

Australia Western Sahara Association

PRESS RELEASE

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Melbourne-based fertiliser company, Incitec Pivot is blacklisted by Swedish government pension fund for imports from Western Sahara

The Swedish government pension fund has divested from Incitec Pivot Ltd as a result of a finding by the Swedish Ethical Council, which stated on 30 September that:

“The recommendations on exclusion of **Incitec Pivot Ltd** and **Potash Corp.** are based on both companies being purchasers of phosphate from a Moroccan supplier that mines its product in Western Sahara. Western Sahara has been under Moroccan occupation since 1975 and is on the United Nations’ list of non-self-governing territories that should be decolonised. The UN's legal counsel stated in January 2002 that exploration of mineral resources in Western Sahara without local consent would be in breach of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.” <http://www.ap4.se/etikradet/Etikradet.aspx?id=1094>

They continue: “The Ethical Council has engaged with both companies since 2010 with the aim of persuading them to cease procurement of phosphate from Western Sahara or to prove that the extractive process complies with the interests and wishes of the Western Saharan people, in accordance with the UN legal counsel's statement of 2002. The Ethical Council has also urged both companies to adopt policies undertaking to refrain from actions that violate international humanitarian law. The Ethical Council concludes that further dialogue with Potash and Incitec Pivot would be to no avail as neither company has indicated an intention to cease procurement of phosphate from Western Sahara in the near future or been able to demonstrate that the extractive process accords with the interests and wishes of the Western Saharan people.”

The Australia Western Sahara Association welcomes this development.

In 2005 it drew the attention of Incitec Pivot to the unethical nature of their trade with Morocco in the phosphate from Western Sahara, and has been reminding the company every year since at its Annual General Meeting.

Saharawis living in occupied Western Sahara hold regular protests about the plunder of their land. In October-November 2010 tens of thousands of Saharawis held a mass protest camp at Gdeim Izik, which has been called the beginning of the Arab Spring. They complained that they were being treated as second-class citizens in their own country, while Morocco exploited their natural resources for its profit. Twenty-three Saharawis arrested at that time received unjust and harsh sentences last February ranging from 20 years to life imprisonment from a military court. Human rights organisations around the world condemned Morocco's use of a military court and called for their release.



This former phosphate worker made the point very specifically to Cate Lewis on a recent visit to El Aaiun, capital of Western Sahara, that Australia must stop importing his country's phosphate.

Sometimes Incitec Pivot makes out that they play only a small part in the plunder of Western Sahara, but to put it in perspective, the value of two cargoes, received in April and September 2012 aboard

the *Maple Fortitude* and the *Maple Crystal* would provide enough humanitarian aid for the 160,000 Saharawi refugees in Algeria for a whole year, according to Western Sahara Resource Watch (wsrw.org). The refugees have been surviving on international emergency aid since fleeing Morocco's invasion 38 years ago. They see absolutely no benefit from the pillage of their country by Morocco and its international partners, such as Incitec Pivot.

"Our experience has been similar to that of the Swedes", said Cate Lewis, Vice-Chair of AWSA, "Notwithstanding our criticisms, Incitec Pivot imported more phosphate in April 2013 on board *STX Bonita*. We, too, have tried to engage with them, but without success so far". Lewis added, "We hope that the Swedish action in divesting large government pension funds will help the company to do the right thing and put their imports from Western Sahara on hold until the country has a chance to determine how it wishes to be governed".

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