

Conference on Western Sahara EUCJ Ruling

21 October 2024 / 7:00 PM / UK Parliament, London

Jeremy Corbyn's Remarks

1. **Historical Awareness:** Corbyn became aware of the Western Sahara issue in the late 70s, including the massacres and killings. He discussed it at the Consolidated Fund Bill.
2. **UN Involvement:** Corbyn witnessed Western Sahara's decolonisation committee at the UN, noting that many spoke on Morocco's behalf using scripted statements.
3. **Natural Resources & Refugees:** Western Sahara's natural resources are being exploited, and its people remain in exile. Corbyn urged writing to MPs to amplify Saharawi voices and denounce companies profiting from occupied Western Sahara.
4. **Call to Action:** Challenge companies that purchase goods from occupied land through legal and political means. Push for public debate on the name and shame companies involved as this is precisely what Morocco doesn't want to happen.

Key Takeaways from the EUCJ Ruling (From Mahfud Bechri - Saharawi activist)

- **Polisario Recognition:** The court recognised Polisario as the legal representative of the Saharawi people globally.
- **Invalid Fisheries Agreements:** The EU-Morocco fisheries agreements are invalid as they illegally include resources from the occupied Western Sahara which illegally assumes Western Sahara is part of Morocco.
- **Labelling & Demographic Changes:** Products from Western Sahara must be labelled accordingly. Morocco has altered the demographic composition of the region by relocating Moroccan citizens.
- **Civil Society Action:** The "Western Sahara is Not for Sale" campaign mobilises civil society to expose companies exploiting WS resources and encourages European customers to act.

The Way Forward: What Now?

- **Legal Action:** Name and shame companies profiting from Western Sahara and challenge them legally.

- **Solidarity:** International groups should push campaigns against companies operating illegally in WS. Polisario will take legal action to stop the exploitation.
- **Human Rights Documentation:** Morocco blocks efforts to document human rights violations in WS, leaving a gap in accountability.

Human Rights Violations

- **Short-Term Enforcement:** Arbitrary arrests, lack of freedom of speech, and suppression of Saharawi culture and activism.
- **Prisoner Rights:** Saharawi prisoners face medical neglect, isolation, and denial of defence rights and are often sentenced to death.
- **Economic & Social Rights:** Widespread violations of economic, social, and cultural rights are reported in the occupied territories.

Situation in Refugee Camps (SW Algeria)

- **Humanitarian Crisis:** Reduced funding for humanitarian aid has led to desperation, particularly among younger generations. The Saharawi Red Crescent has issued an urgent call for support.

Sidi Breika's Statement (UK representative of POLISARO)

- **Victory:** The EUCJ ruling is a victory for Polisario, the Saharawi people, and international law.
- **Root Cause of WS/Morocco Conflict:** The exploitation of natural resources is the root of Spanish colonisation and Morocco's illegal occupation.
- **Self-Determination:** Western Sahara's right to self-determination includes control over its resources. European companies exploiting these resources must be stopped.
- **The Wall:** Western Sahara has the world's second-longest wall, filled with landmines, and protecting the longest conveyor belt transporting phosphate, highlighting the exploitation of WS resources that no one knows about.
- **Call to Action:** Write to MPs and campaign against the illegal plunder of resources, which sustains the occupation. It is really important to push the UK government right now as Morocco is trying to get them to follow in the U.S. footsteps.
- **Campaign Against Illegal Activity:** Contact the Western Sahara Foundation (WSF) when encountering companies operating illegally in WS.
- **Parliamentary Support:** people were encouraged to write to their MPs and ask them to join the APPG for Western Sahara. Ben Lake MP is prepared to be chair so MPs should contact him.