

From War to Peace: Armed Conflicts and Lessons Learned from Colombia and Morocco



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In recent days, within the framework of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, King Mohammed VI of Morocco delivered a message that resonated in my heart and mind. In his speech, he called for peace and dialogue as the only viable paths to resolve conflicts.

As a human rights lawyer who has worked in Colombia, a country marked by war, King Mohammed VI's words deeply moved me. Like him, I am convinced that peace is the only way to a better future for all.

In my work with victims of armed conflicts, I have witnessed the suffering they endure. I have seen shattered families, orphaned children, and traumatized individuals. I have witnessed how war destroys lives, communities, and hinders the development of nations. According to the United Nations, in 2022, over 10,000 deaths were recorded in armed conflicts worldwide.

Children are especially vulnerable in armed conflicts. According to UNICEF, in 2022, over 2,000 children died in armed conflicts, and more than 6,000 were recruited by armed groups.

It is heartbreaking to see that the Western Sahara conflict remains unresolved. This conflict has caused great suffering to the Sahrawi population, living for decades in a political and humanitarian limbo. The autonomy proposal for Western Sahara presented by Morocco represents an opportunity to end this conflict peacefully. This proposal offers the Sahrawis a high degree of self-government, respecting Morocco's sovereignty. I firmly believe that this proposal is the best option for peace in the region. It is a fair and balanced proposal with the potential to meet the aspirations of the Sahrawi population.

During my visit to Morocco, I had the opportunity to speak with victims of the conflict in this region of Africa. Like victims in my country, war has devastated their lives. However, it is noteworthy how the public policies of the Kingdom of Morocco have translated into social peace and an improvement in the quality of life for people who now have better access to state goods and services. The impact of these guidelines on the reconstruction of their communities is also admirable. In terms of institutional and administrative similarities between Colombia and Morocco in handling victims, both countries have shown significant commitment to strengthening judicial cooperation. For instance, Moroccan officials have received training from Colombia's National Police in an effort to enhance crime prevention and reduce criminality.

This kind of bilateral cooperation is a testament to the shared willingness of both countries to learn and grow together. Additionally, the two countries have maintained a smooth and constructive political dialogue, supported by a convergence of views on multiple regional and international issues. They have collaborated on various cooperative projects in areas such as agriculture, security, sports, tourism, crafts, and archiving.

In recent years, Morocco has made significant progress in promoting and protecting human rights, both nationally and internationally. Some of Morocco's notable achievements in human rights include the adoption of a new constitution in 2011 that enshrines human rights as a fundamental value of the state, the establishment of an independent and autonomous National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), and the reform of the Penal Code to eliminate cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishments.

Armed conflicts have a devastating impact on the economy and society, causing massive displacements, infrastructure destruction, and the loss of economic opportunities. Peace is the only way to end the suffering and death caused by armed conflicts. I am convinced that peace is possible in Western Sahara.

A negotiated agreement, such as the autonomy proposal, can put an end to this conflict in a stable and lasting manner; for this reason, the words of His Majesty are more relevant than ever in a tumultuous and unstable world. Human Rights Without Borders celebrates this commitment to ensuring human rights and the relentless pursuit of peace, not only for our Sahrawi brothers but in every corner of the world.