

Even after 37 years of failed efforts to realize a referendum on self-determination in the Western Sahara, the Polisario Front remains the unified voice of the Saharawi people. Nonetheless, certain high-level leaders have defected over the years, citing a variety of reasons. Most recently, Ahmadou Souilem, who was a personal advisor to Polisario Secretary General Mohammed Abdelaziz, left the Tindouf camps in July 2009, citing disillusionment with the Polisario leadership and unbearable conditions in the camps. The Polisario's willingness to abide by the UN's terms – despite the organization's unwillingness to impose a solution on Morocco – have caused several former supporters to lose patience with the movement's leadership.

As Morocco itself admits, the Kingdom offers safe haven and incentives – both economic and political – for Saharawis who defect from the Polisario. Saharawis who support Morocco's autonomy plan are given positions in Moroccan-based organizations, as well as in the Moroccan parliament itself. The Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs (CORCAS) was founded by King Mohammed VI in 2006 to increase royal influence in the Western Sahara. Khalli Hanna Ould Errachid, a Saharawi who assisted Morocco in organizing the Green March in 1975, was named President, and a number of Polisario defectors have become members.

Despite occasional defections from the Polisario Front, every year dozens of Saharawis make the inverse journey from the Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara to the refugee camps. Such journeys are made to reunite with family, flee oppression by Moroccan security forces, and show support for the Polisario Front. Even after three decades of disappointments, the Saharawis remain largely united.