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HUMAN RIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES
NEWSLETTERS
WOMEN
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WSC Newsletter April 2022



Outrage at Spanish Government's Decision | Spain Should Reconsider | Biden Should Not Proceed with Weapons Sales to Morocco | Sultana Khaya - Support and Attack | Tourists Break Moroccan Siege | Women Attacked and Prevented Access to Khaya | Activist targeted with Pegasus spyware | EU defies its highest court

Statement on the Spanish Government 's decision to support Morocco 's autonomy plan for Western Sahara.

The Western Sahara Campaign UK is dismayed by the decision of the government of Spain to abandon its commitment to self-determination for the people of the Western Sahara, turning its back on them and on resolutions 658 and 690 of the UN Security Council, which determined there should be a referendum of the Saharawi people through which they would choose between independence and integration with Morocco.

The Spanish government has declared in a letter to the king of Morocco that his scheme for autonomy' for the territory is "more serious, realistic and credible" than pursuing the Saharawis' right under international law to determine their own future.

This shift was made without reference to, discussion with or agreement of the Saharawis, a fact that illustrates Madrid's disgraceful abandonment of its responsibilities. Morocco's sham autonomy plan is no more than a device to underpin its military occupation of much of the Western Sahara and its ongoing campaign to eliminate Saharawi national and cultural identity.

All governments have a responsibility to uphold rights enshrined in the UN Charter. Spain has an additional moral responsibility towards the Saharawis, being the former colonial power that handed the Western Sahara over to Morocco in 1976, reneging on the promise of self-determination.

WSC UK believes that the action of the Spanish government means it can no longer play any constructive role in the already discredited UN group of friends of the Western Sahara.

We call on Madrid to reverse its shameful decision, and reiterate our solidarity with the Saharawi people living under occupation and in exile.

Spain Should Reconsider

Polisario Representative at the UN and Coordinator with Minurso, Dr. Sidi Mohamed Omar, stressed in a letter to the UN Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, that Spain should reconsider its last decision to support Moroccan position, if Madrid is to play a constructive role in the UN efforts to find a solution to this last case of decolonisation in Africa

He further indicated that " the Frente POLISARIO and the Government of the Sahrawi Republic (SADR) call upon Spain, as the de jure Administering Republic of Western Sahara, to assume fully its legal and historical responsibility regarding the Territory and the destiny of its people.

Read the letter [here](#).

Biden Urged Not to Proceed with Offensive Weapons Sales to Morocco

March 4 Washington, D.C. Congresswoman Sara Jacobs (D-CA-53) and Congressman Colin Allred (D-TX-32) have written to President Biden, urging the Administration not to proceed with any significant or offensive weapons sales with Morocco. They write that "such sales would be highly inappropriate in light of recent escalating violence between Morocco's security forces and the Polisario, the lack of assurances from Morocco that such weapons will not be used against the Sahrawi people, and the lack of progress towards a political referendum and a final peace agreement with Western Sahara."

Read the Press Release [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.

Sultana Khaya - Support and Attack

Dear Friends

With all the horrors going on in the world today, I have the great pleasure of sharing some amazing, hopeful, and inspiring news: a volunteer team yesterday safely arrived at the home of Sahrawi human rights defender Sultana Khaya in Moroccan Occupied Western Sahara. This team -- putting themselves at risk -- went there for the specific purpose of protecting Sultana and her family from the sexual and physical violence the Moroccan occupation forces have inflicted on her and her family over the last 482 days.

Suzanne Scholte

Chair, US Western Sahara Foundation

17 March Tourists Break Moroccan Siege in Western Sahara:

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara At the invitation of the Khaya family in Boujdour, Western Sahara, US-based volunteers have arrived at their home to protect them from human rights abuses and break the almost 500-day siege of the house imposed by Moroccan occupation forces.

Read more [here](#).

22 March Women are Attacked and Prevented Access to Khaya 's Home

After international visitors broke the 482-day siege of the Khaya family home in Boujdour, Western Sahara, it has been a bustling center of joyous reunions and international friendship. However, a new celebration was interrupted when women leaving the house were beaten and robbed by Moroccan Forces. One of the women, who does not want to be identified, said, "They whispered to us that when the visitors leave, we will be given the same treatment as Sultana Khaya has endured." These same threats appear on social media platforms.

Khaya had been under de-facto house arrest for 482 days during which Moroccan forces poisoned the family's water supply, beat and raped Khaya and her sister in front of their 84 year-old mother, and injected her with unknown substances.

The four international visitors who broke the siege of the Khaya home 6 days ago have been listening to the [stories](#) of the people in Boujdour. They want the rapes and siege to stop. Ruth McDonough, a U.S. and British citizen, said "Although I had read Sultana Khaya's call for an end to the rapes and terrorization of her family before we arrived to the house, nothing prepared me for the devastating signs of these abuses, including horrific scars and bashed-out teeth. I am overwhelmed by what the Khaya sisters and their mother have endured for 482 days. "An international investigation into the targeting of the Khaya family is imperative as they represent the experiences of the Saharawi community as a whole."

Morocco's security forces have often been [accused](#) by Moroccan and international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, of torturing activists and terrorism suspects.

Despite the continued beatings and threats, Saharawi women flocked out into the street to demonstrate that they will not be intimidated.

Read more [here](#).

Amnesty International: Morocco/Western Sahara: Activist targeted with Pegasus spyware in recent months new evidence

Analysis by Amnesty International's Security Lab found that two phones belonging to Sahraoui human rights defender Aminatou Haidar were targeted and infected as recently as November 2021, just months after the Pegasus Project revelations shocked the world.

"The fact that Aminatou Haidar was targeted with Pegasus spyware mere months ago is further proof that companies like NSO Group will continue to facilitate human rights violations unless they are properly regulated," said Danna Ingleton, Deputy Director of Amnesty Tech.

"This latest revelation shows NSO Group's human rights policies are meaningless in practice. Amnesty International has repeatedly shown forensic evidence of Pegasus misuse since 2019 in Morocco, as well as in over a dozen countries in the Pegasus Project investigation, yet NSO Group has taken no action to prevent the ongoing human rights violations caused by its tools in Morocco.

"NSO Group must be held accountable for its role in the targeting of Aminatou Haidar, and other fearless activists from Morocco and Western Sahara."

Aminatou Haidar is a human rights defender from Western Sahara, who has won multiple awards for her peaceful activism, including the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award in 2008, the 2009 Civil Courage Prize, and the Right Livelihood Award in 2019.

EU again defies its highest court

In a new report, the EU Commission elaborates on how Moroccan settlers in Western Sahara are benefiting from a trade agreement that the EU Court of Justice has found illegal.

On 22 December 2021, the European Commission [released](#) a report on how the EU-Morocco trade agreement allegedly is for the "benefits for the people of Western Sahara.

The EU's circumvention of the 2016 ruling was yet again found invalid in the court ruling on [29 September 2021](#). The Court repeated and further clarified that the argumentation of benefits to the local population cannot replace the requirement of obtaining consent from the Saharawi people.

Despite this, the Commission in its report this week - "2021 Report on benefits for the people of Western Sahara on extending tariff preferences to products from Western Sahara" - seems to systematically ignore the rulings and arguments of its own highest court.

There is no definition in the report of the term "people", nor a clarification that Western Sahara's "population" and "people" are two different concepts. No reference is made to any talks with people of Western Sahara who do not live under Moroccan occupation - either in the part of the territory that is not under Moroccan control, or in exile in refugee camps. Except for in the title on the cover page, the report consistently addresses the "population" of Western Sahara - which are primarily Moroccan settlers. There are no references to the right to consent of the people of the territory.

Read more [here](#).

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