



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA · THE SENATE

SENATOR LYN ALLISON

Leader, Australian Democrats
Senator for Victoria

17 May 2007

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
United Nations, S-378
New York, NY 10017

Dear Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

I write in support of the people of Western Sahara. Western Sahara continues to be regarded by the United Nations as a non-self-governing territory and as such is entitled to a process of decolonisation. The UN has a responsibility to ensure that its doctrine of decolonisation is practiced to the letter in Africa's last remaining colony.

I congratulate you on your 13 April report in which you recommended that the two parties, Morocco and Frente Polisario, should enter into direct negotiations in order to overcome the current impasse. I urge you to do all that is in your power to ensure that the forthcoming negotiations be founded upon respect for the Saharawi people. It is my hope that that these negotiations succeed, and result in agreements that allow the Saharawis to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination through a free and fair referendum that allows them to decide their own future.

Polisario's recent proposal seems to be flexible and constructive. I believe it to be a serious and credible contribution to the solution of the conflict. This initiative could speed the resolution process and advance UN efforts if Morocco were to accept it. The Polisario initiative offers a great deal to Morocco and provide significant guarantees. I urge the UN to encourage Morocco to accept the proposal so that a just, lasting and speedy resolution to the conflict in Western Sahara can at last be achieved.

I note, however, the difficulty of the task as it is not be the first time that Morocco and Polisario have been in negotiations. Both parties agreed to the UN Settlement Plan and both parties negotiated under the auspices of the former US Secretary of State James Baker III such negotiations culminating in the Houston Accords which were signed by the two parties on 16th September 1997. Unfortunately, those agreements were not respected by Morocco.

I also remind you of the report of the delegation from the HCHR in May-June 2006 which recommends that the problem of human rights abuses in Western Sahara will only be solved when the basic right to self-determination is exercised. I request that the UN makes the HCHR Report on human rights in Western Sahara public, and call on you to ensure that the UN provide its mission with the means to protect the human rights of Saharawi citizens living under Moroccan occupation, as well as ensure that the UNHCR and WFP provide adequate food for the Saharawi refugees.

Lastly, I call your attention to very recent human rights abuses. During the past two weeks Saharawi students at Moroccan universities have suffered brutal repression, torture and imprisonment by Moroccan police and military forces. For example Saltana Khaya a young Saharawi student was seriously injured during a peaceful rally at Marrakech University on 9 May 2007. She was subjected to a a brutal beating by Moroccan security forces in which she lost an eye and she continues to suffer without proper medical treatment. Photographic proof of her injuries can be viewed at http://www.asvdh.net/img/main.php?q2_itemId=1074.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lyn Allison', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Senator Lyn Allison
Leader, Australian Democrats