

How to start a revolution

Nonviolent resistance (NVR) as strategy in Western Sahara



Anti-war demonstration in front of the Pentagon on October 21, 1967, organised by the National Mobilisation Committee to End the War in Vietnam

Learning outcomes

- To build on existing understanding of the political developments in the Western Sahara conflict
- To have an understanding of nonviolent resistance strategizing
- To have a basic understanding of where poetry sits in the Saharawi nonviolent resistance movement

A note on language

- “Occupied” or “disputed”?

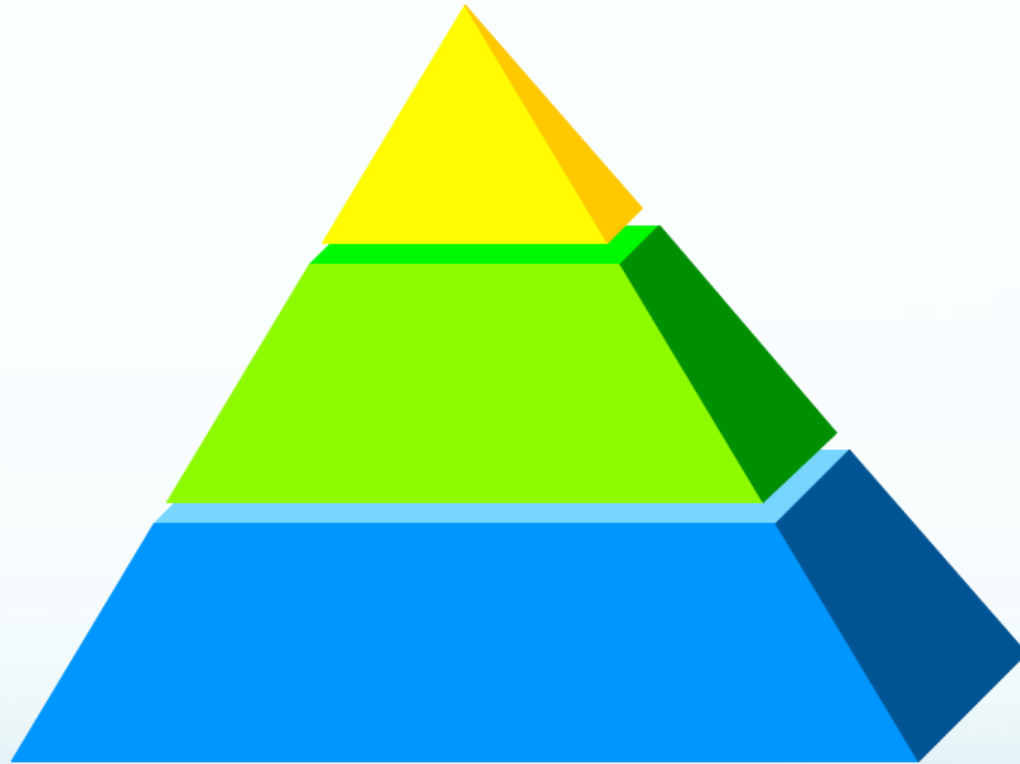
Nonviolent resistance (NVR)

- “Nonviolent action refers to those methods of protest, resistance, and intervention without physical violence in which the members of the nonviolent group do, or refuse to do, certain things. They may commit acts of omission – refuse to perform acts which they usually perform, are expected by custom to perform, or are required by law or regulation to perform; or acts of commission – perform acts which they usually do not perform, are not expected by custom to perform, or are forbidden by law or regulation from performing; or a combination of both.” (Gene Sharp, *Social Power and Political Freedom*, Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, p. 218).

Success of NVR

- Recent study of all violent and nonviolent campaigns between 1909 and 2006 - there were 323 such campaigns - found nonviolent ones were twice as likely to be successful (Chenoweth and Stephan 2014)
- When it comes to overthrowing dictators, nonviolence has better long-term results than revolution via “the barrel of a gun”.

How does NVR work?



Saharawi NVR

- Sources of power: **legitimacy, cultural and ideological factors, human resources** (mass participation of the Saharawi population), immunity to the Moroccan's regimes **sanctions** (immunity to sanctions comes through **loss of fear** - see the Sharp reading)
- Pillars of support: seek individual, organizational and government **allies** abroad, **convert** Moroccan citizens, challenge key pillars of support of the Moroccan regime e.g. multinational corporations, foreign states and groups of states (e.g. European Union)



How does “loss of fear” work?

“Ya me llevaron fuera de la sociedad y empezaron un interrogatorio, “¿con quién trabajas?” y todo eso, “¿con quién?” “¿cómo coordináis?” Y allí, pues, me torturaron... el miedo... y también me estaban diciendo que “mira, si no pares... ¿qué te va a pasar? Muchas cosas. Otra vez, te vamos a llevar a la cárcel para hacer lo que no puedes imaginar. Te vamos a violar si no pares.” Y después de mucho tiempo de tortura me dejaron allí en medio de la nada. Luego fui andando hasta la ciudad. Todo esto no me pare de mi resistencia y mi lucha. Me da esfuerzo para seguir luchando. Nosotros como saharauis, nos torturan. Nos dan más fuerza cuanto más nos torturan, cuanto mas secuestran, nos dan más fuerza y más.” [J. Allan, interview with Nguia Elhaouasi, Zaragoza, 26 Nov 2014].

- V for Vendetta:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8L4LwjD5L-k>

Life west of the wall



The war years (1975-1991)



1987



Aminatou Haidar



El Ghalia Djimi



Fatma Ayach

1999 intifada



Nagjir hotel, El Aaiún

2005 intifada



Aminatou Haidar, 2005

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7Blc7v8244>

Gdeim Izik





Natural resources



Friendship Generation as the rearguard: Poetry in the NVR movement

- Helps secure international allies (a key pillar of support)
- Fosters mass Saharawi participation
- It (spiritually/emotionally) strengthens the nonviolent movement
- Promotes nonviolent discipline

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