

**This peaceful activist is on a hunger strike. Her life is in danger.**



## **Aminatou Haidar**

**The Saharawi Gandhi &  
Defender of Human Rights**

Winner of the Civil Courage Award  
(New York 2009)

Robert Kennedy Peace Prize  
(Washington 2008)

Silver Rose Award  
(European Union 2007).

Aminatou has been on a hunger strike at a Spanish airport since November 16 when Moroccan authorities confiscated her passport and deported her from her homeland. She is now gravely ill.



Aminatou's supporters include Nobel prize-winner Jose Ramos Horta, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the African Union, the European Union and United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon.

Aminatou Haidar has stated she wishes to return to her homeland "*with or without a passport, alive or dead*".

*"My demand is to return to Western Sahara, to hug my children and to live with them and my mother, but in dignity."*

The Australia Western Sahara Association supports Aminatou Haidar's claim to dignity and calls for the human rights of all Saharawi people to be respected.

**You can support Aminatou by going to [www.awsa.org.au](http://www.awsa.org.au) and following the link to the Amnesty International petition or writing to the Australian Government and the UN urging them to act (details at [www.awsa.org.au](http://www.awsa.org.au)).**

## **Saharawi Gandhi asks to go home to Western Sahara**

Human rights defender, Aminatou Haidar, now in her fifth week of hunger strike, is desperately hoping Morocco will respect international law and let her return to El Aaiun where she lives with her two teenage sons and mother.

The Moroccan authorities who occupy Western Sahara confiscated Aminatou's passport and forced her to travel back to Lanzarote in the Canary Islands (Spain). She was on her way home from receiving the Civil Courage Award in New York.

Aminatou's crime was to state "Western Sahara" rather than "Morocco" as her country of residence on her landing card. Morocco invaded Western Sahara in 1975. Their claim to the territory is not recognised by any other country.

The forced exile of Aminatou Haidar is the latest episode in Morocco's crackdown on Saharawi human rights activists. In October, five prominent figures were refused permission to travel although in possession of correct travel documents. Another had her papers confiscated so she could not continue medical treatment in Spain on the eye she lost after being beaten in a police van. Seven other leading human rights defenders are presently in a military prison accused of treason.

Ordinary Saharawis face daily human rights abuses and journalists reporting these abuses are expelled.

Morocco's current action is not just threatening the life of a peaceful human rights activist but also the UN ceasefire negotiated in 1991.

Since the 1975 invasion, half of the Saharawi population has lived under Moroccan occupation. The other 165,000 live in refugee camps in the harsh Sahara desert, in neighbouring Algeria. A referendum on the future of the territory has been promised by the UN but is yet to be held.

Like East Timor, this is an illegal occupation which the international community must take a stand against. Aminatou and her people deserve our support.

For further information: <http://www.awsa.org.au/>

