

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 23, 2009

His Majesty the King, Mohammed VI
Royal Palace
Rabat, Morocco

Dear King Mohammed VI:

We are writing to express our concern for the arrest of the seven Sahrawi human rights activists who were detained on October 8, 2009 at the Mohamed V airport in Casablanca upon their return from the Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf, Algeria.

The seven human rights activists have been involved in peaceful efforts to raise the issues of the Saharawi people through their various organizations. It is concerning to see these civilians detained and placed before a military court for exercising their right to freedom of expression and freedom of association. Additionally, the international community and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have worked to promote visits between the Sahrawis living in the Western Sahara and those in the refugee camps in Tindouf.

We believe that this action will not advance the confidence building between your government and the Polisario in the conflict in the Western Sahara and could be detrimental to the success of the U.N. sponsored negotiations. Those arrested include:


1. Brahim Dahane, President of the Saharawi Association of Victims of Serious Violations Committed by Morocco (ASVDH);
2. Ali Salem Tamek, First Vice President of the Collective of Saharawi Human Rights Defenders (CODESA) and member of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH);
3. Ahmad Anasiri, General Secretary of the Secretary of the Saharawi Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Smara and President of AMDH Smara Chapter;
4. Ms. Dagja Lachgar, Member of the Executive Office of ASVDH;
5. Yahdih Ettarrouzi, Member of AMDH Laayounne Chapter;
6. Saleh Lebayhi, President of the Forum for Protection of Sahrawi Children and member of the Laayoune Chapter of CODESA and AMDH; and
7. Rachid Sghayar, Member of Committee Action against Torture

For over 30 years, the conflict over the Western Sahara has gone unresolved. There have been many negotiations and it is our hope that a resolution will be reached in the near future. On

October 9, 2009, in a statement to President Obama, you said, "My country also supports your efforts to uphold the universal values of freedom, democracy, solidarity, justice and brotherhood, and to promote the lofty ideals of human rights to which both our peoples are deeply committed."

We commend you in these efforts and hope that you will apply them specifically to the Saharawis. We would like to ask you to release these seven human rights activists and in doing so uphold your commitments to human rights for all people.

Sincerely,



James M. Inhofe
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Committee on Foreign Relations



Johnny Isakson
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on African Affairs
Committee on Foreign Relations



Jim DeMint
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on European Affairs
Committee on Foreign Relations