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the diplomatic advisory group

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## **Independent Diplomat Communiqué 5 May 2009**

### **Human rights in Western Sahara - one step closer**

In an important development last week, the UN Security Council - in [Resolution 1871](#) - for the first time recognized "the human dimension" of the long-standing dispute over Western Sahara between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO, the elected leadership of the indigenous population of Western Sahara. Independent Diplomat has provided diplomatic advice and practical assistance to the Frente POLISARIO since 2006, helping the Saharawi people in their 30-year-long struggle to secure a free referendum on the establishment of an independent state in Western Sahara, as required by international law.

The POLISARIO worked behind the scenes at the UN in New York to push Council delegations to mandate the UN's Mission in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to monitor human rights. Such a capacity has been recommended by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and an ad-hoc delegation of the European Parliament, which visited the region in late January 2009. MINURSO is the only contemporary UN peacekeeping mission in the world which lacks a mandate to monitor human rights in its area of operation.

With support from non-permanent Council members Costa Rica and Uganda, the POLISARIO worked successfully to isolate France as the only delegation opposed to expanding the Mission's mandate to include a human rights monitoring capacity. France's blocking tactics were reported worldwide, including in the French daily *Le Monde* - see [here](#). While not yet secured, this year's resolution provides a sound basis for seeking human rights protections for the Saharawi population in the future.



Photo: UN Photo/Evan Schneider

To support our work with the Frente POLISARIO of Western Sahara, please click [here](#).

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