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Kingdom of Morocco

**Freedom of opinion and expression
Safety of journalists**

March 2022



Equipe Media is an organization composed by journalists, photographers and filmmakers, who are committed to document the systematic violations of International Humanitarian Law and human rights in the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara occupied by the Kingdom Morocco.

Equipe Media regularly publishes news about occupied Western Sahara and, throughout the years, has become a reference in collecting information for many human rights organisations and news agencies around the world.

Many members of Equipe Media have already been beaten, arrested, tortured and sentenced to prison terms by the occupying Moroccan authorities; 3 of them are currently imprisoned. Some have lost their employments because of their activism.

Equipe Media produced a first short documentary called “3 stolen cameras”, which was selected in 2017 at DOK Leipzig for the best short documentary category. The film, featuring the difficulties faced in carrying out journalist’s work in occupied western Sahara, received several awards, many of them honoring the film's efforts to address the issues of freedom of expression and freedom of the press.



The American Association of Jurists was founded in 1975, having national branches in a number of American countries. AAJ enjoys consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 1989.

Its main goals and area of action are the struggle for peoples' self-determination, full economic independence, and the sovereignty of the state over its natural wealth and resources, the action against imperialism, colonialism, fascism, neo-colonialism, racial discrimination, discrimination against women, aborigines and national minorities, the defence of effective peace based on the principle of peaceful coexistence between states of different social and economic systems, the defence and promotion of human rights and the realisation of better and more effective guarantees of protection. AAJ promotes the establishment of fraternal relations and common actions among jurists from all over the world, and their organisations, committed to similar objectives to those enunciated here.



Founded by four journalists in the southern French city Montpellier in 1985, RSF is now one of the world's leading NGOs in the defense and promotion of freedom of information. Based in Paris, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is an independent NGO with consultative status with the United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF).

RSF has received awards throughout the world: the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's First Amendment Award, the city of Bonn's 2014 DemokratiePreis, the 2013 International Association of Press Clubs Prize, the 2009 Charlemagne Medal for European Media, the 2006 Emmy Award of the U.S. Academy of Television Arts and Science, the 2005 European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, the OSCE's Journalism and Democracy Prize in 1997 and the European Commission's Lorenzo Natali Prize in 1992.

In June 2019, RSF España has published a report on the violation of the freedom of the press in the occupied Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara.



Emmaus Stockholm is a community made up of 30 employees, who carry out the traditional activities of Emmaus communities of collecting, sorting and selling goods at low prices. The group runs two second-hand shops: one sells all manner of items and a large range of clothing, books and toys. The other sells vintage items.

Emmaus Stockholm also has a sorting centre on the Västberga industrial estate. Income from the group's activities goes towards supporting the liberation movement Polisario for a free Western Sahara, and to spread information about Africa's last colony and challenge opinions both of politicians and the public. The group also sends humanitarian aid to the refugees of Western Sahara. Emmaus Stockholm collaborates with some Swedish organisations, including IMÄI (no-one is illegal) to whom they give both money and clothes. It also supports ADRA, an Angolan organisation promoting democracy and organic farming.

INTRODUCTION

1. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranks the Kingdom of Morocco at the 136 place in the world in its 2021 assessment of press freedom. In its last report on press freedom in Western Sahara “Sáhara Occidental, un desierto para el periodismo”¹, RSF sheds light on a territory cut off from the rest of the world, a veritable news black hole that has become a no-go zone for journalists.
2. Similarly, hundreds of international parliamentarians, academics, jurists, lawyers, human rights defenders have been denied access to or deported from the occupied Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara.
3. The adoption, on 15 August 2016, of a new article (275 e/) of the Penal Code has narrowed the space for freedom of expression and increased the repression of media professionals and people who criticise the policies of the king or the government. Article 275 e/ states that “anyone who insults the Muslim religion, the monarchy or incites against the territorial integrity of the Kingdom shall be punished by six months to two years’ imprisonment and a fine of 20,000 to 200,000 dirhams², or one of these two penalties”.
4. Since the Kingdom of Morocco has illegally occupied and annexed a large part of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara and due to the fact that, despite the UN led process of decolonisation, it considers that part of the Territory being part of the Kingdom, any reference to the right to self-determination of the Saharawi people is considered as an attempt to the territorial integrity of the Kingdom and therefore punishable, in accordance with article 275 e/ of the Penal Code.
5. Although the Kingdom of Morocco is member of the core group promoting the safety of journalists in the Human Rights Council, its policy towards journalists has led to a generalized feeling of fear that leads everyone to exercise a form of self-censorship. Several well-known Moroccan journalists are imprisoned; some have preferred to go into exile³ to avoid imprisonment and to be able to express their opinions freely from abroad.
6. Over the past four years, the Kingdom of Morocco has carried out severe repression against Saharawi citizen journalists. Arbitrary arrest and detention⁴, prosecutions on trumped-up charges, physical abuse and confiscation of equipment are common to for those who report on events taking place in occupied Western Sahara.
7. The COVID-19 restriction measures adopted by the Moroccan authorities and the resumption of the armed conflict provoked by the Kingdom of Morocco on 13 November 2020 have worsened the actual conditions in which journalists operate in occupied Western Sahara.

¹ https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/rapport_sahara_-_final_pdf2.pdf

² 100 dirhams are equivalent of 9,34 Euros

³ See Annex I

⁴ A/HRC/WGAD/2019/23 and A/HRC/WGAD/2020/68

8. Three Saharawi journalists jailed (Khadda, Haddi and Khatri Dadda) are held in solitary confinement, and without access to their family. Others are physically assaulted, tortured, intimidated because of their professional activities.
9. This crackdown has also affected Saharawi blogs and websites, many of them including Equipe Media's official website being hacked and suspended by anonymous after they left nasty comments and threats.
10. The pro Moroccan website sahravikileaks.com (registered and designed by Wassla Company in Rabat) still publishes articles defaming several human rights defenders and journalists.
11. The possibility spreading journalism by means of teaching is difficult as the Moroccan occupation forces threaten the participants to workshops as was the case on 10 October 2021, when they were harassed and threatened with arrest and rape.
12. In the absence of international observers, Sahrawi citizen journalists, most of them self-taught and working with few resources, are often the only source of information -and particularly of footage- about international humanitarian law and human rights violations, plunder of Western Sahara wealth and natural resources that take place on a daily basis.

SAHARAWI JOURNALISTS PERSECUTED

Walid El Batal spent two years in prison for his journalistic activities, while those who beat him enjoy impunity.

13. Walid Al-Batal (see footnote 4) has been frequently harassed by the Moroccan authorities. In December 2016, he was sentenced to 16 months in prison, for covering peaceful demonstrations and protests calling for the right to self-determination in Western Sahara.
14. On 7 June 2019, Walid El Batal ,25 year old Saharawi journalist, member of «Smara News» media group, was intending to report about the reception held following the release from prison of Saharawi journalist Salah Eddine Bassir. El Batal was assaulted in his car, dragged out of the vehicle through the window, and heavily beaten with sticks and batons by a militia. An impressive video of his arrest was later made public and went viral.
15. The journalist was interrogated over a period of 48 hours at a local police station in Smara. During the interrogation, he was physically abused, ill-treated and prohibited from lawyer and family visits. After the interrogation, Al-Batal was transferred to El Aaiun local prison, 217 kilometres away from Smara, where he lives with his family.
16. On 9 October 2019, after El Batal had spent four months in preventive detention, the Criminal Court of First Instance of El Aaiun sentenced him to six years in prison on the charges of “obstructing public order”, “insulting public employees” and “disobedience”; the sentence was reduced to 2 years by the Appeal Court.

17. The Moroccan occupying authorities claimed that they initiated an investigation about the acts of violence Al Batal was subject to, but 2 years later no information was disclosed about the outcome of the investigation and none of the perpetrators (still in function) has been brought to justice.
18. After his release in September 2017, he has frequently been threatened with re-arrest and torture by the authorities.

Khatri Dadda sentenced to 20 years in prison

19. On 24 December 2019, Khatri Dadda, who used to work with Salwan Media, was arrested in Smara (occupied Western Sahara) due to his activism as a Saharawi photographer. He was later sentenced to 20 years in prison as a punishment for his activism and is currently held in Ait Melloul 2 prison, on the Moroccan soil.
20. Khatri visited the police station of Smara on two occasions where he had been informed that he had a pending arrest warrant against him. He was never informed of the reason for the arrest warrant nor what kind of charges was brought against him.
21. On 24 December 2019, he went to the police station in Smara to retrieve an identity card together with the Saharawi human rights defender and president of Moroccan Association of Human Rights (MAHR), Smara branch, Abdelouahab Haddi. This time, he was brought to the headquarters of the judicial police in Smara and subjected to interrogation and torture for two days; he was forced to sign police records that he had absolutely no chance of understanding, as Khatri does not know how to read nor write Arabic.
22. After having been held under arrest for two days, Khatri was brought in front of the investigative judge in El Aaiun who ordered his detention. Khatri was subsequently sentenced to 20 years in prison on the charges of having attacked police officers and destroyed public property on 4 March 2020 in front of the Court of First Instance in El Aaiun. The evidence being used against Khatri was the confession he had been forced to sign whilst being held under torture, later denied by him when he was informed of what was written. As part of the evidence were also images of a masked person retrieved from an alleged video that neither Khatri nor his lawyer have even seen. Khatri has therefore never been given full access to the evidence file.
23. On 12 May 2020, the sentence was confirmed by the Appeal Court in El Aaiun through a video conference with Khatri attending the session from his arrest in the so-called "Black Prison" of El Aaiun. On 3 June, Khatri Dadda was transferred to an unknown location which remained undisclosed for a total of 22 days, before the family learnt that Khatri had arrived in Ait Melloul 2 prison. Complaints submitted by the family have not been responded to.
24. The arrest of Khatri Dadda is directly linked to his work as a Saharawi media activist and photographer. In fact, it has been reported by anonymous sources that the reason why Khatri was arrested by the Moroccan police and later sentenced to 20 years, is because the police believes that it was Khatri who filmed the violent arrest of Walid El Batal in June 2019.

Essabi Yahdih, insulted, threatened and sentenced for his journalistic activities

25. On June 30, 2020, Moroccan occupying forces arbitrarily detained Algargarat Media's founder Essabi Yahdih for 10 hours when he went to the police station to obtain an administrative certificate. Then he was released without any charge.
26. He said that police insulted and threatened him with "arrest, rape and murder" and interrogated him about Algargarat's editorial line, its staff and funding as well as his personal online posts, specifically a post that mocked another post by a Moroccan parliamentarian about the King.
27. On 27 May 2021, Essabi was rearrested at his workplace in El Marsa, 25 km. west of El Aaiun. He was kept in detention based on administrative orders issued by the authorities for 72 hours and was held handcuffed all the time.
28. A Moroccan court in occupied El Aaiun sentenced Essabi to 2 years in prison, for "filming a sensitive military site" among other vague charges.
29. The sentence against Essabi Yahdih, is related to his articles posted in his social networking site "El Gargarat Network".
30. Essabi has been in solitary confinement all the time spent in prison, in Smara. Furthermore, he can't see without glasses. He has been blind for the last two months. He needs at least a sight test so that his wife knows what glasses to buy for him. The administration of the prison refuses that exam.

Mohamed Lamin Haddi

31. Mohamed Lamine Haddi, 42 years old Sahrawi journalist who participated in the 2010 Gdeim Izik camp protesting Saharawis' social and economic conditions, was arrested in December the same year while he was accompanying two Belgian members of Doctors Without Borders, who came to El Aaiun to help the victims of the violent camp's dismantlement that were denied medical care or that were hidden from the Moroccan occupation forces.
32. Like all the members of the Gdeim Izik group, Haddi was accused by a Moroccan military court of murder and of belonging to a criminal gang. He was tortured and sentenced without proofs to 25 years imprisonment. The Appeal Court in Rabat confirmed his sentence in 2017 on the basis of confessions extracted under torture.
33. During his incarceration, Mohamed Lamin has undertaken numerous hunger strikes to protest for his dramatic conditions in the prison of Tiflet 2, Morocco. He is held in solitary confinement since September 2017.
34. On January 13 of this same year, he began another hunger strike, interrupted by the Moroccan detention authorities on the 70th day. On this occasion, he could not communicate with his family for the 24 last days of the strike although the family went to the prison, 1.200 km away from El Aaiun, to get news from him. The family was detained and threatened with prison, and had to go back home without news.

35. Mohamed Lamin's hunger strikes have never been admitted by the Moroccan authorities. The day after the authorities interrupted his first hunger strike, he was dragged into the University to take exams to prove he was alright although he couldn't even keep straight.
36. On 21 September 2021, he began another hunger strike that lasted 63 days, again stopped by the detention administration of the prison on November 28.
37. His communications with the family have been scarce and short. Since 13 January 2022, he has spoken 7 times, for some few minutes, with his family.

Bachir Khadda faces reprisals in detention after protesting poor prison conditions

38. Bachir Khadda, coordinator of video archives in Equipe Media, was arrested in December of 2010 in El Aaiun (occupied Western Sahara) after the dismantlement of Gdeim Izik protest camp. He was sentenced by a military court on 18 July 2017 to 20 years of imprisonment.
39. According to Khadda's family, Bachir is held in solitary confinement, in a cell of around 5m² for at least 23 hours a day, in Tiflet II prison (Moroccan soil), 1.227 km away from El Aaiun, where his family lives and he.
40. Bachir Khadda has not been allowed any contact with his family or a lawyer and is subjected to psychological torture, harassment and ill treatment.
41. The family is deeply concerned about his health, as he has reportedly lost a significant amount of weight because of several hunger strikes he held against the prolonged isolation and ill-treatment.

Mohamed Salem Mayara and Mohamed Aljomayaa

42. On 27 March 2018, saharawi journalist Mohamed Salem Mayara and cameraman Mohamed Aljomayaa, from Smara News and correspondents for RASD TV, were arrested in the city of Smara (occupied Western Sahara). They were accused of attempting to murder a policeman, placing barricades and humiliating a public servant on duty.
43. The immediate provocation however seems to have been a Saharawi TV report showing protests against the Moroccan occupation in the city, and subsequent attacks on protesters by Moroccan settlers. Injured protesters were allegedly denied aid at hospitals after the incident. They were sentenced to two years in prison.

Ndour Laaroussi

44. On 2 May 2018, Saharawi journalist Ndour Laaroussi, photographer, correspondent for RASD TV, was arrested, tortured and arbitrarily detained and subsequently released in July 2018.

45. Police officers surrounded him in the street, beat him and took him to the police station where he was subject to torture. For two days, he was left on the floor until he was forced to sign prewritten police records.
46. After a suspension of the trial due to the visit of the than Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Western sahara, Mr.Horst Köhler, the judge condemned him on 5 July 2018 for the time he had been in prison plus 15.000 DH.

Salha Boutengiza

47. On 21 May 2018, Salha Boutengiza, the correspondent of SADR TV in the occupied Western Sahara, was detained when she was trying to attend the trial of Ndour Laarousi.
48. She suffered severe ill-treatment in custody, before she was released. She was, however, still under surveillance by the Moroccan security forces and feared being apprehended again. Police officers stole her cell phone and then private pictures have been published in many Moroccan websites as a revenge for her activities.

Nezha El Khalidi, intimidation and Equipment's interception and confiscation

49. In July 2019, a Moroccan court in El Aaiun (occupied Western Sahara) fined Equipe Media member Nezha El Khalidi for working without credentials, after she criticized Moroccan policy towards the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara and filmed a street scene in late 2018.
50. Khalidi had previously been arrested and abused in the street by policemen when she covered a women's demonstration in El Aaiun. While in detention, her equipment was confiscated. She was released without charges.

Mayara Mohamed

51. In 2015, Mohamed and his wife were fired from their work as a retaliation for his activism. They are still excluded from a job in the public sector.
52. On 13 January 2019, Mohamed Mayara journalist and cofounder of Equipe Media was physically attacked by eight police officers inside El Aaiun airport and wounded in the cheek, while returning from a visit to the Saharawi refugee camps in Algeria accompanied by a delegation of 16 human rights defenders, including Ms. Aminatu Haidar.
53. Police officers then took him to a private room in the security area of the airport and questioned him about his visit to the refugee camps and the activities of Equipe Media. They photographed him before releasing him, without any charges being brought against him.
54. «It is unacceptable that all perpetrators continued to enjoy impunity and were promoted for higher-level posts» said Mohamed Mayara.

Ibrahim Amrikli, the excuse of Covid-19 against the Freedom of Expression

55. On 20 March 2020, the Moroccan government declared a state of health emergency that remained in place until the end of the year. It also imposed a national lockdown including the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara which was gradually lifted in June and replaced by a set of measures including restrictions on movement and lockdowns in specific areas.
56. In May 2020, the Sahrawi journalist and human rights activist Ibrahim Amrikli was arrested in El Aaiun (occupied Western Sahara), and detained for over two days.
57. Three Moroccan policemen interrogated him about his work for the Saharawi human rights organization Nushatta Foundation, and they repeatedly beat him and insulted him. They forced him to sign a “confession” to trumped-up charges of throwing stones at police officers in April 2020. Two days later, he was charged with “breaking orders related to the health emergency status” and “offending public officials” under Article 263 of the Penal Code. His trial opened on 18 November 2020 but was postponed to an unknown date.

Lwali Lehmmad, death threat

58. On 12 December 2021, Lwali Lehmmad, director of Western Sahara’s Nushatta Foundation, was detained and beaten by Moroccan security forces.
59. On the night of a football match between Algeria and Morocco, some of the foundation’s members were watching the match. Eight cars and three motorbikes belonging to a number of different security bodies led by the so-called Younes Fadel (known to be involved in serious human rights violations against Saharawis) came to surround his home.
60. The Saharawi young journalist was kidnapped by the security forces, blindfolded and handcuffed, and was beaten in the car with an iron bar as he was driven to the police headquarters, which sits only a couple of kilometres away from the office of MINURSO.
61. In the basement of the headquarters, Lehmmad was beaten with a baseball bat. He was told that if he did not stop his activism he would be killed or raped next time.

Nezha El Khalidi and Ahmed Ettanji, journalists wedding targeted, illustrating media crackdown

62. On 21 and 22 November 2020, some 200 security personnel, including police and intervention forces, surrounded the homes of Ahmed Ettanji, president of Equipe Media, and Nezha el Khalidi, also a journalist and a member of the same news agency, on their wedding day.
63. The security personnel threatened both journalists with imprisonment, aggression and forced entry. They also stopped guests from coming to the couple’s homes and close family were prevented from entering.

64. The Moroccan authorities claimed that the deployment was related to COVID-19 related measures. However, the wedding had been organized in compliance with safety measures, and the police were watching the families' homes, which is in no way related to COVID-19 related measures.

Mohamed El Bambari released after six years in jail

65. Mohamed al-Bambary is a Saharawi media activist, co-founder of Equipe Media who served six years in prison as a result of his journalistic activities.
66. He was arrested on 26 August 2015 in Dakhla (occupied Western Sahara) without being informed of the charges he faced.
67. Al-Bambary was released on 26 September 2021, one month after his six year prison sentence expired. His first act upon being released was to visit the grave of his parents; both passed away while he was imprisoned.
68. Al Bambary was tortured and now suffers a large haematoma on his neck which could be a tumour, but he is too reluctant to go to a hospital to check his illness as Moroccan hospitals' personnel are controlled by the occupation forces, and he doesn't rely on them.
69. Since then, he has been under heightened surveillance and subjected to intimidation. He is barred from working as a porter in the Dakhla port to provide for his family.

Abdallay Lekhfaoui and Hassana Dah

70. Both journalists were arrested during the violent destruction of the Gdeim Izik protest camp in November 2010 and sentenced illegally. Abdallay Lekhfaoui has been sentenced to life imprisonment and Hassana Dah to 25 years imprisonment.

INTERNET RESTRICTIONS AND BLOCKING WEBSITES

71. Censorship continued to negatively impact freedom of expression, as the occupying authorities utilized high technology and a large number of followers to block Saharawi websites and survey internet users.
72. Social networks are one of the few means that Saharawis have of meeting virtually, organizing and expressing themselves.
73. Since 13 November 2020, date of the resumption of the armed conflict in Western Sahara, network accounts of many Saharawis in the occupied Territory, the refugee camps in Algeria or elsewhere abroad, have been or are temporarily -and for varying periods of time- inaccessible or restricted.

74. Here are some of the Saharawi bloggers and activists that have been restricted or banned from using their Facebook accounts in the occupied Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara:

- El Mammia Habibi, a student blogger living in Boujdour, was barred from activity on her Facebook account for a month following "reports". She is however sure that she has respected the vocabulary and message rules in her posts informing on developments related to the resumption of the armed conflict.
- Moulay Lehssan Douihi, living in El Aaiun, is one of the most influential Saharawi bloggers on social networks. He has been threatened several times through messages, but he has continued to express himself on the networks and disseminate information on the evolution of the military operations carried out by the Polisario Front since 13 November 2020. "I posted in a respectful and peaceful manner. But the Moroccan services do not like what I say. They do not want Moroccans to find information about the war. Facebook's punishment is based on false claims. For 7 days I was not able to publish or distribute information".
- Babouzayed Mohamed Saïd, living in El Aaiun, President of the Saharawi association CODESA, has also been banned from his account for a week.
- Baih Jamaa, living in El Aaiun, is a blogger and a human rights activist also from CODESA, was banned from activity on his Facebook account for a week.
- Isalmou Etaoubali, living in El Aaiun, is also a blogger who has shared information about the armed conflict, the restrictions on movement, oppression and surveillance imposed on Saharawi civilians since 13 November 2020. He has been reported and prevented from posting for a week.

DEPORTATION OF FOREIGN JOURNALISTS AND OBSERVERS ***"not welcomed" in the occupied Western Sahara***

75. The fact that Western Sahara has become a news "black hole" cannot be explained solely by the constant repression of local journalism by the occupying Power; it is also a consequence of the systematic policy of denying entry to foreign journalists and deporting those who manage to get into the territory.

76. Equipe Media recorded the following incidents of expulsion, deportation of journalists and observers as they arrived in the occupied Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara. The list cannot be considered as exhaustive:

- January 2017, Roger McShane, correspondent of "The Economist" in Egypt, was deported to Casablanca a few hours after his arrival to El Aaiun where he held a meeting with Saharawi activists.
- February 2017, Catalan photojournalist Bernat Millet was abruptly deported while he was spending the afternoon in El Aaiun at the Equipe Media journalist Ahmed Ettanji's home with other colleagues.

The police also arrested the four members of Equipe Media that were with him that night: Ahmed Ettanji, Brahim Laajil, Mohamed Saleh Zaroualo and Bachar Mohamed Hamadi. After several hours in custody, they were all released.

- 30 August 2018, the Spanish lawyers Ana Sebastián and Pablo Jiménez, from the Bar of Zaragoza, went to El Aaiun as observers in the trial of the activist El Fak Jalihehna. They were not even allowed to leave the plane that landed in El Aaiun and they had to fly back to Casablanca, where the security agents told them they were not welcomed to Morocco.
- 17 November 2018, Ms. Laura Kleiner (lawyer) and Mr. Tullio Togni (anthropologist), who worked already in Palestine and Guatemala travelled to occupied Western Sahara to gather information. They arrived in El Aaiun on November 16 and met unions of unemployed. The next day, at 8,30 am, 6 agents of the security forces lead them outside El Aaiun and interrogated them about their contacts. The officers said they that it was illegal to have contact with Saharawi activists without an authorization. They seized their mobile phones, unlocked them, looked at everything inside and recorded photos and videos. Ms. Laura Kleiner and Mr. Tullio Togni were deported to Agadir in a taxi.
- 15 January 2019, Mr. Luis Mangrané (Spanish lawyer) was not allowed in El Aaiun after having received the entrance stamp that was deleted subsequently. He was going to attend the trial of a journalist that filmed a demonstration. Two other Spanish lawyers were allowed in El Aaiun.
- 16 February 2019, Ms. Ana Cortés (journalist for Valencia Plaza) was expelled from occupied Western Sahara. She was with an Italian colleague at a Sahrawi activist's home in El Aaiun. They were meeting with members of Al Kássam, a collective of unemployed people, when police officers suddenly burst in, interrogated the journalists and proceeded to deport them to Agadir.
- Twelve observers of the Nazha El Khalidi trial expelled

19 May 2019, Vegard Fosso Smievioll and Kjersti Brevik Møller, 2 law students in Bergen sent by the Rafto Foundation for Human Rights to observe the trial were denied entry to the occupied Western Sahara;

20 May 2019, María Dolores Travieso, Ruth Sebastián García, María Lourdes Barón, Ramón Campos, y Sidi Mohamed Talebbuia (Spanish lawyers) tried to enter the occupied Western Sahara to observe the trial, but Moroccan authorities prevented them from attending the trial;

22 June 2019, two lawyers from the American Bar Association were not allowed to travel from Casablanca to El Aaiun where they intended to observe the trial, which had been postponed to 24 June;

23 June 2019. Miguel Ángel Jerez, José María Costa e Inés Miranda, lawyers coming from the Canary Islands with the certification of the Consejo General de la Abogacía Española (CGAE), were not allowed to leave the plane that landed in El Aaiun and were sent back to Las Palmas;

- 11 June 2019, the very day Reporters Without Borders published its report about journalism in Western Sahara (see footnote 1), the Spanish photojournalist, Judith Prat, was expelled from El Aaiun after having given classes of photojournalism in Dakhla;
- 6 August 2019, Cristina Martinez flew to El Aaiun to observe the trial of four Saharawis (including a minor) that celebrated Algeria's victory in the African Football Cup⁵ on July 19, when the Moroccan security forces brutally repressed those demonstrations: the Moroccan authorities forced Ms. Martinez to take the same plane back;

The first trial was postponed from the 7 August till the 19. On August 18, Ms. Martinez tried a second time to attend the trial, but Moroccan police expelled her again at the stopover in Casablanca saying that she was “not welcome to Morocco.”

- 28 February 2020, a delegation from Cataluña (Spain) went to El Aaiún to meet human rights defenders and the family of the prisoner Mahfouda Bamba Lefkir. They were not allowed to leave the plane and were sent back to Spain. These are the members of the delegation: Susana Segovia (diputada de Los Comunes), Ferrán Civit (diputado de ERC), Vidal Aragonés (diputado de CUP), Guadalupe Moreno (Agencia Catalana de Desarrollo y Cooperación), Oriol Puig (Sáhara Dempeus), David Minoves (Director general de Fons Catala - Fondo Catalán de Cooperación al Desarrollo), Gemma Aristoy (Presidenta de la Coordinadora catalana d'Ajuntaments Solidaris amb el Poble sahraui – Ayuntamientos solidarios con el Pueblo saharauí) and Toni Royo (Fons Catala).
- 2 October 2021, Mr. Raabub Mohamed Lamin (a saharawi doctor with Spanish nationality), Ms. Flora Marrero (Spanish lawyer) and Ms. Inés Miranda Navarro (consejera del Cabildo de Gran Canaria y vicepresidenta de la Asociación Internacional de Juristas por el Sáhara Occidental), were put in the plane that brought them to El Aaiun when they said they were going to Boujador. They formed a legal and medical delegation to assist Sultana Jaya, in confinement since 19 November 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS

77. Based on the above, the signatory organizations condemn the prevailing impunity for attacks and violence against journalists, and expresses concern that the vast majority of these crimes go unpunished, which in turn contributes to the recurrence of these crimes and recommend that the Kingdom of Morocco:
- create and maintain, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their work independently and without undue interference, including in the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara the Kingdom of Morocco occupies;

⁵ That night, Ms. Sabah Mint Ozman was run over by a police car and died.

- abrogate any legislative provision, notably article 275 e/ of the Penal Code, that would prevent any citizen from freely express his opinions about religions, the role of the King in the national social, economic or political spheres or the decolonization of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara;
- implement the recommendations made by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and immediately and unconditionally release journalists and media workers who have been arbitrarily arrested and arbitrarily detained.
