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WSC Newsletter July 2019



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Aminatou Haidar Visits London as the Guest of WSC

"It was such a pleasure to meet so many new friends in the UK. I am heartened by the great work that WSCUK is doing on behalf of our just cause. Many thanks for everything. I'm really happy with how it went. It was a tough week but a successful one."
Aminatou

The Western Sahara Campaign exists to support the Saharawi people's struggle for self-determination so it works hard to draw the attention of parliamentarians to the issue. That is one of the reasons why we invited Aminatou Haidar, a Saharawi human rights activist from the occupied Western Sahara, to visit London in June.

On June 25, at a meeting hosted by the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Western Sahara, Ben Lake, MP for Ceredigion, she told parliamentarians about the treatment she experienced at the hands of the Moroccan authorities in the occupied territories of Western Sahara and the impact the UK government's policy has on the human rights of the Saharawi people.

She called on the UK Government to take action at the Security Council to fulfil its legal duty to protect the human rights of the Saharawi people, to implement international law and make sure that the UN complies with its mandate by organising a referendum of self-determination.

Jeremy Corbyn MP attended the meeting and expressed his, and the Labour Party's, continuing support for the right of the Saharawi people to self-determination. The Western Sahara Campaign also organised a wider programme of visits and events so that Aminatou Haidar could give her personal testimony about the torture she had suffered at the hands of the Moroccan authorities. She was particularly keen to raise awareness of how other Saharawi are routinely mistreated, imprisoned, tortured, raped and abused, and expressed puzzlement as to how this could happen just beyond Europe's borders. Morocco acts with impunity and the international community rewards it with trade deals.

And that may include the UK which has a secret deal with Morocco. One of Boris Johnson's last acts as Foreign Secretary was to enter into an agreement with Morocco.

Mr Johnson met the Moroccan foreign minister on 5 July 2018 for the first Morocco-UK strategic dialogue aimed to strengthen bilateral relations including trade. Mr Johnson stated in the letter he sent when resigning his post that the UK was headed "for the status of a colony" but, ironically, a few days before he appeared to have no concerns about supporting a country in colonial occupation of Western Sahara.

The Western Sahara Campaign is worried that in a post-Brexit world the UK government will use this secret deal with Morocco to increase bilateral trade and will ignore the illegality of trading in goods from Western Sahara.

It was the first time that many people Aminatou met had the opportunity to hear directly from a human rights defender from the occupied territories of Western Sahara. She spoke softly and calmly but the content of her own testimony was chilling. But she also wanted to make people aware of the imprisonment of young Saharawi students, the case of the people illegally imprisoned after Gdeim Iznik and the trial of the journalist Nashza El Khalidi.

At every meeting she held, Aminatou called on our government to make it clear that it will abide by international law and not sacrifice the human rights of the Saharawi people for better relations with Morocco and to aid the profit it makes by the illegal export of goods from Western Sahara.

The Western Sahara Campaign heard her call and we pledge to continue to help raise the voice of the Saharawi people in the corridors of power in the UK and make sure that any trade deal with Morocco complies with international law.

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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.

New Report on the Western Sahara Phosphate Industry

Morocco shipped 1.93 million tonnes of phosphate out of occupied Western Sahara in 2018, worth an estimated \$164 million, the new report shows.

The imports of Morocco's production in Western Sahara in 2018 are attributed to six companies from four countries internationally, while approximately 72 companies worldwide have been identified as owning or operating the vessels that have transported the phosphate rock to the importers.

[Download the Report here](#)

In its report on press freedoms in Western Sahara, **Reporters Without Borders (RSF)** sheds light on a territory cut off from the rest of the world, a veritable news black hole that has become a no-go zone for journalists.

A forgotten story

The silence enveloping the area stems principally from the constant persecution and repression of Sahrawi journalists who endeavor to practice their profession outside official Moroccan channels, but also from the fact that it is impossible for foreign journalists to work there.

Testimonies

The report examines the experiences of Sahrawi journalists, who are jailed and often sentenced to lengthy prison terms, but who have an essential role to play in peace in the region, and it allows their voices to be heard for the first time, along with those of experts on the conflict.

[Read the Report here](#)

Nazha El Khalidi

A court in Morocco has now fined El-Khalidi 4,000 dirhams (€400) on the grounds that she did not have press accreditation to work as a journalist.

"The Moroccan government is going to attack me once again and again anytime I try to document the violations or try to do journalism," she said. She also denounced the lack of press freedom in Western Sahara imposed by Morocco. "I want to denounce the media blockade that Morocco is imposing on the territory of Western Sahara. We are also asking for more international pressure on Morocco and that international watchdog gain access into the territory in order to document the human rights violations towards the Saharawi people."

International organisations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have condemned el-Khalidi's trial and called the accusations "unfounded".

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