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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement* submitted by CIRID (Centre Indépendent de Recherches et d'Initiatives pour le Dialogue), 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.

[22 May 2025]

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

Extreme Poverty in the Tindouf Camps: A Result of Humanitarian Aid Diversion and Structural Violations of Fundamental Rights

The Centre Indépendant de Recherches et d'Initiatives pour le Dialogue (CIRID) expresses its deep concern over the **chronic and extreme poverty** affecting tens of thousands of Sahrawi refugees in the **Tindouf camps** (southwestern Algeria). This humanitarian crisis is not incidental but **deliberately maintained** by the leadership of the Polisario Front, with the **complicity of the Algerian authorities**, through the large-scale **diversion of international aid** and the **systematic denial of economic rights**.

1. Systematic and Organized Diversion of Humanitarian Aid

According to official reports—most notably from the **European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)**—over **€105 million in humanitarian aid** was misappropriated between 1994 and 2004. Food supplies, medicines, school materials, and equipment have been **resold on black markets** in Algeria and Mauritania or redirected for private use or military purposes by Polisario elites.

The remaining aid is distributed based on **political loyalty, tribal affiliation**, and submission to the separatist ideology. **Falsified invoices and double accounting practices** are routinely used to deceive international donors and humanitarian agencies.

2. Elites Enriched, People Impoverished

While Polisario leaders accumulate **luxury properties, livestock, and vehicles** in Algeria, Spain, and Mauritania, the majority of camp residents live in **severe deprivation**, lacking access to food, healthcare, education, and safe drinking water. This **deliberate inequality**, sustained by the camp's political-military hierarchy, deprives the population of any real prospect of development or autonomy.

3. Suppression of Economic Freedoms and Enforced Dependency

Any attempt at **economic independence or entrepreneurship** is repressed by the Polisario and Algerian intelligence services. Young Sahrawis attempting to engage in trade or informal work are **arrested, harassed**, or **accused of terrorism**, and in some cases expelled from the camps.

The strategy is clear: to **maintain a state of total dependency on humanitarian aid**, ensuring political control and continued justification for external funding.

4. No Transparency, No Accountability

Despite decades of warnings, **no independent population census or audit of aid flows** has been allowed since the early 1990s. Algeria and the Polisario continue to **block access to oversight mechanisms**, cultivating a **culture of impunity and opacity**.

Recommendations

CIRID urges the Human Rights Council to:

A. **Strongly condemn the organized diversion of humanitarian aid** and the artificial impoverishment of the Tindouf camp population;

B. Call on **Algeria, as host State**, to authorize **independent access** by UN agencies and to conduct a reliable population census in the camps;

C. Support the establishment of an *international audit of humanitarian funding* provided to the camps since the 1990s, under the supervision of the European Union and UNHCR;

D. Promote the *economic empowerment of refugees*, particularly women and youth, by protecting their right to entrepreneurship and property;

E. *Protect whistleblowers, local activists, and human rights defenders* who expose these abuses and are often subject to intimidation or arbitrary detention.
