



Australia Western
Sahara Association
Working for justice for the Saharawi people

14 December 2020

The Australia Western Sahara Association (AWSA) strongly condemns the announcement by President Trump on 10 December that the United States would recognise Morocco's claim of sovereignty over Western Sahara.

The United Nations categorises Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony and occupied by Morocco since 1975, as a Non-Self-Governing Territory. The people of Western Sahara, the Saharawi, have been waiting since 1991 for a referendum of self-determination agreed to as part of a ceasefire which ended years of conflict between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Sahara Arab Democratic Republic led by the Frente Polisario. The exercise of self-determination will complete the decolonisation process.

AWSA is deeply concerned that the rights of the people of Western Sahara have been traded away by Washington as part of its deal to normalize relations between Israel and Morocco.

Until President Trump's announcement no state recognised Morocco's claim of sovereignty over the territory. All countries, including Australia, supported the UN's peace process aimed at achieving a just outcome. Recognising the annexation of an entire country by another state blatantly violates long standing international norms.

The International Court of Justice and the European Court of Justice have both rejected Morocco's claims of sovereignty over Western Sahara. US recognition of Morocco's annexation of the territory will do nothing for the peace process or for stability in the region. AWSA notes however, that there is no change in the international legal status of Western Sahara and that the UN, the European Union and even United States congress representatives have dissociated themselves from the announcement.

AWSA asks the Australian Government to use its diplomatic channels to urge incoming President-elect Biden to reverse the decision and encourage the UN to urgently restart the peace process. It must be a peace process that recognises the right to self-determination of the Saharawi and has a deadline for the referendum.

Like civil society organisations worldwide, AWSA has condemned the outbreak of violence in Western Sahara and the recent breakdown of the long-held ceasefire between the Saharawi and the Kingdom of Morocco. In Australia the peak organisation for international development, ACFID, has again [expressed its support](#) of the right of the Saharawi people to self-determination and independence, while the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) has also [reaffirmed its solidarity](#) with the people of Western Sahara in their struggle for justice.

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