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WSC Newsletter September 2020



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"The failure of the United Nations Secretariat and the Security Council (UNSC) to act firmly in the face of Morocco's annexationist actions whose aim is to impose a fait accompli by force in the occupied Western Sahara has seriously undermined the credibility of the United Nations and deepened the loss of faith amid the Sahrawi people in the already fragile United Nations peace process. As a result, the entire United Nations peace process in Western Sahara has been completely paralysed. The delay in appointing a new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara after the resignation of Horst Köhler in May 2019 has only added to the state of paralysis.

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At a time when Morocco continues its violation of the ceasefire and . . . flagrant violations of human rights and plunder of the natural resources of the occupied Western Sahara, the United Nations unfortunately still chooses to turn a blind eye to this situation that is utterly unacceptable. This situation is profoundly serious, and it cannot in any way go unchecked."

Extract from a letter of 26 June 2020 from Brahim Ghali Secretary-General of Frente POLISARIO to the UNSC.

Read more [here](#).

Next month the Security Council will again discuss the renewal of the MINURSO mandate. Nothing has changed since the mandate was renewed last year, or rather, no progress has been made to organise the referendum while Morocco continues to build facts on the ground. In the absence of a clear statement by the UNSC companies continue the illegal exploitation of Western Sahara's natural resources aiding Morocco in its annexation. Earlier this year the UK - Morocco Association Agreement, that explicitly includes trade in produce from Western Sahara, became law.

Plans for 3rd Solar Plant in Western Sahara

Morocco plans a third solar plant in occupied Western Sahara, to be constructed in close proximity to the agri-business in Dakhla. The plant will constitute the third unit in the territory that Morocco has held under illegal military occupation since 1975. An 80 MW plant near El Aaiún and a 20 MW plant near Boujdour have been operational since 2018.

Read more [here](#).

From Grenoble to Geneva

On Monday August 17th, 2020, I embarked on a cycling journey which has taken me from Grenoble in the French Alps to Geneva in Switzerland. The aim of this challenge was to raise awareness on the plight of the Saharawi people and the lack of human right protection that they suffer. A petition was launched a few weeks prior to the trip in order to ask the United Nations to engage more actively in finding a solution to this four-decade long conflict. Over 700 signatures were collected and were handed in symbolically to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet. Aminatou Haidar, Right Livelihood Award Laureate 2019 added her signature to the list. The challenge was completed in 3 days and many journalists were waiting for me at my arrival at the Palace of Nations in Geneva. The petition will be kept until February 27th, 2021 with the aim to collect 10,000 signatures.

We would like to congratulate Meriem Naili on her imaginative initiative and achievement.

Add your name to the petition [here](#).

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WESTERN SAHARA CAMPAIGN UK
The Western Sahara Campaign works in solidarity with the Saharawi people to generate political support in order to advance their right to self-determination and to promote their human rights. Our role is to lobby the UK Government and the EU. You can help us to ensure the UK does not ignore the voice of the Saharawi people.



Follow the news about EU's illegal fisheries in Western Sahara



The EU pays Morocco to fish in occupied Western Sahara.

The French company, plans to commence construction of a wind farm in occupied Western Sahara later this year.

Read more [here](#).

The Indian engineering giant Larsen & Toubro erects large energy infrastructure in occupied Western Sahara.

A new Indian company has taken foothold in supporting Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara: Mumbai headquartered Larsen & Toubro. The company won a tender which Morocco's Office National de l'Electricité et de l'Eau Potable (ONEE) had called for to build substations and transmission lines in Dakhla, located in the occupied territories of Western Sahara.

Read more [here](#).

Siemens Again Evades Questions

Siemens has created a new company that will inherit its operations on occupied land in Western Sahara, but still refuses to clarify whether the people of the territory have actually consented to those operations.

Read more [here](#).

Swiss supermarkets ban produce from occupied Western Sahara

The Swiss trade statistics reveal that 2019 was the first year without any imports of fruits and vegetables from occupied Western Sahara.

Read more [here](#).

Turkey: biggest funder of the occupation of Western Sahara

The value of the fishmeal exports from occupied Western Sahara to Turkey in 2019 may have been larger than the entire phosphate trade from the occupied territory.

Read more [here](#).

Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders (CODESA)

Saharawi activists hold the strong conviction that it is necessary to apply international humanitarian law when dealing with the legal status of occupied Western Sahara, and should be applied to the legal responsibilities of the international community and the Moroccan authorities, who have had the Saharawi people under occupation.

On this basis, the members of CODESA: 1- Affirm that CODESA is an independent, democratic Saharawi human rights organization with a progressive vision. It is not private property nor a matter of personal preferences, but rather a collective and common historical legacy of our struggle that embodies the sacrifices of martyrs, victims of forced disappearance and political arbitrary detention, as well as victims of torture and systematic repression against Saharawi civilians.

Read more [here](#).

Al Guerguerat Border Crossing Blocked by Saharawi Protesters

Since Monday, 31st August the Guerguerat border crossing has been blocked by Saharawi from the liberated areas east of the Moroccan berm.

The protesters have closed the crossing hampering commercial activities between Morocco and Mauritania, and also the Moroccan drug trafficking. Morocco continues to plunder the natural resources of the illegally occupied territories in clear violation of international law, whilst the Saharawi population is victim of forced impoverishment.

On Monday afternoon MINURSO (UN Mission for Western Sahara) sent three envoys to start talks with the Saharawi protesters. The protesters are demanding that the UN «put an end to the plundering of Western Sahara's natural resources by Morocco».

Read more [here](#).

Saharawi Government Reaffirms Rejection of Guergarat Illegal Passage

Bir Lehlu (Liberated Territories), Sept 01, (SPS) –

The Saharawi Government reiterated today its firm rejection of the continued existence of the illegal Guergarat crossing, which is in flagrant violation of the terms of ceasefire and military agreement No. 1.

The Saharawi government, in a statement issued by the Ministry of Information, voiced its total rejection of the persistent existence of the illegal breach in the Moroccan wall of humiliation in the Guerguerat area, as it is contrary to the provisions of the military agreement no 1 and the peace plan.

The SADR Government has called on the Security Council to force Morocco to close this illegal passage, which continues to be a permanent source of tension in the region and a real obstacle to international efforts in the search for a solution.

Read more [here](#).

International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, 30th August UN General Assembly resolution 65/209 (21/12/2010)

In celebrating the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, the Geneva Support Group for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in Western Sahara recalls that hundreds of Saharawi combatants and civilian are still disappeared following the military invasion in November 1975 and the prolonged occupation of Western Sahara by the Kingdom of Morocco.

Since 31 October 1975, enforced disappearances of Saharawi soldiers and civilians were widely practiced by Moroccan troops. The lowest estimations are around 1000 cases, 80% of

which occurred between 1975 and 1977. While the Asociación de Familiares de Presos y Desaparecidos Saharaui (AFAPREDESA) has registered more than 4500 cases, more than 400 cases are still unsolved, including the 351 identified by the Moroccan National Human Rights Institution in 2010.

Enforced disappearance is a continuing offense, which continues being committed until the fate and whereabouts of the victim are clarified, and reliable information is provided on the fate of missing persons and their families. Denying information to the families about the fate of disappeared people is a violation of their psychological integrity, a form of psychological torture, given the fact that, because of this, relatives are denied the possibility to cope with their mourning.

In the late 80's, the discovery of clandestine detention centres as PCCMI Laayoune, Galaat Magouna and Tazmamert has allowed to start campaigning to disclose the whereabouts of missing persons. On 22 June 1991, 322 missing Sahrawis were released thanks to international pressure.

Enforced disappearance has survived to the present day in Western Sahara, even if on a smaller scale and for shorter durations. Forced disappearance is a multiple violation of several human rights and constitutes a form of torture.

Furthermore, by using coercion, corporal punishment, torture, degrading and inhuman treatments on the members of the Polisario Front before the Ceasefire Agreement of 1990 and on the Saharawi civil population until our days, Morocco severely violated and continues to violate Articles 31 and 32 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

By deporting the indigenous people of Western Sahara during the military campaign of invasion of Western Sahara and continually promoting on a large scale the transfer of Moroccan citizens into the Occupied Territory of Western Sahara, the Kingdom of Morocco also constantly violates Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Read more [here](#).

Saharawi Refugees in COVID-19 Lockdown Hit by Livestock Epidemic **By Russell Fraser and Yamina Djoudi**

TINDOUF, Algeria – Taking a break from her daily chores, Mariem Mohamed Boujemaa – a 69-year-old Saharawi refugee living in Boujdour Camp in Algeria's Tindouf province – would often pause to watch her young grandchildren playing among the family's sheep and goats in their dusty, wire-fenced enclosure, and feel a deep connection to her own past. "Breeding sheep and goats for my family is something inherited from one generation to the next," Mariem explained. "The Saharawi are known for raising livestock. If a family has four or five goats, they have an endless source of milk for the children and the elderly."

Mariem reconnected with the tradition and began raising her own livestock around 10 years ago, after her divorce left her struggling to make ends meet. "I felt that I had to do something to face the increasing costs and responsibility of looking after my family," she said. "We sell one or two goats to have money to cover our daily needs."

Boujdour is one of five camps established in the remote desert region of south-western Algeria since 1975 to shelter Saharawi refugees who fled the violence of the Western Sahara War. For those that can afford to raise livestock, the milk and meat they provide helps to supplement the basic monthly food rations that refugees in the camps receive.

"The loss was financial and emotional."

But earlier this year, just as the camps were being locked down in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in many refugees losing their jobs and other sources of income, another disease was wreaking devastation on the vulnerable refugee population.

A pulmonary epidemic affecting livestock has resulted in the death of over 1,700 sheep and goats in the camps this year, including all ten of Mariem's animals. "The sheep got sick after they were infected by the goat. I called the vet who gave them some injections, but even with the treatment they all died."

Besides the financial blow, she said the young members of her family had found it difficult to comprehend what had happened.

"The children felt sad for the loss," Mariem said. "They didn't understand why all the sheep and goats were gone at the same time. The loss was financial and emotional for the family."

Some of the families that lost their animals had received them only recently as part of a program funded by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, targeting some of the most vulnerable refugees in the camps.

"Most... who were working lost their daily wages."

With over 50 per cent of women of reproductive age and children in the camps suffering from anaemia, and high rates of malnutrition (7.6 per cent) and stunting (28 per cent), UNHCR in collaboration with its partner the Algerian Red Crescent provided goats to 263 families suffering from malnutrition, especially those with pregnant and lactating women.

Read more [here](#).

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