

Letter from the Chairman

Over two centuries ago, the United States of America set an example that much of the world would follow: that self-rule and freedom are rights that all people should be allowed to practice. The principles of self-determination and freedom have since become enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, but there remain many stateless people in the world who are deprived of these most basic rights. Today, we find that freedom and independence have been denied to many people across various continents.

The Organization for Statehood and Freedom (OSF) was founded to support these people and to honor the memory of the founder of VDI, a specialized international consulting firm that provided initial funding support for this foundation. Through the course of a long and diverse international career, VDI's founder worked closely with various stateless people in different parts of the world, and was particularly involved in helping the Palestinians and indigenous peoples in Latin America. He was an avid supporter of legitimate movements toward statehood and independence, advancing ideals first laid out by the United States of America over two hundred years ago. OSF seeks to carry on his ideals through the creation of bonds of political support between well-established nations and non-self-governing peoples seeking to follow in their footsteps. OSF was created to give back to the international community in a way that would serve the most basic desire of all human beings – the desire for freedom.



The case of the people of the Western Sahara is one such example of a people struggling for freedom and statehood, and one that has not received the international attention it deserves.

The Saharawi people of the Western Sahara seek the right to self-determination and freedom and our goal is to support them. The people of Western Sahara endured almost 100 years of Spanish colonial occupation in the 19th and 20th centuries and, over the last three and a half decades, much of the Western Sahara has been occupied by the Kingdom of Morocco. The Saharawis, united under the banner of the Polisario Front, originally resisted the occupation by force, but more recently have continued the struggle diplomatically and politically since the signing of a UN-backed ceasefire in 1991. According to the United Nations and the International Court of Justice, the Western Sahara case is a clear-cut example of decolonization, with an accompanying right to self-determination. Despite this fact, the Saharawi people's quest for freedom and independence has fallen victim to Morocco's territorial ambitions and been held hostage by powerful geopolitical interests.

The Organization for Statehood and Freedom seeks to support stateless people, and particularly the Saharawis, by building political support for and – more importantly – action to support universal principles of independence and self-rule among the international community. It is the responsibility of all those who believe in self-determination and freedom to further the expression of these values across the globe. It is with this in mind that the Organization for Statehood and Freedom proudly takes up the cause of independence for the Saharawi people.

Don L. Pepper
Chairman, Organization For Statehood & Freedom