

**NGOs – Geneva Support Group for the Protection and Promotion
of Human Rights in Western Sahara**

Open letter to the President of the UN General Assembly

H.E. Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande

Your Excellency,

The 210 undersigning organisations express their deep concern over the appointment of the Moroccan Permanent Representative to the UN, Mr. Omar Hilale, as one of the two co-facilitators for the process of “Strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system”.

Despite all legislative and communication efforts deployed by its authorities, the Kingdom of Morocco remains a place where the fundamental freedoms and rights are constantly violated, including the freedom of expression and the freedom of peaceful assembly and therefore counts among the countries with the worst human rights records in the world.

More than that, the Kingdom of Morocco is illegally, militarily occupying the Non Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara since 1975 and is systematically violating the International Humanitarian Law, as well as all fundamental rights of the Sahrawi people, including its sovereignty over the natural resources and its inalienable right to self-determination and independence enshrined in UN General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

In recent years, the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights have expressed their concerns about the failure to find a solution to the issue of the right to self-determination of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara and the illegal exploitation of the natural resources in the Territory.

Considering the communication submitted by Ennaâma Asfari (one of the leaders of the 2010 mass protest in Gdeim Izik), condemned to 30 years imprisonment without any material element of evidence, the Committee Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment has ruled that the Kingdom of Morocco violated articles 1 and 12 to 16 of the Convention. In a letter dated 9 February 2017, the Kingdom of Morocco vigorously rejected the decision.

In the past, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment found that “torture and ill-treatment were used to extract confessions and that protestors were subjected to excessive use of force by Moroccan law-enforcement officials.” He also found that “excessive force was used during demonstrations for the independence of Western Sahara, including kidnappings and abandonments in the desert, in order to intimidate alleged protestors.”

In recent years, considering different complaints lodged by Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders or journalists, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) has repeatedly pointed out the violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by the Moroccan authorities. The Kingdom of Morocco systematically rejects those findings.

In its most recent Opinion (No. 67/2019), released last March 31, considering the communication submitted by a group of 14 students, the WGAD found that the detention of the Student Group was and is arbitrary, breaching Articles 9, 10, 19, 23 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and Articles 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 14, 18, 19, 26 and 27 of the International Convention on Civil and Political rights.

Moreover, The NGOs – Geneva Support Group for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in Western Sahara expresses its deepest concern to see the UN entrust the task of co-facilitator to a diplomat who has personally been widely accused of using corrupt and spying acts against UN personnel while serving as Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco in Geneva.

It should be recalled here that in the period of Ms. Navy Pillay as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Hilale has been accused on the basis of various official documents leaked by a Moroccan whistleblower (<http://www.arso.org/ColemanPaper.htm>) of corrupting some UN high ranking officers, mainly the Swedish Anders Kompass and the Senegalese Bacre Waly Ndiaye, in addition to using the Pakistani Athar Sultan Khan, as an information source in the office of Mr. Antonio Guterres, former UNHCR High-Commissioner.

According to these official documents, Mr. Hilale was using these three UN officials to serve his country's interests, manipulating UN mechanisms and jeopardizing the efforts made at that time by the UN Secretary General's Personal Envoy, H.E. Mr. Christopher Ross. Such action had in fact undermined years of efforts by the UN to find a solution to the decolonization process of Western Sahara.

The members of the NGOs – Geneva Support Group for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in Western Sahara stress that the UN's reputation and neutrality is already severely damaged in Western Sahara, where its Mission is a powerless witness of serious breaches of the International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights law by the Moroccan occupier.

The members of the NGOs – Geneva Support Group for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in Western Sahara seize this opportunity to reiterate their appeal to the members of the UN Security Council and in particular to France (the motherland of Human Rights) to include a Human Rights chapter in the MINURSO mandate and to sincerely allow the Mission to accomplish its fundamental mandate, that was due to be implemented in 1992 already: the organization and the supervision of a referendum of self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

Yours sincerely,

Bir Lehlu / Geneva, 16 April 2020

c.c. : Mr. A. Guterres, UN Secretary General
Ms. M. Bachelet, UN High-Commissioner for Human Rights
Mr. F. Grandi, UN High-Commissioner for Refugees

SIGNATORIES (NGOs enjoying UN - ECOSOC Status)

Acción Solidaria Aragonesa (ASA), African Law Foundation (AFRILAW), Agrupación Chilena de Ex Presos políticos, **American Association of Jurists (AAJ)**, Amigos por un Sahara Libre, Arabako SEAD en Lagunen Elkartea, Asociación de Amigos y Amigas de la R.A.S.D. de Álava, Amal Nanclares, Asociación Amal Centro Andalucía, ARCI Città Visibili, A.R.S.P.S. - Rio de Or, Asociación Amigos del Pueblo Saharaui del Campo de Gibraltar (FANDAS), Asociación Amigos del Pueblo Saharaui de Toledo, Asociación de Amistad con el Pueblo Saharaui de Albacete, Asociación ARDI HURRA, Asociación Asturiana de Solidaridad con el Pueblo Saharaui, Asociación Canaria de Amistad con el Pueblo Saharaui (ACAPS), Asociación Chilena de Amistad con la República Árabe Saharaui Democrática, Asociación de la Comunidad Saharaui en Argon (ACSA), Asociación Cultural Peruano Saharaui, Asociación de Discapacitados Saharaui, Asociación Ecuatoriana de Amistad con el Pueblo Saharaui (AEAPS), **Asociación Española para el Derecho Internacional de los Derechos Humanos (AEDIDH)**, Asociación de Familiares de Presos y Desaparecidos Saharaui (AFAPREDESA), Asociación Hijas de Saguia y el Rio, Asociación por la Justicia y los Derechos Humanos, Asociación de Médicos Saharaui en España, Asociación Mexicana de Amistad con la República Árabe Saharaui A.C. (AMARAS), Asociación Navarra de Amigos y Amigas de la R.A.S.D. (ANARASD), Asociación Navarra de Amigos y Amigas del Sahara (ANAS), Asociación Panameña Solidaria con la Causa saharauí (APASOCASA), Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de España (APDHE), Asociación Profesional de Abogados Saharaui en España (APRASE), Asociación por la Protección de los Presos Saharaui en las Cárceles Marroquí, Asociación Riojana de Amigos de la R.A.S.D., Asociación Saharaui de Control de los Recursos naturales y la Protección del Medio Ambiente, Asociación Saharaui para la Protección y Difusión del Patrimonio cultural Saharaui, Asociación Saharaui contra la Tortura, Asociación de Saharaui en Alicante, Asociación de Saharaui en Ávila, Asociación de Saharaui en Bal, Asociación de Saharaui en Fuerteventura, Asociación de Saharaui en Jerez de la Frontera, Asociación de Saharaui en Lebrija, Asociación de Saharaui en Navarra, Asociación de Saharaui en Tenerife, Asociación de Saharaui en Valdepeñas, Asociación Um Draiga de Zaragoza, Asociación Venezolana de Solidaridad con el Sáhara (ASOVESSA), Asociación de Víctimas de Minas (ASAVIM), Asociación de Zamur Valencia, Associação Amigos e Solidaridade ao Povo Saharaui (ASAHARA), Associació d'Amics del Poble Sahrauí de les Illes Balears, Association des Amis de la RASD (France), Association de la Communauté Sahraouie en France, Association Culture Sahara, Association culturelle Franco-Sahraouie, Association des Femmes Sahraouies en France, Association of Humanitarian Lawyers, **Association Mauritanienne pour la Promotion du Droit, Association Mauritanienne pour la Transparence et le Développement – ATED**, Association for the Monitoring of Resources and for the Protection of the Environment in Western Sahara (AMRPENWS), **Association Nationale des Echanges entre Jeunes (ANEJ)**, Association pour un Référendum libre et régulier au Sahara occidental (ARSO), Association Sahraouie des Victimes des Violations Graves des Droits de l'Homme Commises par l'Etat Marocain (ASVDH), Association des Sahraouis de Bordeaux, Association de la vie maghrébine pour la solidarité et le développement (AVMSD), Associazione bambini senza confini, Associazione Jaima Sahrawi per una soluzione giusta e non violenta nel Sahara Occ., Associazione Nazionale di Solidarietà con il Popolo Saharaui, Australia Western Sahara Association, Bentili Media Center, Bureau International pour le Respect des Droits Humains au Sahara occidental (BIRDHSO), Campaña Saharaui para la sensibilización sobre el peligro de Minas (SCBL), Cantabria por el Sáhara, Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Chile, Centro Brasileiro de Solidaridad con los Pueblos y Lucha por la Paz, CEBRAPAZ, Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos "Segundo Montes Mozo S.J." (CSMM), Centro Saharaui por la Salvaguardia de la Memoria, Colectivo Saharaui de Defensores de Derechos Humanos (CODESA), Colectivo Saharaui en Estepona, Colectivo Saharaui en Gipuzkoa, Colectivo Saharaui en Jaén, Colectivo Saharaui en Lanzarote, Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos de Ecuador (CEDHU), Comisión General Justicia y Paz, Comisión Media Independientes, Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos de la República Dominicana (CNDH-RD), Comisión Nacional Saharaui por los Derechos Humanos (CONASADH), Comité d'Action et de Réflexion pour l'Avenir du Sahara Occidental, Comité de Apoyo por el Plano de Paz y la Protección de los Recursos

Naturales en el Sáhara Occidental, Comité Belge de soutien au Peuple Sahraoui, Comité de Defensa del Derecho de Autodeterminación (CODAPSO), Comité de Familiares de los 15 Jóvenes Secuestrados, Comité de Familiares de Mártires y Desaparecidos, Comité de Familiares de los Presos Políticos Saharais, Comité de Jumelage et d'Echange Internationaux / Gonfreville l'Orcher, Comité de Protección de los Defensores Saharais – Freedom Sun, Comité de Protección de los Recursos Naturales, Comité Saharai de Defensa de Derechos Humanos (Glaimim), Comité Saharai de Defensa de Derechos Humanos (Smara), Comité Saharai de Defensa de Derechos Humanos (Zag), Comité Saharai por el Monitoreo de los Derechos Humanos (Assa), Comité de Solidaridad Oscar Romero, Comité Suisse de soutien au Peuple Sahraoui, Comité de Víctimas de Agdaz y Magouna, Comunidad Saharai en Aragón, Comunidad Saharai en Castilla y León, Comunidad Saharai en Castilla la Mancha, Comunidad Saharai en Catalunya, Comunidad Saharai en Grenada, Comunidad Saharai en Las Palmas, Comunidad Saharai en Murcia, Coordinadora Estatal de Asociaciones Solidarias con el Sáhara (CEAS – Sáhara), Coordinadora de Gdeim Izik para un Movimiento Pacífico, Coordinadora de los Graduados Saharais Desempleados, Coordinadora d'Organizacions No-Governmentals de Cooperació al Desenvolupament (CONGDIB), Coordinadora de las ONGs en Aaiún, Coordinadora Saharai de Derechos Humanos de Tantan, DISABI Bizkaia, Emmaus Åland, Emmaus Stockholm, Equipe Média, Federació ACAPS de Catalunya, Federació d'Associacions de Solidaritat amb el Poble Sahrauí del País Valencià, Federación Andaluza de Asociaciones Solidarias con el Sahara (FANDAS), Federación de Asociaciones de Amigos del Pueblo Saharai de Extremadura (FEDESAEX), Federación de la Comunidad de Madrid de Asociaciones Solidarias con el Sahara (FEMAS Sahara), Federación Estatal de Instituciones Solidarias con el Pueblo Saharai (FEDISSAH), Fondation Frantz Fanon, Forum Futuro de la Mujer Saharai, Freiheit für die Westsahara e.V., Fundación Constituyente XXI, Fundación Mundubat, Fundación Sahara Libre-Venezuela, Fundación Sahara occidental, **Fundación Latinoamericana por los Derechos Humanos y el Desarrollo Social (Fundalatin)**, Giuristi Democratici, Global Aktion - People & Planet before profit, Groupe Non Violence Active (NOVA SAHARA OCCIDENTAL), Grupo por la renuncia de la Nacionalidad Marroquí, **Habitat International Coalition**, Housing and Land Rights Network, Ibsar Al Khair Association for the Disabled in Western Sahara, **Indian Council of South America (CISA)**, **International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL)**, **International Educational Development, Inc.**, **International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR)**, **Liberation**, Liga de Defensa de los Presos Políticos Saharai, Liga de Deportistas Saharais en España, Liga de Estudiantes Saharais en España, Liga de Mujeres Saharais en España, Liga Nacional dos Direitos Humanos, Liga de Periodistas Saharais en España, Liga Saharai de defensa de Derechos Humanos y Protección de RW-Bojador, Ligue des Jeunes et des Etudiants Sahraouis en France, Ligue pour la Protection des Prisonniers Sahraouis dans les prisons marocaines (LPPS), **Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples (MRAP)**, National Television Team, Nigerian Movement for the Liberation of Western Sahara, Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara, Observatoire des Médias Saharais pour documenter les violations des droits de l'homme, Observatorio Aragonés para el Sáhara Occidental, Observatorio Asturiano de Derechos Humanos para el Sáhara Occidental (OAPSO), Observatorio Saharai por el Niño y la Mujer, Observatorio Saharai de Protección del Niño, Observatorio Saharai de Recursos Naturales, 1514 Oltre il muro, Organización Contra la Tortura en Dakhla, Organización Saharai por la Defensa de las libertades y la dignidad, Pallasos en Rebeldía y Festiclown, **Paz y Cooperación**, Plataforma de Organizaciones Chile Mejor Sin TLC, Por un Sahara Libre, **Right Livelihood Foundation**, Sahara Euskadi Vitoria, Sahara Gasteiz Vitoria, Saharawi Advocacy Campaign, Saharawi Association for Persons with Disabilities in Western Sahara, Saharawi Association in the USA (SAUSA), Saharawi Campaign against the Plunder (SCAP), Saharawi Center for Media and Communication, Saharawi Media Team, Saharawi Voice, Sandblast Arts, Schweizerische Unterstützungskomitee für die Sahraouis, Sindicato Español Comisiones Obreas (CCOO), Solidariedade Galega col Pobo Saharai (SOGAPS), Stichting Zelfbeschikking West-Sahara, Tayuch Amurio, Tawasol Ludio, The Icelandic Western Sahara Association, The Swedish Western Sahara Committee, TIRIS - Associazione di Solidarietà con il Popolo Saharawi, Unión de Asociaciones Solidarias con el Sáhara de Castilla y León, Union des Ingénieurs Sahraouis, Unión de Juristas Saharais (UJS), Unión Nacional de Abogados

Saharais, Unión Nacional de Estudiantes de Saguia El Hamra y Rio de Oro (UESARIO), Unión Nacional de la Juventud de Saguia El Hamra y Rio de Oro (UJSARIO), Unión Nacional de Mujeres Saharais (UNMS), Unión Nacional de Trabajadores de Saguia El Hamra y Rio de Oro (UGTSARIO), Unión de Periodistas y Escritores Saharais (UPES), US Western Sahara Foundation, VZW de Vereniging van de Sahrawi Gemeenschap in Belgie, Werken Rojo - Medio de comunicación digital, Western Sahara Resource Watch España (WSRW España), Western Sahara Times, **World Barua Organization (WBO), World Peace Council.**
