



Western Sahara & Recent events

1. Saharawi Refugee Camps

Saharawi refugee children arrive in Spain and other European countries as part of the Holidays in Peace (Vacaciones en Paz) programme

Thousands of Saharawi children have arrived in different parts of Spain, with a few hundred children also arriving in France and Italy to spend two months living with host families. The programme enables Saharawi children from the refugee camps to escape the harsh conditions of the camps during the summer months and enjoy some time doing different activities whilst also getting vital medical and dental treatment and having a more balanced and healthy diet. Whilst they are in Europe, the children may also get the opportunity to do groupactivities with other Saharawi children in order to spread the message of their cause. In Sardinia, for instance, a group of Saharawi children have visited a local radio station to talk about their cause and generate more support from locals for Italian solidarity organisations.

Read more here: '[Italian radio station Radio Etna Espressoreceives Sahrawi children in their studios](#)'.

Creation of Presidential Commission on issue of Western Sahara at 31st African Union (AU) summit in the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott

The issue of Western Sahara was included, for the first time, as ‘a special and separate item’ from the other issues on the agenda of the 31st African Union Summit of heads of state and government held in Nouakchott (25 June to 2 July 2018).The issue of Western Sahara was examined at the heads of state level following the presentation of a first-time exclusive report on the issue, complied by the Chairman of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat. The report had been prepared in accordance with a resolution of the Addis Ababa AU Summit in January 2018, in which the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and Morocco were called to negotiate to resolve the conflict.

The discussion of the report by heads of state was the first time the AU has got directly involved in the Western Sahara issue, given that hitherto it merely denounced Morocco’s ‘colonial occupation’ of the territory. The subsequent creation of a presidential commission on the issue of Western Sahara opens the way for negotiations between Morocco and Western Sahara to reach a consensus on the basis of the African Union’s



position. The decision adopted unanimously by the leaders of the AU on the creation of an African mechanism for the issue of Western Sahara is an initiative likely to revitalise the AU's key role, as a fully-committed partner for the United Nations.

While calling for the Polisario Front and Morocco to resume negotiations, without preconditions and in good faith, the Summit adopted the mechanism and set up a troika of three heads of state consisting of currently AU head President Kagame, the 2017 AU chair Guinea's President Alpha Conde and incoming chairperson Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, supported by Mr Faki. The mission of the troika will be to provide efficient support to the United Nations-led process to resolve the conflict.

Read more: '[The key outcomes of the Nouakchott African Union Summit](#)'.

Read more: '[Creation of African mechanism for Western Sahara, important step in resolving conflict](#)'.

Read more: '[Nouakchott Summit, turning point in handling Sahrawi issue](#)'.

2. Occupied Territories

New Report from Adala UK: The Visit of the UN Special Envoy for Western Sahara, Mr Horst Khöler

The UN Special Envoy, Horst Khöler, recently visited the region of Western Sahara in order to gain a deeper understanding of the conflict. The Special Envoy, following a visit to the Saharawi Refugee camps in Tindouf (Algeria), arrived in the capital of Western Sahara, Layounne, on 28 June 2018. He toured the region until 1 July. In relation to the visit of the Special Envoy, repression against the Saharawi population and demonstrators calling for the right to self-determination has been growing.

In direct relation to Mr Khöler's visit, Adala UK witnessed an apparent growing repression of Saharawi civil society and growing use of police violence towards demonstrators. In the run-up to the visit by Mr Khöler, the Kingdom of Morocco systematically intensified the grip of repression in the occupied territories of Western Sahara, transporting thousands of police officers, auxiliary and gendarmerie forces to Western Sahara from Morocco. Prior to the visit, more than 50 Saharawis were arrested in the occupied territories. Two children are amongst the protestors who have been arrested over the last few days: Hamza Aalbouchekra and Mansour Moussaoui. Both



children reported to the court that they had been tortured and subjected to other kinds of inhumane treatment and harassments whilst held in custody.

Despite the siege imposed by the Moroccan regime and police, demonstrations were held in the biggest cities of Western Sahara between 28 June and 1 July. Protesters chanted slogans in favour of the right to self-determination, demanding justice after more than 40 years of Moroccan occupation and repression, aiming to send a message to the UN Special Envoy. Following the demonstrations held in the largest cities of occupied Western Sahara on 28 June, over 120 Saharawi demonstrators were left with serious injuries, after being subjected to comprehensive police violence.

Read more here: [New Report from Adala UK: Visit by the UN Special Envoy for Western Sahara, Mr Horst Khöler](#).

3. Natural Resources

New EU-Morocco trade talks violate EU Court of Justice rulings

The European Commission is attempting to sign off a new trade agreement with Morocco including the fishing waters of the territory of Western Sahara, in disregard of the EU Court of Justice (CJEU) judgment of December 2016 on the issue, which stated that Western Sahara cannot be included in any agreement between Morocco and the EU without the consent of the Saharawi people. In spite of the CJEU judgment, the EU Commission sought a mandate from the EU Member States to open talks with Morocco for both a new Agreement and a new Protocol that would explicitly apply to Western Sahara and its maritime zone. The Member States in Council agreed on 16 April this year that the EU Commission ought to negotiate an amendment to the Agreement so as to include the waters of Western Sahara in its territorial scope, and a new Protocol as the current one is close to expiring. On 11 June 2018, the EU Commission sent a proposed amendment to the EU-Morocco Trade Protocols to the EU Member States and the EU Parliament for approval. The proposal seeks to extend the scope of the EU-Morocco trade deal into occupied Western Sahara.

93 Saharawi groups have called on the EU institutions to respect the will of the people of Western Sahara when negotiating trade or fisheries agreements that will affect their occupied land. They stated in a press release: "We call upon the EU member states and the EU Parliament to reject any proposed agreement covering Western Sahara that does not have the explicit consent of the POLISARIO Front, as the legitimate representative – and recognized by the UN as such - of the people of Western Sahara".



On 15 June 2018, the Polisario announced that they have launched a new court case regarding the EU-Morocco plans to cooperate on fisheries in the waters of occupied Western Sahara. In a press release, the Polisario Front announced that it has asked the EU Court of Justice to annul the Council Decision of 16 April 2018, authorising the EU Commission to renegotiate the Fisheries Protocol with Morocco. Polisario's press release stated that: "carried out within the framework of the annexation policy of the Kingdom of Morocco, these negotiations violate the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, and their related rights. They will only lead to a new illegal agreement".

Read more here: '[Saharawi groups object to EU's Western Sahara trade plans](#)'.

Read more here: '[This is how the European Commission will violate the CJEU ruling](#)'.

Read more here: '[Polisario initiates new law suit against EU-Morocco fish deal](#)'.



Adala UK
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AdalaUK - Justice & Human Rights for Western Sahara
www.adala.uk.org, info@adala.uk.org, +44 7506167722