations that demand immediate attention. The United Nations Human Rights Council must act decisively to address these abuses, hold the perpetrators accountable, and ensure justice for the victims and their families.