

20 January 2021

President Joseph Robinette Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

We are writing to express our strong objections to President Trump's decision to recognize Morocco's illegal annexation of Western Sahara, and to call on you to rescind the declaration as soon as possible upon coming to office.

As you are fully aware, Western Sahara is recognized as a non-self-governing territory by the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, the Court of Justice of the European Union, and a broad consensus of international legal scholars. As a result, the people of that nation have the right of self-determination and to independence should they decide to do so through a free and fair referendum as stipulated in United Nations resolutions. The United States has no right to determine their fate simply by declaring that they are part of another country.

Western Sahara, formally known as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, has been recognized by scores of countries and is a full, founding member state of the African Union, the charter of which prohibits unilateral changes in colonial borders. Trump's proclamation, therefore, has put the United States on record endorsing the takeover of one legally-recognized African state by another. If allowed to stand, it could seriously damage the U.S. reputation on the continent and even encourage other countries to believe they could also get away with territorial expansion.

When Iraq invaded and annexed Kuwait in 1990, the international community united in opposition to this flagrant violation of the UN Charter. While there were disagreements as to whether war was the best means to reverse the Iraqi takeover, the United States led the international community in its determination that such aggression must not stand. Trump's decision sends a very bad signal that the United States now sees such illegal irredentism as legitimate.

You have spoken of the need for the United States to lead by the power of our example. This requires upholding the United Nations Charter and related international legal principles recognizing the right of self-determination and the inadmissibility of expanding territories by force. Furthermore, as former Secretary of State James A. Baker reminded us, "the United States was founded first and foremost on the principle of self-determination." Thus, reneging on that principle regarding the people of Western Sahara is not only regrettable but immoral and dangerous.

Both Baker and former National Security Advisor John Bolton have already called for the US to rescind its recognition of Morocco's annexation of Western Sahara. Republican Senator James Inhofe and Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy are among the bipartisan supporters of self-determination in Western Sahara. During your tenure as Vice President, the Obama administration sought to introduce human rights monitoring to the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) before succumbing to pressure from Morocco's allies to drop this initiative. We

therefore call on you to rescind US recognition of Morocco's annexation, to insist upon a human rights mandate for MINURSO, to cancel plans to open a US consulate in Dakhla, Western Sahara, and to support self-determination in Western Sahara.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Zunes
Professor of Politics
University of San Francisco, USA

Alice Wilson
Senior Lecturer
University of Sussex, UK

Jacob Mundy
Associate Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies
Colgate University, USA

R. Joseph Huddleston
Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Relations
Seton Hall University, USA

Yahia Zoubir
Professor of International Relations and International Management
KEDGE Business School, France

Vivian Solana
Assistant Professor
Carleton University, Canada

Meriem Naili
PhD Candidate
University of Exeter, UK

Mark Drury
Lecturer in Anthropology
Princeton University, USA

Joanna Allan
Northumbria University, UK

Sébastien Boulay
Assistant Professor in Anthropology
University of Paris France

Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh
Professor of Migration and Refugee Studies
University College London, UK

Juan Soroeta
Professor of International Law
University of the Basque Country, Spain

Isaías Barreñada
Professor of International Relations
Madrid Complutense University, Spain

Ben Hounet Yazid
Senior Research Fellow
French National Center for Scientific Research

Francesco Correale
Historian
University of Tours, France

Moisés Ponce de León
University of Rennes 2, France

Carles Serra
University of Girona, Spain

Souadou Lagdaf
University of Catania, Italy

Eduardo Ruiz Vieitez
Professor in Constitutional Law
University of Deusto, Spain

Maria Lopez Belloso
Postdoctoral Researcher
University of Deusto, Spain

Joanne Clarke
University of East Anglia, UK

Claude Calame
Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, France

Bahia Mahmud Awah
Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain

Jaume Guia
University of Girona, Spain

Marc Vicens
University of Girona, Spain

Rita Reis

PhD Candidate
University of Lisbon, Portugal

Concha Moya
Journalist and writer

Julia Gonzalez Ferreras
University of Deusto, Spain

Judit Tavakoli
Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany

Wolf-Dieter Seiwert
Center for European and Oriental Culture/ZEOK, Germany

John Comaroff
Hugh K. Foster Professor of African and African American Studies and of
Anthropology
Harvard University, USA

Enrique Bengochea Tirado
New University of Lisbon, Portugal

Raquel Ojeda-García
Senior Lecturer in Political Science
University of Granada, Spain

Irene Fernández-Molina
Senior Lecturer in International Relations
University of Exeter, UK

Manfred O. Hinz
Professor
University of Bremen and Jacobs University, Germany

Àngel Vázquez Viu

Maja Zwick
Free University Berlin, Germany

Adolfo Campoy-Cubillo
Associate Professor of Spanish
Oakland University, USA

Victoria Veguilla del Moral
Professor of Political Science
Pablo de Olavide University, Spain

G. Michelle Collins-Sibley
Professor of English, Director of Africana Studies

University of Mount Union, USA

Michael Minch
Professor of Philosophy, Peace and Justice Studies
Utah Valley University, USA

Ferran Soler
Catalonia, Spain

Michael Nagler
Professor Emeritus
UC, Berkeley, USA

Barbara Wien
Senior Professorial Lecturer, School of International Service
American University, USA

Randi Irwin
Casual Academic Lecturer
University of Newcastle, Australia

Anna DeMers

Juan Ignacio Robles Picoón
Professor of Anthropology
Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain

John D. MacDougall
Professor Emeritus, Regional, Economic and Social Development
University of Massachusetts-Lowell, USA

CC: The Honorable Anthony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520