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## WSC Newsletter July 2017

**Conflict Cargo Case | Petition on EU Trade Talks | Arrest of Moroccan Drug Smugglers | Echoes through the Wall | House-building**



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### WESTERN SAHARA HAS WON ITS CONFLICT CARGO CASE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Moroccan state company **OCP** has decided to drop defending the detained conflict mineral cargo in South Africa. The Saharawi people thus won a 5 million USD walk-over victory before the trial over phosphate rock ownership even had begun.

On 1 May 2017, the bulk vessel **NM Cherry Blossom** was detained in Port Elizabeth, on a stop-over to New Zealand. The vessel contained 55.000 tonnes of phosphate rock from occupied Western Sahara.

The UN has concluded that any exploitation of resources in Western Sahara would be illegal if the Saharawi people do not consent to it. Similarly, the Court of Justice of the EU on 21 December 2016 judged that trading with the territory would be illegal without such consent. However, Morocco, illegally occupying parts of Western Sahara since 1975, has kept the exports of Western Sahara phosphate rock. In 2016, Morocco earned over 200 million USD from the rock export from the territory.

Read more about the court case in the WSRW report '**Carriers of Conflict**', published 16 June.

### Policy Statement of the government of the Saharawi Republic on the risk and liability of ships carrying natural resources from occupied Western Sahara

Bir Lehlu, Western Sahara (21 June 2017). The government of the Saharawi Republic (the SADR) avails itself of the opportunity to identify the material risks and express its policy in the matter of the ocean carriage of natural resources from occupied Western Sahara.

The SADR government notes that the act of illegally exporting and trading in resources from the occupied area of Western Sahara is presently being defined as an offence in national law.

Read the full statement **here**.

### Sign up! Stop EU trade talks with Morocco regarding Western Sahara!

"We call on the EU to abide by the judgment of its own Supreme Court, and to cease all trade talks regarding Western Sahara with the occupying state, Morocco. As a champion for rule of law and human rights, the EU should respect the rights of the Saharawi people and negotiate trade in goods from Western Sahara with their representatives, the Polisario Front."

Read more and sign the petition **here**

### EC Plan To Circumvent ECJ Ruling Raised In The Dáil

*An Phoblacht* - 1 June 2017 - John Hedges

A EUROPEAN COMMISSION move to renegotiate its Association Agreement with Morocco on trade, political co-operation and development issues without involving the people of Western Sahara and their UN-recognised political representatives, the Polisario Front, has been raised in the Dáil (Irish Parliament) by Sinn Féin TD Seán Crowe with the Irish Foreign Affairs Minister.

Morocco has occupied much of resource-rich Western Sahara since 1975. Most of the population has been expelled by force, many to camps in the Algerian desert where 165,000 refugees still live. United Nations resolutions have called for the right to self-determination of the Saharawi people. The United Nations considers the Polisario Front to be the legitimate representative of the Saharawi people.

Continue reading at **An Phoblacht**

### Polisario Arrests Moroccan Drug Smugglers

Bir-Lehlu, July 17, 2017 (SPS) - The Saharawi government announced on Monday that a unit of the Saharawi People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has arrest a group of smugglers of 19 Moroccans called al-Hamala who are transporting drugs to the east of Moroccan military

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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.

wall.

### **WESTERN SAHARA'S HIDDEN DEMOCRATIC PROMISE**

The Globe Post - 19 June 2017 - Elliott Schwebach

On the western coast of Northern Africa are a territory, a conflict, and a people that the world has mostly forgotten. Though many do not realize it, this level of neglect has serious ramifications for the state of democracy in the Middle East and North Africa.

As the right to national self-determination in Western Sahara has gone ignored and unfulfilled, a unique potential for the creation of a robust and functional democracy has also gone tragically unheeded.

In order to prevent future conflict and diminish possible openings for radicalization, it is important for world leaders committed to human rights and international stability to recognize the democratic potential of Western Sahara for what it is: a rare opportunity for low-cost, high-yield democratic transition and the best possible outcome for citizens in the region.

Continue reading the **Globe Post**

### **Echoes Through The Wall**

*A video by Meriem Naili*

The Sahara Marathon is an international sports event organised every year since the year 2000 by the Proyecto Sahara group. Its aim is to encourage the public to learn more about the conflict and the Sahrawi people's condition by staying with families in refugee camps for the duration of the event. This video is a demonstration of how the Sahrawi people protest by singing, dancing and celebrating freedom that is yet to be obtained and how guests are embarked in this journey. It received the Young Journalists in the Mediterranean Award 2017 by the WAR (Web Art Resistance) media platform.

See the video **here**.

### **Civilian Court Follows Military Court**

The verdict comes after years of accusations that the trials were politically motivated, imprisoning activists who stood up against Morocco's social and economic deprivation of Saharawi.

The civilian court of Salé (near Rabat) has largely upheld the severe sentences issued by a military tribunal against a group of 25 Saharawi activists.

The so-called Gdeim Izik group had been arrested and previously convicted in relation to the Moroccan army's dismantling of the Gdeim Izik camp - a mass protest camp denouncing the Saharawi people's social and economic marginalization in their occupied homeland. On 8 November 2010, the Moroccan security forces destroyed the camp, resulting in violent clashes between the security forces and Saharawi protesters.

The 25 men have been arrested and tried on charges of inciting or participating in violence against security forces "leading to death with intent," and participation in a criminal organization. All of them are however known for their activism for Saharawi rights or independence.

The entire group had been originally condemned in February 2013 by a military tribunal, based on testimonies obtained under torture, as documented by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Most were given harsh sentences ranging from 20 years to life imprisonment. On 27 July 2016, Morocco's court of cassation ruled that the Gdeim Izik prisoners would be granted a civilian re-trial before the Salé court of appeals. Most of the group have already served more than six years in prison.

Read more **here**.

### **The House That Tateh Built . . . Out Of Sand-filled Plastic Bottles**

In the Sahrawi refugee camps in the Algerian desert, Tateh Lehbib Braica - aka 'the crazy bottle guy' - has built circular houses from waste plastic that protect from wind and sun.

On the ground lie hundreds of sand-filled, 1.5 litre plastic bottles that serve as bricks. With them, Tateh has found a way to fight back against the harshness of the Algerian desert that is home to refugees from Western Sahara. It's not yet that hot, but in summer, when the temperature rises above 50C, it will be impossible to venture out of doors.

"I was born in a sun-dried brick house," he says. "The roof was made of sheets of zinc - one of the best heat conductors. Me and my family had to endure high temperatures, rain and sandstorms that would sometimes take the roof off.

"When I came back to the camps, I decided to build a place for my grandmother to live that was more comfortable and more worthy of her."

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