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WSC Newsletter January 2017



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From the Chair

The Western Sahara Campaign is proud of its role in holding the UK Government to account by constantly reminding ministers, parliamentarians and civil servants of the inalienable right of the Saharawi to self-determination.

That is why we took the government to court and although we haven't won yet we are confident that the import of tomatoes from the occupied territory and the Moroccan fisheries agreement will be found to be illegal. That will be a bitter blow to the Moroccan state who ruthlessly exploit the resources of the Western Sahara for their own profit. We expect the case to be heard in the European Court of Justice early next year and we can be confident of victory.

That was the news we heard, at our annual meeting from a representative from Leigh Day, the lawyers who we are working with us on this ground breaking case. Every year we invite all our members to a meeting to plan our campaigns – this year we met in November and we also invited friends and fellow campaigners to find out what their plans were for the coming year.

We heard reports from Adala UK, an organisation set up to support the brave Saharawi who assert their right to self-determination in the face of Moroccan brutality in the occupied territories. The news was not good as the Moroccan authorities continue to act with impunity but the increased ability to document the beating, torture, rape and murder makes the failure of the United Nations to act ever more astounding.

That is why we decided to join the campaign that the Western Sahara Action Forum will be running next year – this is an international campaign to get the United Nations Security Council to include human rights monitoring when the mandate of their peace keeping mission, MINURSO, is renewed in April 2017.

We discussed tactics with Independent Diplomat who work with the Government of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and its political leadership, the POLISARIO Front on its objective of securing self-determination for the Saharawi. With offices in New York, Brussels, Geneva and London they are well placed to provide advice. They also updated us on the renewed support in the African Union for the Saharawi cause. We also heard back from a member who had recently attended a meeting of the Western Sahara Resource Watch – an organisation that focuses on challenging the illegal exploitation of Saharawi resources by Morocco. The member had also met with UK MEPs to talk about the progress of our case. Sandblast updated us on their successful work in the Saharawi refugee camps near Tindouf to support musicians, education and civil society groups.

So as you can read, support for the Saharawi in the UK is strong, varied and effective and the WSC is only part of a wider movement. This would not have happened without the support of our members and affiliates who have given their time and money – some for over 30 years.

We just wish we hadn't had to call on your support for so long - but then so do the Saharawi! We may get tired but we have not felt the pain of over 40 years of waiting for the international community to fulfil its role. Some Saharawi wait in exile in the desert, others live under the brutal regime of the Moroccan authorities in the occupied territories whilst the international community stands idly by. This injustice must end.

So please continue to support our campaigns to make our government uphold international law so that the Saharawi can express their inalienable right to self-determination. And tell others about their cause. That is all we ask. With your continued support we can win.

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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.

Justice is not a pre-condition for peace - Justice is the essence of peace

"The absence of war does not guarantee the presence of peace.

The people of Western Sahara no longer go to bed each night to the sound of gunfire and bombs. But neither do they live in peace.

More than half a million Western Saharans live under the brutal repression of the Moroccan occupation. Another 100,000 have fled Moroccan rule and now live in exile and abject poverty in a refugee camp in the Algerian desert.

There are 16 United Nations peacekeeping missions in the world today. MINURSO in Western Sahara is the only such mission without the authority to monitor human rights violations.

As an international human rights expert at Harvard University, having worked on the Western Sahara crisis for many years, I'm speaking to you today with an urgent message: the United Nations must monitor human rights violations in Western Sahara.

Let me tell you a story about Khadija, a student in the capital city, Laayoune. One afternoon back in March, Khadija found herself in the middle of a protest against Morocco's 37-year occupation.

"Three Moroccan riot police came up to me from behind, and tripped me," she said. "I fell and they tore my headscarf off, and hit me. They dragged me by the legs, face down, to their van."

"Inside, about 10 police officers were waiting. That's when they hit me the hardest. During half an hour or longer, they beat me. They called me a prostitute. They insulted my mother. They threatened to rape her."

Khadija's not alone. Human Rights Watch has documented the cases of thousands of people just like Khadija who've faced violence and abuse just for speaking out or engaging in peaceful protest.

Many Western Saharans are angry. Can you blame them? Most have no opportunities, no prospects, and no rights. The world has forgotten Khadija and Western Saharans like her, and they know it. "Where is the UN when our rights violated?", they ask. "Where are CNN and the BBC?"

That anger, that fury cannot be sustained without being unleashed. The status quo in Western Sahara – an absence of war, but an absence of peace – cannot possibly endure. It's been said that "young hope betrayed transforms into bombs." And there are too many young men and women in Western Sahara whose hope and trust has been betrayed.

Western Sahara never makes the news. Never. But raising awareness isn't enough. We need action. Urgently. Why isn't the UN monitoring human rights violations in Western Sahara? It makes no sense.

Human rights monitoring in Western Sahara isn't the whole answer. But it's a start. If we can start documenting these human rights violations, we can hold the perpetrators to account. We can end impunity and injustice in Western Sahara.

After all, justice is not a pre-condition for peace. Justice is the essence of peace."

Tom O'Bryan, former coordinator of the Western Sahara Advocacy Forum petitioned the UN Fourth Committee for the MINURSO peacekeeping operation to monitor human rights violations in Western Sahara.

Protests in Western Sahara against solar and wind plant construction

November 8, 2016 - Reuters

Protests erupted yesterday in the Western Sahara over the construction of renewable energy plants without the permission of the Sahrawi people.

The protests, which took place in the capital EL Aaiun, coincided with the United Nation's COP22 conference on climate change yesterday in Marrakech.

Siemens and Enel are building solar and wind plants in the region

"Siemens should not back Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara through energy infrastructure," the Western Sahara Resource Watch (WRSW) said on social media.

Siemens has constructed 22 new renewable energy plants in the Western Sahara, which power over 95 per cent of mineral extraction plants in the Sahrawi region.

The World Bank, the European Investment Bank, and the European Union have previously refused to finance development projects in Western Sahara.

"If we support those investments, it would look like we are supporting the Moroccan position. We are neutral regarding that conflict," a banker told Reuters.

When Floods Came To The Desert — An Appeal For Climate Justice

When the floods came the waters rose up above my ankles; wheels of cars took on half-moon shapes; footballs floated over on typically dusty pitches, their goalposts submerged. Our adobe homes no longer provided a safe-haven after a week of unprecedented rainfall reduced them to mud. Our hospitals, our businesses, our schools — all collapsed under the water's brute force. My people, the Saharawi, have a proverb: "The dawn is always clear in the desert." But on 16 October 2015 the dawn brought some of the worst rainfall we have seen since our exile to refugee camps began over forty years ago. The morning after 25,000 men, women and children moved in procession to higher ground.

Extreme weather is not unique to our refugee camps. Hurricanes devastate the southeastern coast of the United States, rising tides wash away the sea walls of small island nations, and typhoons take lives across Southeast Asia. Climate change does not respect borders; it does not discriminate across ethnicity, nationality, or religion — it threatens the whole of mankind.

My people are no different; we have not been spared the myriad costs of climate change.

Yet as leaders gathered for the latest round of UN climate talks in Marrakesh we were excluded. This is because Morocco, the host of this year's UN climate conference, known as COP22, is illegally occupying my country, Western Sahara. Two weeks ago the floods returned to the Sahara, and this time to the occupied territory, where Saharawi had to contend with the devastating impact of climate change while under Moroccan subjugation. Morocco's suppression of Saharawi has broader effects beyond the occupation and into the global work on climate change. Just this month, Moroccan security forces detained and later deported the African Union Pan-African Parliament Vice-President Sueilma Beirouk. Ms Beirouk is a Saharawi. She was sent to COP22 to carry out her duties on behalf of the African Union. Morocco single-handedly denied a legitimate African voice and a representative of the African Union from articulating the continent's position on climate change.

Despite its claim of green credentials, Morocco's actions show otherwise. Morocco actively grants new oil exploration contracts for multinational corporations to illegally drill on- and off-shore in Western Sahara. Much of Morocco's internationally applauded green energy development is taking place — illegally — in Western Sahara, without the consent of its people. This violates international law as asserted in the UN Legal Opinion of 2002, which states that any exploration of natural resources in Western Sahara must be in the interests and wishes of the Saharawi people. The continued exploitation of Western Sahara's natural resources further entrenches Morocco's illegal occupation. An incredibly important responsibility has been entrusted to Morocco as the President and host of this year's UN climate conference. Climate change poses the most significant challenge of our time — and we must work together across the globe to urgently address this issue. And more importantly, the United Nations and the international climate change community cannot forget that issue of climate change is an issue of social justice. Morocco is illegally exploiting natural resources and violating human rights mere miles away from the convention center where COP22 will take place.

My people have trusted the United Nations with our future on the understanding that it is its duty — legal and moral — to uphold the founding principles of the UN Charter "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small." As we once again trust the United Nations with our future — our climate future — we hope that the international community will hold Morocco accountable for the grave injustices it continues to perpetrate against the people of Western Sahara. We are committed to active international cooperation, to deal with the climate crisis, without compromising our commitment to human rights and international law. Can Morocco say the same?

Mohamed Salem Ould Salek Minister of Foreign Affairs, Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic

On 10th December the Tai Harvest, registered in Panama, arrived in El Aaun to load Saharawi phosphate. It is the 35th ship of 2016 to export stolen Saharawi phosphate.

Climate Justice

When we talk about climate justice, the first thing that comes to mind is the plight of small island states, which contribute little to global warming but suffer its worst impacts. Or perhaps we think of climate-vulnerable countries like Pakistan, where millions are at risk of displacement due to severe floods.

But with the latest instalment of the UN climate talks underway in Marrakesh, don't forget about the people of Western Sahara right next door.

Morocco has become a key player in international climate politics after assuming the presidency of this year's UN climate conference, known as COP22.

It is troubling and ironic that such an important responsibility has been entrusted to a country that has repeatedly demonstrated its profound contempt for international law and the United Nations, and that remains a brutal occupying power.

Let anyone involved in international climate politics — journalists, diplomats, or civil society actors — forget: despite an opinion from the International Court of Justice in 1975 that Morocco has no valid claim to the territory of Western Sahara, Morocco has been illegally occupying the territory, located south of its southern border, for forty years.

And in case anyone missed the news: when last year the UN Secretary-General had the temerity to refer to Morocco's occupation as "an occupation", Morocco responded, first with massive street protests denouncing the secretary-general (that were attended by Moroccan government officials), and subsequently by expelling all civilian personnel from Minurso, the UN's peacekeeping mission in the territory.

As the secretary-general made clear, Morocco's behaviour carries a serious risk of reigniting war in the region.

The history of the Western Sahara occupation is complex, but a good place to start is with Minurso itself. The name stands for (in English) the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.

The referendum in question was promised to the indigenous Sahrawi people of Western Sahara in 1991, as part of a UN-brokered ceasefire that ended the war that they had fought with Morocco since its invasion in 1975 (after Spain, the prior colonial power, withdrew).

In line with clear international norms for post-colonial transitions, the referendum will give the Saharawi people the option to become an independent nation.

They remain the only former colony in Africa that has not been granted this fundamental right, and the African Union has repeatedly called on the UN to set a date for the referendum to occur.

The Sahrawi Republic is a full and founding member of the African Union, while Morocco is the only country on the continent which is not a member.

Since 1991, Saharawi refugees in Saharan Algeria have been waiting, in some of the most inhospitable conditions imaginable, for the referendum to be held. They have foresworn armed struggle and placed their trust in the UN, and in international law, to resolve the issue.

In response, Morocco has repeatedly prevented the referendum from being held, flooded the Western Sahara with Moroccan settlers, and engaged in widely documented human rights abuses against indigenous Sahrawi in the occupied territory.

The people of Western Sahara are some of the most vulnerable in the world to climate change. Increasingly common extreme weather events amplify the hardship posed by already inhospitable conditions.

Last year, severe floods devastated the adobe structures of the refugee camps, destroying homes and displacing some 25,000 people.

Meanwhile, Morocco is fast positioning itself as a global green energy pioneer. This is an important and admirable goal, but the fact that Morocco is actively granting new oil exploration contracts for foreign corporations to illegally drill on- and off-shore in Western Sahara throws its true intentions into question.

Already, some of Morocco's renewable energy development is taking place in Western

Sahara. Energy generated in Western Sahara – without the consent of its people – is exported back to Morocco. The royal palace regulates Morocco's energy market and receives significant energy contracts in the occupied territory.

This contravenes the UN's legal opinion of 2002, which asserted that exploration and exploitation activities of the natural resources of Western Sahara could only be carried out in accordance with the interests and wishes of the people of Western Sahara.

Morocco has not consulted the people of Western Sahara on its green energy projects in their territory, nor will the people of Western Sahara be the ones profiting from them. Quite simply: Morocco's actions violate international law. Left unchecked, this will further entrench the occupation and damage the peace process.

The Sahrawi have no interest in disrupting the essential and urgent international cooperation that is needed to deal with the climate crisis. But it is imperative that everyone involved in international climate politics understands that no country is less deserving of the honour and responsibility of guiding these crucial talks than Morocco: a country that has unilaterally expelled UN peacekeeping staff and repeatedly refused to abide by UN Security Council resolutions.

At COP22 in Marrakesh, the international community must not allow Morocco to sweep the injustices of Western Sahara under the rug. Responsible countries, journalists and members of civil society can use this opportunity to send the message that it does not condone Morocco's behaviour.

Only in the face of strong international pressure will Morocco begin acting as a responsible international partner with the UN. For a start by agreeing to return to direct negotiations with the Frente Polisario, the internationally recognised representative of the Sahrawi people, towards holding a referendum as soon as possible.

As a climate activist, I've dedicated much of my life to the pursuit of a safe climate future for the world. The fight against climate change is the most important challenge of our time, but it must not be used as a smokescreen to mask injustices perpetrated against some of the world's most marginalised people.

Catherine Constantinides, climate activist and humanitarian.

Occupation To Electrify EU

During COP22 in Marrakesh, Germany, France, Spain and Portugal have signed a roadmap agreement with Morocco to work towards renewable electricity trade between Morocco and the EU.

But the joint-declaration omits is that a sizeable part of Morocco's projects that are to be implemented to reach that 52% goal, will be carried out in a territory that Morocco brutally invaded in 1975 and kept under its yoke since: Western Sahara. If Morocco manages to proceed as planned, over a quarter of its wind and solar capacity will be derived from Western Sahara by 2020.

EU funding to fish sector in occupied Western Sahara increases

For the second year in a row, the Moroccan government has spent most of the EU's fish sector support on developing the fishing industry in occupied Western Sahara. And the EU was fully aware of it.

Under the EU-Morocco Fisheries Partnership Agreement, entered into force in July 2014, Morocco receives an annual €14 million to develop its fishing sector. Morocco reports to the European Commission on the geographical distribution of that sectoral support. And for a second year in a row, most of the money is spent outside of Morocco, and inside the part of Western Sahara that it holds under military occupation since 1975.

This is clear from Morocco's second report documenting its geographical expenditure of EU fish sector support, "Rapport sur la mise en oeuvre de l'appui sectoriel au titre de la deuxième année du Protocole", which WSRW has obtained a copy of.

Twice a year, Western Sahara Resource Watch gathers together activists from all over Europe, including students eager to get involved with the Western Sahara cause for the first time, for a two-day meeting in Belgium to discuss strategy and recent developments. The meetings empower activists to continue WSRW's work in their respective countries and play a role in communicating with their national governments and country representatives in the EU about Western Sahara. Representatives from other Western Sahara NGOs from across Europe also attend to foster continued collaboration between the different branches of the solidarity movement.

Our committee member, Beccy Allen, attended to represent the Campaign and Adala UK, with whom she also volunteers. This year's autumn meeting focused on the recent Powering the Plunder report, published by WSRW, exposing Morocco's plans to build wind farms in Western Sahara, in partnership with Siemens, to help power the phosphate extraction in the occupied territories. We made plans for how to contact press to disseminate the report and how to organise around the COP22 summit in Marrakech in November.

The meeting also included discussions on recent submissions by WSRW and other organisations from the global solidarity movement to Morocco's Universal Periodic Review at the UN and submissions made by WSRW regarding Morocco's adherence to the Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights under the UN Global Compact and the forthcoming submissions on political rights.

Following the weekend meeting, the group spent two days lobbying in the European Parliament, meeting with MEPs from their individual countries, and with Permanent Representations of member countries.

Beccy Allen

Reading Matters

The shelves or your local bookshop – or virtual bookshop – are not groaning with the weight of tomes relating to the Western Sahara. It takes some scouting around to find more than a handful. But there may be more than you think. Here is a handful you might want to hunt down.

Baraka by John Ralston Saul, Granada, 1983. An airport thriller about the Western Sahara? Yes, written by a Canadian oil man. It's got battle scenes and sex, arms deals and oil. Of course the plot is 'unlikely'. Of course you can gripe at more than the detail. But it's sympathetic and well-written and may have alerted many people to the conflict. I assume it's long out of print, so you'll have to scour second-hand bookstalls and websites.

Desert Divers by Sven Lindqvist, Granta, 1990. Lindqvist's writing is exquisite, his take on time and place simple yet wholly unexpected. This very slim volume takes him down through Morocco into the Western Sahara, going through the Saharawi lands of former Spanish Southern Morocco, with other trips into the Algerian Sahara. He writes about St Exupery and Vieuxchange in the Western Sahara. He narrowly avoids a battle between Polisario and Moroccan troops on the road to Smara.

From Camp to City – refugee camps of the Western Sahara, ed by Manuel Hertz, ETH Studio Basel Lars Muller Publishers, 2013. This monster of a book – over 500 pages – is a study by an architect and his team of the development of the refugee camps as physical and social constructs. Its breadth is astonishing, swooping from satellite images and physical geography to copious studies and portraits of individual people and buildings, all in a historical and political context. Many of the 1,172 photographs and drawings are of exceptional quality and beauty. This is what a book on human geography should be like.

Relatos del Sahara Espanol, ed by Ramon Mayrata, Cuentos de Clan, 2001. For the Spanish reader, a fascinating selection of extracts, articles and reports running from just before the Spanish occupation through to its end. Most of the entries are written by colonial explorers, administrators and soldiers but they give a rare view of relations between Spaniard and Saharawi and Sahara, accounts of the conflict of 1958, the discovery of phosphates, the first Polisario raids on Spanish outposts, the betrayal of 1975. Fittingly, the first chapter recounts Ma el Ainin's trip to Mecca in the 1850s where he tells other pilgrims of his land "in the far west, beyond Morocco" where – to their astonishment – "no monarch reigns ... the people govern themselves with help of elected chiefs who they consult on matters of detail".

Les Sahraouis, by Ismail Sayeh, L'Harmattan, 1998. In French, this is one of several publications of someone better known as Fadel Ismael. Sadly dead now, he was one of Polisario's lesser-known greats, a fighter and diplomat whose contribution to building a free, open and tolerant Western Sahara would have been great, and who was much loved in the occupied territory. In large part, this short book is an introduction to the conflict, to the aims and institutions of the SADR. But its importance lies in its openness in acknowledging mistakes while remaining loyal, in its determination to see a multiparty state, workers' rights, religious tolerance, and a place for Moroccan settlers who wish to remain.
Toby Shelley

Mr Stavros Lambrinidis
EU Special Representative for Human Rights

Brussels, 18 November 2016

Dear Mr Lambrinidis,

We, Members of the Intergroup Western Sahara in the European Parliament, would like to express our deep concern for the worsening state of human rights in the occupied territory of Western Sahara. We restate the repeated calls of the European Parliament condemning the occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco and its effects and demand that the EEAS and Commission:

- Ensure the full reestablishment of the MINURSO, the UN mission in Western Sahara and the extension of their mandate to the monitoring and protection of human rights of the Saharawi population.

- Denounce the situation of the Saharawi political prisoners in Moroccan prisons, victims of torture, medical neglect, ill treatment and disrespect of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners; and recalling the European Parliament Resolution of 25 November 2010 on the situation in Western Sahara, draw particular attention to the situation of the political prisoners of the Gdeim Izik group, currently in El Arjat prison. We call on the Commission and EEAS to work for the release of all Saharawi political prisoners, which, as requested by the European Parliament several times, should be achieved as soon as possible;

- Condemn the expulsion of Mrs. Suelma Beiruk, vice-president of the Pan-African Parliament, by Moroccan authorities, preventing her participation at the COP22 Summit, an event organized by the United Nations in Marrakesh, Morocco, in disrespect of international law;

- Ensure full respect of the ECJ ruling of 10th December 2015, regarding the inclusion of Western Sahara in the EU-Morocco agreements, which suspends the application of bilateral EU-Morocco agreements to the Occupied Territories of Western Sahara.

Sincerely yours,
Norbert Neuser

Repression and Nonviolent Resistance in Africa's Last Colony

Sultana Khaya's eyes don't match perfectly. One of them is artificial. In 2007, a Moroccan police officer rammed his baton into her eye socket while she was peacefully protesting with fellow college students. He then gouged her eye out with his hand. Sultana is Sahrawi (Sah-ha-RAH-wee), the indigenous population native to Western Sahara. Occupied by the Kingdom of Morocco since 1975, Western Sahara is commonly referred to as Africa's last colony. The Sahrawis are in a protracted struggle for self-determination, and face terrible repression by Morocco.

The United Nations has called for a referendum that would allow Sahrawis to decide whether to remain a part of Morocco or become independent, but Morocco has blocked the vote for over 25 years. Western Sahara is a territory rich in natural resources: fishing, phosphates and the prospect of offshore oil. Thousands of Sahrawi have been tortured, imprisoned, killed and have disappeared since the occupation began over 40 years ago. To understand the depth of the Sahrawis' commitment to independence, their courage in the face of brutal oppression, one need only look into Sultana Khaya's eyes. We went to Laayoune, the capital of Western Sahara, just after the United Nations climate summit (COP22) wrapped up last week in Marrakech, Morocco. We were the first foreign television news crew to get into Western Sahara in recent years. We were followed constantly, on foot and by men on motorbikes and in cars. They stood outside our hotel night and day. Moroccan secret police came to our hotel at midnight on our first night, a "strictly routine" visit, they told us, "to protect us." Foreign journalists who do get in are often promptly expelled if the Moroccan intelligence agents see them interviewing pro-independence Sahrawis.

The Sahrawi activists who spoke to us did so at great risk to their own personal safety. We

met them primarily in their apartments, where couches line the walls in traditional Saharan fashion, with the Sahrawi tea, "at-tay," prepared over embers. We stopped for lunch at a virtually deserted restaurant on the edge of town. About 80 men and some women arrived abruptly. Most wore traditional Sahrawi garb, and many waved the official flag of the occupying state, Morocco. They moved into the restaurant, filling every nearby table, effectively cornering us. A dozen plainclothes agents, one wearing an NYPD baseball cap, were there coordinating, constantly on their cellphones. Outside, security agents' cars blocked ours. Several of the men seated near us seemed very agitated, and we feared this bizarre display could turn violent. They surrounded us as we left. While almost none in the mob spoke English, they unfurled several glossy vinyl banners with slogans in English like "Shame on Democracy Now!" The banners were identical in design to ones displayed after U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon condemned the Moroccan presence in Western Sahara as an occupation.

As we left, it became apparent why the crowd descended on us when they did. Sultana and other Sahrawi activists had organized a demonstration in the city center. The mob that surrounded us prevented us from getting to the protest, which was violently attacked by Moroccan plainclothes police. Brave Sahrawi independent journalists who operate under extreme threat in Western Sahara managed to capture video, which they later shared with us. That day's violent repression was all too typical. One video shows a handicapped man, Mohamed Alouat, director of a school for the handicapped, holding the flag of independent Western Sahara, a government in exile in the Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf, Algeria, where around 100,000 Sahrawi refugees live. Police attack Alouat, tear the flag from his hands, and drag him off. Sultana and other women shout at the plainclothes officers. A group of at least 20 of the men swarm around the Sahrawi women, pushing them into a side street, away from the main thoroughfare. They gang up on the women. They beat one of them, Aziza Biza, a member of the Sahrawi Women's Forum, in her kidney and stomach with a walkie-talkie. She said later that they choked her with her traditional melfa dress until she passed out on the ground. The police continue pushing other women against a wall and sexually assaulting them by grabbing and twisting their breasts. The agents see a man recording the assault from a nearby rooftop and began throwing rocks at him.

We met the injured men and women that evening, and recorded their accounts. The women showed us their injuries, describing how the police twisted their breasts and nipples, inflicting intense pain and bruising them. Aziza was faint, throwing up repeatedly. Later that night from our hotel window, we saw police in riot gear throwing rocks at Sahrawi protesters. The Sahrawi people are undeterred in their nonviolent struggle for self-determination. You can see the commitment to that struggle in the eye of Sultana Khaya.

Amy Goodman and Denis Moynihan
Human Rights Activists

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