



U.S. - Western Sahara Foundation



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March 10, 2009

**The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500**

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing on behalf of the U.S.- Western Sahara Foundation, a bipartisan group of American citizens, to urge your administration to immediately call upon Morocco to end their brutal repression and escalating violence against the Sahrawi population in occupied Western Sahara. Most recently, the Moroccan police gang raped a 16 year old Sahrawi teenager, Hayat Rguibi, in El Aaiun after questioning her about Western Sahara flags and graffiti. Just a few months ago, in December the Moroccan police contributed to the deaths of two college students who were intentionally run over during a peaceful sit-in at a bus station in Agadir.

The violence against the Sahrawis in occupied Western Sahara has been documented and reported by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, the World Organization Against Torture, Reporters without Borders, the United Nations Office of the High Commission for Human Rights and the U.S. State Department. In fact, Morocco's brutal occupation of Western Sahara has repeatedly led Freedom House to list Moroccan Occupied Western Sahara as one of the world's worst regimes.

Your election as President of the United States has given great hope to the Sahrawi people because you have stated that you will not forsake America's principles for political expediency. Furthermore, our Foundation was also greatly encouraged by the report in the *New York Times* that stated you were considering "a break with the Bush administration's pro-Morocco policy" on the Western Sahara issue. Our long-time friendship with Morocco cannot be an excuse to ignore their gross violations of human rights against an innocent population who are simply seeking their long promised right to self determination, upheld by the International Court of Justice and promised by the United Nations.

As we write this letter today, Sahrawis are being tortured, brutally treated and imprisoned simply for supporting international law and the right to vote. We fervently believe that your leadership on this issue could end the suffering of the Sahrawi people and also lead to the holding of the long-promised referendum on self-determination.

Please call on Morocco to end their violence against the Sahrawi people and allow the referendum to move forward so that this issue can be resolved peacefully and justly in conformance with international law and American principles.

Sincerely,


Suzanne Scholte


Carlos Wilson

U.S.-Western Sahara Foundation, a project of the Defense Forum Foundation

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