



Australia Western
Sahara Association

Working for justice for the Saharawi people

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The Odyssey: Filmed in the occupied territory of Western Sahara (AWSA thanks FiSahara for the below information)

The Odyssey, directed by Christopher Nolan, is one of the most hyped-up movie releases ever! But did you know that some of the scenes were filmed in Dakhla, a city in the non-self-governed territory of Western Sahara under illegal Moroccan military occupation since 1975 and whose original peoples, the Sahrawi, are heavily repressed by Moroccan authorities.

Dakhla, sits on a stunning peninsula with sparking white sand at the southern tip of Western Sahara. It is also the Moroccan occupation's "crown jewel", used by the regime to promote and normalise its presence and exploitation through tourism, sporting events, film and cultural festivals and international film shoots like Nolan's *The Odyssey* last year.

Meanwhile, Sahrawi from Dakhla are imprisoned if they speak out against the occupation and Morocco's plunder of their homeland. Those attempting to make their own films about life under occupation are threatened, persecuted and forced out of the territory.

The Australia Western Sahara Association (AWSA) is part of a global campaign critical of Nolan for filming there without the consent of the Sahrawi people. Under international law the consent of the rightful owners of the White Sand Dune where they were filmed should have been sought. The only consent he received came from the occupier of the land: Morocco.

Christopher Nolan and the film's producers should now be aware of the issues around the choice of location and of Morocco's repression against the Sahrawi people.

When Morocco invaded resource-rich Western Sahara, thousands of Sahrawi fled from their land into the desert, a harsh environment where they live in exile, while the remaining Sahrawi are subject to economic discrimination and human rights abuses in their own land.

Over one hundred media outlets have provided extensive media coverage of the issues. Last year's [campaign](#) was supported by film stars and activists, including [Javier Bardem](#), [Pedro Almodóvar](#), [Greta Thurnberg](#) and many others. The silence of Nolan and the film's producers over the past year amounts to a

deliberate choice to be complicit in Morocco's illegal and brutal occupation of Western Sahara.

AWSA is calling on audiences and media covering *The Odyssey's* release not to ignore the fact that part of it was filmed in an illegally occupied territory whose people have suffered 50 years of repression and exile, as documented by numerous international organisations and scores of UN human rights reports.

Just as *The Odyssey's* Ulysses sought to return to Ithaca and recover his homeland, the Sahrawi people seek to return to a free Western Sahara.

Backgrounder:

In line with the United Nations, Australia does not recognise Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara.

Sahrawi people are represented by their government in exile, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, and by the Polisario Front, which is recognized as its representative by the United Nations and the European Court of Justice.

Freedom House only gives Western Sahara 4/100 points in its annual freedom index.

However, The UN peacekeeping mission does not have a human rights mandate, something unique in the world. At the same time Morocco has a media blackout in Western Sahara and prevents European observers and human rights advocates from entering the territory.

We hope that no other film company, nor cultural project, will consider operating in the occupied territory of Western Sahara.

AWSA has brought this matter to the attention of the Australian Minister for Arts, the Honorable Tony Burke MP, asking that when *The Odyssey* is released in Australia it meets Ethical Standards regarding indigenous peoples.

Australia Western Sahara Association

AWSA is a not-for-profit incorporated association established to raise awareness and promote the Saharawi cause in Australia. In particular it campaigns for:

- A UN referendum of self-determination.
- Access to jobs, housing and education for indigenous Saharawis in occupied zones.
- Monitoring of human rights, on both sides, by the UN.
- Protection of the country's natural resources for the Saharawi people.

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Learn more about Western Sahara:

[Fifty Years in Exile: Human Rights and the Forgotten Crisis in Western Sahara](#) (Human Rights Program, Harvard Law School)

Freedom House: [Western Sahara](#)

RSF Report: [Western Sahara, A News Blackhole](#)

[UN: Western Sahara Peoples' Self-Determination at Risk](#) (Human Rights Watch)

By [Prensa FiSahara](#)|July 3rd, 2026|[News](#)|[0 Comments](#)

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