

Adopted Resolution

On Freedom for Western Sahara

As Greens, we have always supported the anti-colonialist struggles of those who have been under the control of other European countries. Today, colonialism is still present, and can be observed by taking a look at a map. The Western Sahara, which is under Moroccan occupation, is one of such case, and its liberation has been demanded by the 'UN Special Committee on Decolonisation' on countless occasions. We, the Greens in Europe, demand freedom for Western Sahara and an end to this case of colonialism, which is just beyond our borders.

Western Sahara was a Spanish colony from 1884. Since 1973 the 'Liberation Front for Western Sahara' has been fighting for their independence, first against Franco's Government, then against Morocco's after the latter's annexation of West Sahara following Franco's fall in 1975. In 1976 the Arabic Sahrawi Republic was proclaimed, recognised by Algeria amongst others. In 1984 the AU recognised the Sahrawi Republic. That year, ignoring a ruling of the International Court of Justice rejecting territorial claims by Morocco and Mauritania and recognising the right to self-determination of the Saharawi people, the Moroccan King ordered a "Green March" of over 300,000 Moroccans into the territory. Spain unlawfully renounced its administrative responsibility over the territory and Morocco and Mauritania divided the country while the 'Liberation Front for Western Sahara' took on its fight for independence. The scattered majority of the population of Western Sahara had to flee to refugee camps in neighbouring Algeria. The guerrilla warfare continued into 1991, which is when the UN brokered a cease-fire agreement, under the condition that the Sahrawi population could hold a referendum on self-determination. Ever since then, the population of Western Sahara is still waiting for its referendum and the Moroccan settler population continues to expand.

Meanwhile, between 90.000 and 125.000 people are living in refugee camps in Tindouf (Algiers), which is south of the Sahara Desert. Living conditions there are far from dignified, and the most common feelings amongst Sahrawi youth are those of resignation and desperation. The international community pays practically no attention to this quiet conflict, in which Morocco, Algeria, France and Spain are the main actors. They avoid finding a fair solution to the conflict, which could be done by holding the referendum as was agreed in the UN framework. The EU is the main provider of assistance to the refugees but refrains from playing any political role.

And even so, the situation in Western Sahara, or the "occupied territories", is even worse than in the refugee camps. Systematic human rights violations, enforced disappearances, torture, arbitrary detentions, and executions are commonplace on the part of Moroccan authorities, as is the lack of freedom of speech, association, and assembly. Last year two high-ranking envoys of the UN were refused entry into Western Sahara by the Moroccan authorities.

The military architecture established by Morocco within the Western Sahara is huge, having amongst others built a triple 2.700 kilometre long wall against the Western Saharan population. The wall is surrounded by anti-personnel mines and barbed wire, and has approximately 40.000 Moroccan soldiers stationed around it. The wall is also used as a deterrent to refugees coming from other African countries, and is therefore often wrongly considered in the European political sphere as useful in the struggle against terrorism. The militarisation of the Sahara needs to come to an end.

Morocco clings to the Western Sahara because it is a resource-rich region. It has the biggest sources of phosphate, which is the main ingredient for modern fertilisers, that support industrialised agriculture worldwide. In fact, six per cent of Morocco's GDP comes only from exports related to Western Saharan phosphate. Other resources include fish stocks, where 74% of Moroccan fishery production is derived from Western Saharan waters, and more than 80.000 tons of agricultural products. Recently, western companies have started exploring possible sites for oil exploitation in the region, also particularly off-shore, with all the associated environmental impacts and severe risks it entails to thousands of kilometres of coastline in different countries. Remarkably, the wealth of Western Sahara is its curse, and European countries are partly to blame for its economic exploitation. For example, the 'Development Agency of

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France' (France being the country that invests in Morocco the most, and is the most supportive ally of Morocco's annexation of Western Sahara) has built a modern harbour in the capital of Western Sahara, so as that resources can be shipped out of the country more easily.

The Western Sahara needs proper recognition by the international community, and international awareness of its struggle. We congratulate the Swedish Red-Green Government on its intention to recognise Western Sahara, which we believe is a brave and important step that other European nations should follow.

We believe the debate on the liberation of Western Sahara needs to be present on a European Level, and we, the European Greens call for the application of international law and stand in solidarity with the Sahrawi, and demand the following:

- A fair referendum on the self-determination of Western Sahara needs to be conducted without delay. The basis for the electorate must be the voting list that was established by the United Nations in 1996.
- In the light of the unfortunate resolution of the UN Security Council of April 28, 2015 it is all the more urgent that the United Nations Mission for the referendum in the Western Sahara (MINURSO) mandate be extended from only observing the cease-fire agreement to actively reporting on human rights violations in the Western Saharan territory. The territory should also be opened for other international observers, such as CSOs and media. We denounce the repeated obstruction by certain EU Member States to this extension, as most recently in April this year.
- Morocco currently holds many people, including political activists, in detention without due procedure. There are plenty of accounts of human rights violations, including torture, perpetrated by the Moroccan police forces. We demand the release of all political prisoners and civil society activists from their unlawful detention and an end to the harassment of human rights defenders and other voices of dissent. We call for a guarantee of human rights for the Sahrawi people.
- In particular, we demand the liberation of political prisoners from 'Gdeim Izik', who have been judged before a military court for having led the start of the Arab Spring Revolution in Aiuun at the end of 2010, and who are currently on hunger strike.
- The European Union is currently supporting the occupation in various ways and therefore going against its duty of non-recognition of such situations, which are illegal under international law. The EU has, for instance, supplied the Moroccan government with border control technology to detect refugees crossing the Moroccan border. This technology is used at the wall erected against the Sahrawis. The EU must stop the proliferation of any kind of technology that is used in the oppression of the Sahrawis.
- The 'EU-Morocco Fisheries Agreement' allows European trawlers preferential access to Moroccan waters, including those bordering the Western Sahara. We demand that European trawlers refrain from fishing in Western Saharan waters, before the conclusion of treaties regulating such usage is agreed upon with the exiled Sahrawi government.
- We demand appropriate reparation be paid to the Western Saharan people, for all of the resources that have been exploited by both Moroccan and international companies and further investigation into the violations of human rights in the territory. In this line, we welcome the ongoing investigation in Spain of the crimes supposedly committed by Moroccan officials in the territory.
- We demand the EU to take measures such as restriction of investments and trade, asset freeze and visa ban against the people and companies who are responsible for and who benefit from the occupation of Western Sahara.