The stalemated dispute over Western Sahara continued in 2012 between the government of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (POLISARIO) independence movement, as no progress was achieved on the fundamental points of contention. POLISARIO operates in exile from the Tindouf refugee camps in Algeria and has proclaimed an independent Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic in Western Sahara, while Morocco controls the majority of the territory and advocates incorporating an autonomous Western Sahara under its sovereignty.

The UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was founded in 1991 with a mandate centered on registering voters and conducting a self-determination referendum originally scheduled for 1992. Due to fundamental disputes between the parties, no progress has been made toward its execution in over a decade. While the two sides appear no closer to an agreement on the future of Western Sahara, MINURSO focuses on other activities, such as the monitoring of the cease-fire and the provision of support to UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)–led confidence building measures. MINURSO is the only UN peacekeeping mission established since 1978 without a human rights role in its mandate, but the 2012 Security Council mandate renewal resolution was the first to explicitly call on the parties to respect human rights. In June 2012 Wolfgang Weisbrod-Weber was appointed as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara.

In addition to MINURSO, the Personal Envoy to the Secretary-General for Western Sahara and an African Union liaison office deal with aspects of the dispute within their respective mandates. MINURSO monitors the cease-fire, tracks personnel movement around the sand berm separating Moroccan- and POLISARIO-controlled territory, receives complaints from both sides, reports cease-fire violations, and acts as the means of communication between Moroccan and POLISARIO armed forces. During the 2011–2012 reporting period, MINURSO performed 8,335 ground patrols and 530 aerial patrols, recording twenty-five violations by Moroccan forces and seven by POLISARIO forces.

The territory of Western Sahara is one of the most heavily mined areas in the world. MINURSO continues to support removal of landmines and unexploded ordnance in POLISARIO-controlled territory. In 2012, MINURSO received a new de-mining system that enhanced the speed of these activities.

MINURSO supports UNHCR assistance programs for displaced and separated Sahrawi families, temporarily reuniting families split between Algeria and Western Sahara. UNHCR recently chartered a larger aircraft for this purpose, greatly enhancing the program’s capacity.

Both Morocco and POLISARIO maintain restrictions on MINURSO operations, including limitations on its access
operation plans, but did not rule out a future endorsement.

After receiving a three-phased operation plan from ECOWAS and a direct request from Mali’s interim president, Traoré, the Security Council in October passed Resolution 2071, declaring its readiness to endorse a military force to intervene in northern Mali. The Security Council also tasked the Secretary-General to assist joint ECOWAS and AU planning efforts and to submit within forty-five days detailed and actionable recommendations for a military force. The resolution called on Mali’s unity government and Malian rebel groups to engage in a credible negotiation process to seek a sustainable solution and called on the international community to support the Malian political process.

SRSG Djinnit met with Tuareg rebels and in a separate meeting for the first time with representatives from Ansar Dine on 13 November, in which both groups assured their