

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

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **World Press Freedom Day**

#### **UNESCO 26 C / Resolution 4.3 (06/11/1991)**

In celebrating World Press Freedom Day on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Geneva Support Group for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in Western Sahara denounces the systematic violations of freedom of opinion and expression and the serious breaches of the International Humanitarian Law by the Occupying Power of the Non Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara, the Kingdom of Morocco.

The long process of the international community, initiated with adoption of the Windhoek Declaration on 3 May 1991, led successively to the adoption of various resolutions by the UN Security Council, as well as by the UN General Assembly (which declared the World Press Freedom Day in December 1993), the Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Council.

In its General Observation no. 34 (July 2011), analyzing the application of Article 19 (Freedom of opinion and expression) of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Covenant's monitoring Human Rights Committee states that "Journalism is a function shared by a wide range of actors, including professional full-time reporters and analysts, as well as bloggers and others who engage in forms of self-publication in print, on the internet or elsewhere". The Committee further states that "It is normally incompatible with paragraph 3 to restrict the freedom of journalists and others who seek to exercise their freedom of expression (such as persons who wish to travel to human rights-related meetings) to travel outside the State party, to restrict the entry into the State party of foreign journalists to those from specified countries or to restrict freedom of movement of journalists and human rights investigators within the State party (including to conflict-affected locations, the sites of natural disasters and locations where there are allegations of human rights abuses)."

The UN Plan of Action, spearheaded by the Intergovernmental Council of UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and endorsed in 2012 by the UN Chief Executives Board, stresses that "Impunity, which may be understood as the failure to bring perpetrators of human rights violations to justice, perpetuates the cycle of violence against journalists and must be addressed."

The UN Security Council has constantly reaffirmed the responsibility of States to comply with their relevant obligations to end impunity and to prosecute those responsible for war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and serious violations of International Humanitarian Law.

In its resolution 1738 (23/12/2006), the UN Security Council, deeply concerned at the frequency of acts of violence in many parts of the world against journalists, urges States and all other parties to an armed conflict to do their utmost to prevent violations of international humanitarian law against civilians, including journalists and urges all parties involved in situations of armed conflict to respect the professional independence and rights of journalists.

Furthermore, the Security Council recalls that the deliberate targeting of civilians and other protected persons, and the commission of systematic, flagrant and widespread violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in situations of armed conflict may constitute a threat to international peace and security.

In adopting resolution 69/185, the UN General Assembly “condemns unequivocally all attacks and violence against journalists and media workers, such as torture, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrest and arbitrary detention, as well as intimidation and harassment in both conflict and non-conflict situations”. The General Assembly also “Strongly condemns the prevailing impunity for attacks and violence against journalists, and expresses grave concern that the vast majority of these crimes go unpunished, which in turn contributes to the recurrence of these crimes.”

In 2012, the UN Human Rights Council initiated a follow-up process with the adoption of resolution 21/12 entitled “Safety of Journalists”, which calls on all parties to armed conflict to respect their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including their obligations under the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 the provisions of which extend protection to journalists in situations of armed conflict.

The fact that the Kingdom of Morocco is associated since the beginning to the group of states promoting this continuing process cannot constitute any form of immunity or impunity for the serious and systematic violations of human rights and breaches of the International Humanitarian Law its security forces commit in the Occupied Non Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara.

The Geneva Support Group for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in Western Sahara denounces the harassment and arbitrary arrests of Sahrawi journalists in Occupied Western Sahara, as well as the systematic expulsion of foreign journalists wishing to investigate in the Non Self-Governing Territory.

In this context, the Geneva Support Group for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in Western Sahara calls upon:

- the UN Security Council to include a Human Rights Chapter in the MINURSO mandate;
- the UN Human Rights Council to create a mandate of Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in the Occupied Non Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara;
- the Special Rapporteurs on Freedom of opinion and expression, on Freedom of association, on Human Rights Defenders, on the right to Privacy, on Violence against Women, on Torture, as well as the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to pay a particular attention, within their respective mandate, to the human rights violations committed by the Occupying Power against journalists in Western Sahara.

Bir Lehlu / Geneva, 30 April 2020

On behalf of the GSGPPHRWS, the coordinators :

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## **SIGNATORIES (212 NGOs)**

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(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 saharai (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 Sahara Euskadi Vitoria, Asociación Sahara Gasteiz Vitoria, 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 Tawasol Lluidio, 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 Sahaui 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 Saharaui, Comité de Jumelage et d'Echange Internationaux / Gonfreville l'Orcher, Comité de Protección de los Defensores Saharaui – Freedom Sun, Comité de Protección de los Recursos Naturales, Comité Saharaui de Defensa de Derechos Humanos (Glaimim), Comité Saharaui de Defensa

de Derechos Humanos (Smara), Comité Saharaui de Defensa de Derechos Humanos (Zag), Comité Saharaui 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 Saharaui en Aragón, Comunidad Saharaui en Castilla y León, Comunidad Saharaui en Castilla la Mancha, Comunidad Saharaui en Catalunya, Comunidad Saharaui en Grenada, Comunidad Saharaui en Las Palmas, Comunidad Saharaui en Murcia, Coordinadora Estatal de Asociaciones Solidarias con el Sáhara (CEAS – Sáhara), Coordinadora de Gdeim Izik para un Movimiento Pacífico, Coordinadora de los Graduados Saharaui Desempleados, Coordinadora d'Organizacions No-Governmentals de Cooperació al Desenvolupament (CONGDIB), Coordinadora de las ONGs en Aaiún, Coordinadora Saharaui de Derechos Humanos de Tantan, DISABI Bizkaia, Emmaus Åland, Emmaus Stockholm, Equipe Média, European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH), 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 Saharaui 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 Saharaui (FEDISSAH), Fondation Frantz Fanon, Forum Futuro de la Mujer Saharaui, 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 Saharaui, Liga de Deportistas Saharaui en España, Liga de Estudiantes Saharaui en España, Liga de Mujeres Saharaui en España, Liga Nacional dos Direitos Humanos, Liga de Periodistas Saharaui en España, Liga Saharaui 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 Saharouis 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 Saharaui por el Niño y la Mujer, Observatorio Saharaui de Protección del Niño, Observatorio Saharaui de Recursos Naturales, 1514 Oltre il muro, Organización Contra la Tortura en Dakhla, Organización Saharaui 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**, 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 Saharaui (SOGAPS), Stichting Zelfbeschikking West-Sahara, Tayuch Amurio, 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 Saharaui (UJS), Unión Nacional de Abogados Saharaui, 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 Saharaui (UNMS), Unión Nacional de Trabajadores de Saguia El Hamra y Rio de Oro (UGTSARIO), Unión de Periodistas y Escritores Saharaui (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**.

**NGOs enjoying UN - ECOSOC Status**

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