



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Fifty-second session

27 February–31 March 2023

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **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.

[23 January 2023]

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



## Slavery In Tindouf Refugee Camps

Slavery has always existed in Tindouf refugee camps controlled by Polisario front, with the economic and political dominance of white Sahrawi people (collectively referred to as Bidan) historically enslaving black people from the Northwest of Sahara. Most formerly enslaved people and their descendants are known as the Haratin. They speak Hassaniya, a local Arabic dialect that the Bidan also speak, and constitute around 10 percent of the Tindouf refugee camps population.

Talking about slavery and its consequences, besides other violations, in the refugee camps of Tindouf is a taboo and may lead to imprisonment and ill-treatments especially for dark-skinned people who refuse slavery may lead their “de-tribalization”; that means losing protection and all kinds of social and humanitarian aids.

We registered that dark-skinned people in Tindouf refugee camps are subject to systematic racial discrimination exercised by the leaders of Polisario front:

- Dark-skinned people in Tindouf refugee camps are banned from reaching high military ranks.
- Dark-skinned people are obliged to do hard jobs in the camps.
- They can't reach high political positions or administrative posts.
- They don't reach out to humanitarian aids as the white leader's relatives.
- They are the poorest and the lowest category of the social structure in Polisario camps.

On the 27th of December 2022 the association of liberty and progress to fight slavery organised a peaceful protest in front of the representative of Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO in Tindouf) responsible for cultural matters, it was against his racial insults against a women artist for being black. The leaders of this protest are facing many types of harassment and psychological pressures by his followers and his tribe members but the victims can't complain for fear not to be jailed and oppressed.

We call on all human rights family, especially human rights mechanisms, to denounce and to take serious steps to stop such practices committed by Frente POLISARIO in Tindouf refugee camps under Algerian protection taking advantage of the international silence, Frente POLISARIO in Tindouf refugee camps continues to oppress black people and their opponents and commit all types of human rights violations like mistreatment of prisoners, forced labour, and restrictions on freedom of movement and freedom of speech and others. These facts have been monitored and confirmed by various organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

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