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## WSC Newsletter March 2017



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### United Nations

The two words – United Nations – bear some examination in relation to the two words – Western Sahara.

Every year the Security Council has the opportunity to take a small step to support the rule of international law in the non-self governing territory of Western Sahara and every year the nations are united in indifference.

It is left to the Saharawi, their representative the POLISARIO Front, and those who support their struggle for self-determination to act to call for international law to be applied in Western Sahara – for their rights to be respected.

Western Sahara Campaign was instrumental in the creation of the Western Sahara Action Forum – an international campaign that focuses on the annual renewal of the mandate of MINURSO. For over 25 years MINURSO has not only failed in its task to supervise a referendum of self-determination, but it has also stood by for a quarter of a century whilst the Moroccan occupation forces flagrantly abuse the basic human rights of the Saharawi.

With the departure of another special representative and the arrival of a new UN General Secretary there is an opportunity to do things differently. Help us to get the nations of the world to unite and include human rights monitoring in the mandate of MINURSO. This must include the most basic human right of all – the right of the Saharawi to determine their own future. Visit wsaforum.org for a briefing.

### Western Sahara Envoy Christopher Ross Offers Resignation

UNITED NATIONS (AP) - The U.N. political chief says the secretary-general's personal envoy for the disputed Western Sahara has offered his resignation. Jeffrey Feltman told reporters on Monday that U.N. chief Antonio Guterres will act on the resignation offer from Christopher Ross "at a time when he sees fit." Feltman says Ross has served for eight years trying to get the Moroccan government and the Polisario Front independence movement back to negotiations on a permanent settlement of the Western Sahara dispute.

"Morocco Must Collaborate With Christopher Ross's Successor and Respect Its International Commitments"  
 SADR Foreign Minister Mohamed Salem Uld Salek

Algeria, March 14, 2017  
 Mohamed Salem Uld Salek said that the problem raised is not what will happen to the special envoy of the UN SG in Western Sahara, but how Morocco will react to the future team of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.

In the same context, the Minister of Foreign Affairs wonders whether Morocco cooperates with the United Nations or not and respects the commitments it has formally accepted, consisting of the UN settlement plan agreed by both sides, the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco, in 1991.

The foreign minister added that the problem is whether or not France will help the United Nations mission to carry out its work in holding the referendum on self-determination of the Saharawi people, noting that Ross tried to promote, France and Spain to work in order to persuade Morocco to seriously collaborate with the UN and stop putting obstacles in the way of a peaceful solution to the conflict.

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### Morocco Joins The African Union

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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.

Some hope that Morocco's readmission to the African Union (AU) on January 31st will help to resolve the dispute. The kingdom left the AU's predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity, in 1984 after a majority of the member states recognised Polisario and granted it membership as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). By returning, Morocco is supposed to accept the AU's protocols, which state that members' borders (including those of the SADR) are inviolable.

**Read The Economist article**

### **Moroccan Bribes**

Despite its flagrant trampling on the objectives of the constitutive act of the African Union (AU) that stipulates to "Defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States", the "Respect of borders existing on achievement of independence" and the "Prohibition of the use of force or threat to use force among Member States of the Union" Morocco, that by means of military force still occupies a large portion of the AU member founder Western Sahara republic, smoothly joined the AU.

Why, then, did the AU admit the membership of a country that not only tramples on this institution's core constitutive act but also despises its role in the Saharawi cause, knowing that the peace plan set to resolve this protracted decolonisation issue is under the auspices of the UN together with the AU?

Morocco's joining the AU was the result of a lobbying policy in which an all pervasive corruption campaign has been its cornerstone.

In a note he sent to his superior the Moroccan Minister on May 5th, 2014, Moha Tagma, Director of the African Affaires at Morocco Foreign Department, put forward "proposals for the undertaken preparations to the next AU Summit" that would be held in Addis Ababa. He suggested giving "individual envelopes of 5000 euros for each friend" and he lists those "friends" who represent the delegations of 24 countries.

### **Tourism in Dakhla is a royal family business**

Mohammed VI's cousin, Princess Lalla Noufissa El Yacoubi and her family are looking to establish themselves in the hotel business in the Dakhla area, where there is enormous tourist potential. Their investment is reinforcing the "kitesurf diplomacy" that Morocco has been using to normalise its presence in the contested Western Sahara. The Westpoint Eco-Lodge, due to open this month, is owned by Moulay Abdelaziz Sennoussi, Lalla Noufissa's son.

### **27th February**

Our Independence Day is also a reminder to us and to the world that something is wrong in Western Sahara. It is a message from our people to the so-called international community that we, the Saharawi, already have decided our future, and we are ready to confirm it in a self-determination referendum if we are allowed to. Otherwise, our choice is clear. We want to be free! There is no other alternative to our freedom. It is a must! We want to build our State and our Nation, and we are ready to do that, because we already have built our own institutions, our own government that succeeded for more than 40 years to run the only refugee camps in the world run, administrated and organised by refugees themselves. We only need France and its protégé, the Morocco Monarchy, to leave us alone, to stop sustaining neo-colonialism in our country.

Do you believe the country will gain its full independence from Morocco?  
Of course I do, because I learned from history that no colonial power has ever succeeded to stay forever in control of colonised territories. One day or another the will of the peoples prevail.

Malainin Lakhil Saharawi translator, human rights defender and freelance journalist. He is a member of Saharawi Natural Resource Watch.

**Read the interview**

### **Briefing 2017: Western Sahara and MINURSO**

#### Summary

1. Setbacks for Morocco's strategy in Western Sahara offer hope for change: embarrassment of Moroccan military adventure into the UN buffer zone – ended thanks to UN pressure; Moroccan return to the AU alongside Western Sahara; European Court of Justice block on Morocco exporting Western Saharan products to the EU.
2. Yet the grim reality of human rights abuses in Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara continues – despite MINURSO presence in the territory. The Saharawi people's right to self-determination remains unrealised, a quarter century after the arrival of MINURSO to organise a referendum.

#### Recommendations

1. Set a date for a free and fair referendum to be carried out in Western Sahara with an option for independence on the ballot paper, consistent with the established international legal norm of self-determination. Morocco can be expected to protest, but should not be allowed to dictate to the United Nations.
2. Develop a robust plan under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to enforce the outcome of the referendum, if any of the parties do not respect the decision of the Saharawi electorate.
3. Grant the MINURSO peacekeeping operation the legal mandate to monitor and report on human rights in territories controlled by the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO. This body must report its findings directly to the UN Security Council and be a permanent presence until the referendum.
4. Building on the important recognition by the Court of Justice of the EU of the Saharawi's rights to control their natural resources, demand an end to the extraction of natural resources from Western Sahara through deals which disregard the interests and wishes of the indigenous Saharawi.

**Read the full briefing here**

### **Vigeo Eiris - From Ethics to Occupation**

The UK-French company Vigeo Eiris advising investors on the occupations of Palestine and Crimea is facilitating the Moroccan government's energy projects in occupied Western Sahara.

At the time Vigeo and Eiris merged Eiris was investigating companies operating in occupied Palestine and Crimea - "Business on occupied lands" -, while Vigeo was large on the Moroccan market. The dilemma today is that the Eiris team sits with experience on how investors should avoid placing money in Palestine and Crimea, while the Vigeo team is helping Morocco in investments in occupied Western Sahara.

**Read the full story**

**Morocco/Western Sahara:  
Grant Saharawi defendants a fair trial**

The trial of 24 Saharawi in a civilian court that began on 26 December is an opportunity to redress the numerous violations that tainted their fundamentally flawed military trial in 2013. The trial at the Rabat Court of Appeals continued on 23, 24 and 25 January, and was adjourned until 13 March. A fair trial is essential in order to bring to light the truth of the events in 2010.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
6 March 2017

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