



Australia Western Sahara Association (AWSA)



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## PROTEST THE PERSECUTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS & UNIONISTS IN WESTERN SAHARA

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**Venue:** in front of Moroccan Embassy- Canberra,  
17 Terrigal Crescent - O'Malley ACT 2606

**Date:** Wednesday 9 February 2011

**Time:** 12.30 to 1.30pm



The people of Western Sahara are denied free assembly and association. **Saharawi trade unions and NGOs are banned in the occupied areas of Western Sahara.** The Moroccan authorities arrest and torture Saharawi trade unionists frequently. Saharawi workers are denied their basic rights and are treated as second citizens in their own country.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2011 Moroccan police and paramilitary forces surrounded the house of Sidi Ahmed Eddia, Secretary General of the Union Confederation of Saharawi Workers in the Occupied Territories of Western Sahara (CSTS). This was due to the increased level of protests led by Saharawi workers in the phosphate company, Phosbucraa. The Saharawi workers were planning a general strike for 24<sup>th</sup> January 2011 in the Capital city of Western Sahara El Aaiun.

### **Western Sahara's phosphate is illegally exported to Australia by Morocco.**

## **Background**

...In August 2010, a general strike was broken up by Moroccan police, who injured 14 people in the process. The general strike was held in front of the Department of Mines and Energy in Aaiun, also to protest the conditions in Fosboucraa, and the CSTS have repeatedly expressed their discontent of the conditions in the phosphate mines of occupied Western Sahara.

The Fosboucraa mine employs over 2000 people, only approximately 100 of these being Saharawi, the latter employing mainly low-paid manual jobs. Morocco is the world's largest exporter of phosphate, including phosphate from Fosboucraa in occupied Western Sahara, and phosphates are one of Morocco's main sources of income. Phosphate production from Western Sahara is believed to amount to around a third of Morocco's total production. Securing the large phosphate deposits of the Fosboucraa mine in Western Sahara are therefore believed to have played a large role in prompting the Moroccan invasion of Western Sahara in 1975.

Phosphate is the primary raw material used for producing fertilizer and is therefore an important part of achieving higher yields and thus improved food security.

**Western Sahara (known as the last colony in Africa) has been illegally occupied by Morocco since 1975. As an illegal occupying force, Morocco has no right to sell Western Sahara's natural resources.** The International Court of Justice rejected Morocco's claim to Western Sahara become they occupied the country in 1975, and the illegality of Morocco's presence in Western Sahara has been maintained by the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly in over 100 resolutions. Additionally, former Under-Secretary General for Legal Affairs, Hans Correll's UN Opinion from 2002 concluded that the selling of Western Saharan resources was only legal if the population of Western Sahara agrees to and benefits from it, something a European Parliament Legal Opinion from 2009 concluded they do not.

**By Peter Kenworthy, 2011**

### **For further information please check:**

- <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/41852>
- <http://www.wsrw.org/index.php?cat=117&art=521>
- [www.awsa.org.au](http://www.awsa.org.au)

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