



THE SAHARAWI RESISTANCE IS OF INTEREST TO THE WORLD

Since 2002, men and women have come from 28 countries and all continents Human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, photo reporters, elected representatives, film-makers, writers, trade unionists and friends of the Saharawi people have come to occupied Western Sahara to discover the reality of living conditions and the peaceful resistance of the Saharawi people in the face of colonial repression

Europe	Belgium	Asia
Spain	Denmark	Japan
France	Switzerland	China
Italy	Ukraine	
Germany		Australia
United Kingdom	North America	
Sweden	United States	South America
Norway	Canada	Mexico
Netherlands		Argentina
Portugal	Africa	Paraguay
Poland	Tunisia	Uruguay
Lithuania		Colombia
Finland		Brazil

For 10 years, Morocco has not tolerated any foreign observers in Western Sahara: media professionals, lawyers or human rights activists. Since 2014, the occupation authorities have expelled 300 people from 21 countries and 4 continents.

Norway (133) Spain (105), Sweden (9), France (6), Italy (6), United States (6), Poland (5), United Kingdom (4), Tunisia (4) Denmark (4) Netherlands (2), Lithuania (2), Canada (2), Japan (2), Switzerland (2) China (1) Portugal (3), Ukraine (1) Belgium (1) Germany (1) Finland (1) 2014 : 53 eviction

2015 : 22 eviction	2020 : 8 eviction
2016 : 85 eviction	2021 : 3 eviction
2017 : 68 eviction (5 European deputies)	2022 : 5 eviction
2018 : 11 eviction	2023 : 6 eviction
2019 : 34 eviction	2024 : 5 eviction

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights of the UN has also been banned for the 9th consecutive year.

19 EVICTION FROM MOROCCO

Person in transit to Western Sahara

Or in the course of activist research or professional activity on the human rights situation in Western Sahara and Morocco

7 international NGOs of 6 nationalities expelled or banned from Morocco

Human Rights Watch	USA
NOVACT	Espagne
Avocats sans frontiere	Belgique
Friedrich Naumann Stiftung	Allemagne
Amnesty International	Londres
Fondation Carter	USA
Free Press Unlimited	Pays-Bas

Michèle Decaster
Anti-colonial activist
Secretary General of AFASPA
French nationality

I've been interested in the Western Sahara decolonisation conflict since 1987. I've been to the refugee camps many times and to the occupied territory five times between 2002 and 2013. In August 2014, I wanted to spend three more weeks compiling the life stories of women and men for my book 'Irréductibles sahraouies, femmes et hommes en résistance', to raise awareness of the resistance in the occupied territory since the 1975 invasion.

I arrived in El Ayoun on Wednesday 6 August 2014 at 6.50pm via Casablanca. As soon as I got off the plane, I spotted a man in civilian clothes filming me. On each of my five previous visits, from 2002 to 2013, I was photographed, filmed, listened to and followed as soon as I met with the Sahrawi resistance, but never so soon. This time, what happened next surprised me.

While I was queuing for passport control, a man in civilian clothes seized my passport without introducing himself and disappeared into an office. When he returned half an hour later, he told me that I was 'undesirable' and that I had to leave on the plane that had brought me here. I challenged the arbitrary expulsion and demanded a court decision. I was immediately surrounded by around twenty plain-clothes police officers. Conciliatory requests to 'be reasonable' were quickly followed by verbal and physical intimidation. After grabbing my travel bag, a man tried to snatch my hand luggage. He twisted my arm but didn't succeed. I was manhandled and ended up on the ground, dragged towards the tarmac by several police officers. No doubt for fear of a scene in front of the plane's passengers, they gave up trying to embark me forcibly. I wanted to inform the French Consulate and the Sahrawi activist who was waiting for me, but the policeman tried to steal my mobile, which fell and opened. I was unable to recover the battery, which was seized. The whole scene was filmed. Photos were circulated on the internet...

Later I was forced into a vehicle. I was taken against my will at 9.30 pm from El Ayoun airport and held in a vehicle presented as a taxi which took me to Agadir, with three men, kind of police auxiliaries, only one of whom knew a few words of French. Three GUS (Groupes Urbains de Sécurité) vans 'escorted' us to the exit of El Ayoun, as did an unmarked vehicle, which was the only one to follow us until we left the non-autonomous territory of Western Sahara.

During the journey, I feared an accident because of the way the driver was driving, driving 'at breakneck speed', phoning constantly while large lorries coming from the opposite direction often dazzled him. I couldn't fasten my seatbelt, which was out of order. With the rear door blocked, I couldn't get out of the vehicle in the event of an accident. I was only allowed to go to the 'toilet' once - my companions had to obtain the OK from a higher authority. The driver didn't stop at one of the restaurants, but by the last refueling pump for trucks, where the toilets, without electricity, were disgustingly smelly, at the end of a corridor with a door that had no lock.

Arriving in Inzgen at around 4.30am, the driver wanted to drop me off in front of a shabby 'hotel' on the 1st floor of a building, where no room had been booked. I refused to get out of the taxi. I was finally taken to an ordinary hotel in Agadir.



Published on the Moroccan website 360 : 'On the evening of 6 August, the authorities in the town of Laayoune turned away a French pro-Polisario activist who had behaved aggressively with Moroccan police.'
By Ziad Alami

©Photo by an unknown person...

Italy_Expulsion from Western Sahara 10 and 11 September 2016

The story of a NON-travel Caterina Lusuardi, president of the Jaima Sahrawi di Reggio Emilia association, Fabiana Bruschi, president of the Berretti Bianchi di Lucca association Silvia Prodi, councillor for the Emilia-Romagna region at the time.

We flew from Bologna to Layoun in Western Sahara, with a stopover in Casablanca. When we arrived at our destination, before we could disembark, 5 or 6 police officers in uniform and plain clothes boarded the plane and informed us that we would not be disembarking and would be sent back on the same plane to Casablanca.

We asked for the reasons and a written document. They replied that they had higher orders and no written document. We warned the people waiting for us. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, indicating the Italian

embassy in Morocco as the reference for the Western Sahara, we called to explain what was happening to us. They told me they didn't know where Layoun was, but that there was an airport where they would contact an official. They then called us back to tell us that there was nothing they could do because, once again, they said they didn't know Layoun from Western Sahara. We deduce that they will do nothing for us, as we watch the plane prepare to leave for Casablanca.

We set off inconsolably for Casablanca, arriving that evening. The entrance to the airport looks like a makeshift checkpoint because they are so quick to look at passengers' passports and just as quick to look at ours without giving them back.

At this point, a man in plain clothes, presumed to be a police officer, ordered us to follow him and we were escorted who knows where by men also in plain clothes. Our concern grew as they continued to give no explanation, and finally took us to a transit zone, raising the possibility of our repatriation. We spent the night on the benches in the corridor, guarded from a distance, without anyone coming to offer us a blanket or a glass of water.

In the meantime, we contacted Stefano Vaccari, coordinator of the parliamentary intergroup for solidarity with the Sahrawi people, informed the mayor of Reggio Emilia, Luca Vecchi, and the Italian consul general in Casablanca, Alessandro Ferranti, who paid us a brief visit at around 1 a.m. to check on the situation, confirming the idea of repatriation on the first flight, without changing anything about our situation.

In the morning, we were taken to the boarding gate for Italy, still escorted, but this time with a uniformed officer holding our passports. At the gate, we met the Italian ambassador to Morocco, to whom we reported the incident and asked him to contact the authorities to obtain information on the case and, above all, written documents. He told us that, as the Italian embassy in Morocco, they had no jurisdiction over Western Sahara. So how come the Ministry refers to it in an emergency? They made us board the plane escorted by police officers, without our passports, which were given to the captain.

When we arrived in Bologna, on Italian soil, the crew didn't allow us to leave the plane. Our passports were given to the Italian police in Bologna, who were waiting for us at the door. The officers could do nothing other than give us back our documents and accompany us to the exit, astonished to find that everything was in order and that we had not received any notice of expulsion, and that what's more they knew nothing about Western Sahara.

It was as if we had never left, never arrived, as if we had never decided to go and meet someone; as if no one was waiting for us in a non-place that only the African Union recognises as a nation and that some maps annex to the state that occupies it, under the name of 'region'. Above all, we wanted to continue to forge the links between women that had already begun on previous trips that two of us had made.

On our return, we received a great deal of institutional support, and a formal request was also sent to the Moroccan embassy in Italy to find out the reasons for this rejection. The reply we received confirmed their total intransigence towards the Sahrawi cause, but also that they knew everything about the three of us and what we were going to do. They knew exactly when Fabiana and Caterina had been travelling to Western Sahara. We were described as 'disrupters of public order' because they

knew we would be talking to 'a minority of Polisario Front separatists'. They regretted that we had not made contact with the territory's elected representatives, who would have allowed us to visit the country freely. But if they had let us through, they would have followed us everywhere and watched us in front of the houses as on our previous trips.

We were also attacked in local newspapers by Moroccan associations in Reggio Emilia who claimed that we were stealing European funds and that we had no authority to defend human rights.

With the benefit of hindsight, this complex episode, which is difficult to place in the context of our human experience, gives us reason to believe that it was an opportunity to experience the suppression of fundamental rights in our own lives.

Our adventure has drawn attention to the Sahrawi people, who have been forgotten for too long, and we hope that this testimony will arouse in others the same shiver of indignation that we felt at the time.

Silvia Prodi, Fabiana Bruschi, Caterina Lusuardi
Reggio Emilia-Eucoco Lisbona 2024



**ON 27 APRIL 2017 THE MOROCCAN AUTHORITIES
EXPELLED FIVE EUROPEAN DEPUTIES FROM
OCCUPIED WESTERN SAHARA**

The delegation of MEPs was prevented from getting off the plane that was taking them from Strasbourg to El Ayoun airport.

The delegation of MEPs from different parties represented in the European Parliament was preparing to visit the occupied territory of Western Sahara to find out about the situation and meet human rights organisations and representatives of civil society in the occupied territory.

The five members of the 'Peace for Western Sahara' intergroup in the European Parliament, including intergroup president Jytte Guteland and her two vice-presidents, Paloma Lopez and Bodil Valero, were prevented from getting off the plane, coming via the Canary Islands, where they were expelled.

Akihisa Matsuno
Kiyoko Furusawa
University Teachers
Japanese nationality
Expelled at 29.12.2017 2017

We, Akihisa Matsuno and Kiyoko Furusawa, traveled to Morocco and Western Sahara in late December in 2017, and were deported after staying only one night in El Aaiun. What we did in El Aaiun was to visit the MINURSO office and to visit a human rights organization, ASVDH. That's all we did. While talking with members of the human rights organization in their office, the police came, forcibly put us into a car, and deported us from the El Aaiun airport to Tokyo via Casablanca and Paris.

Akihisa Matsuno was a professor in international politics at the Osaka University, and Kiyoko Furusawa a professor in economics at the Tokyo Woman's Christian University. We were interested in the conflict of Western Sahara, but had written anything or done anything related with the issue publicly. We were both activists in the solidarity movement with Timor-Leste (or East Timor) and supported self-determination of the people of Timor-Leste until it secured independence at the UN-organized referendum in 1999. Akihisa Matsuno served the UN's referendum mission (UNAMET) as electoral staff. Kiyoko Furusawa was secretary of the Japanese parliamentarians' referendum monitoring mission at the time.

We arrived in Rabat on 23 December 2017 and spent five days there. We met with a human rights organization and also with Professor Maati Monjib, a well-known dissident scholar. On 28 December we flew to El Aaiun and went straightly to Hotel Parador to stay. The following day, we went to the MINURSO Office and talked with an information officer for an hour or so. After coming out of the office, we were stopped by a group of police officers and were told that we could not visit the MINURSO. To visit it, we needed a permission from the Japanese embassy in Rabat, which we rebutted as nonsense.

In the afternoon, we went to the ASVDH. We had heard that the group was the only human rights group recognized by the Moroccan authorities. We met with its members, but after 30 minutes or so, the same group of policemen came to the office and told us to go out. They put us into a car, drove to the hotel to pick up our luggage, and deported us from the El Aaiun airport. At the airport, they took our camera and iPhones and checked the pictures we took. We asked them to allow us to drop by our hotel in Rabat because we had left two suitcases there. They said no. We did not experience violence from the police. They treated us carefully.

The deportation route was El Aaiun - Casablanca - Paris - Tokyo. Our passports were held by the police at the El Aaiun airport. We were told that our passports would be returned in Paris. Arriving at the Charles de Galle airport, we were handed over to the airport police. We were told to stay in a room until the departure. Then, we were guided to the gate, returned passports, and got onboard to the Air France flight back to Tokyo. We were given the most rear seats. We felt as if we were treated as criminals to be transferred.

We arrived in Tokyo on 31 December. Our suitcases we left in Rabat were later sent to us by the Japanese embassy staff in Rabat.

Our case of deportation was reported by the Sahara Press Service on 31 December 2017:
<https://archive.spsrasd.info/en/articles/2017/12/30/12924.html>.

One Moroccan media also reported on our case. We don't understand Arabic, but its rough translation reveals that the Moroccan authorities suspected a link between our visit and the arrival of the new MINURSO head, Colin Stewart, who was a political affairs officer of the UNAMET in 1999 when he was young. Of course it was just a co-incidence. We had no contact with the MINURSO head.

Akihisa Matsuno

Nicolas Marvey

Writer

French nationality

Expelled on 14 February 2019

In February 2019, I travelled to the occupied territory of Western Sahara, for personal research on colonialism in the 21st century. I stayed in Laâyoune for five days (from 9 to 13 February), during which I mainly walked around the city on my own to get a feel for the place.

I was nevertheless able to talk to Hassanah Abba from ASVDH, while driving around the city. After five days in Laâyoune, I went to Smara to meet human rights activists who, it seems, are even more isolated than in Laâyoune. I started by visiting the Asli Boukerch archaeological site so as not to arouse the suspicion of the police. The next day (14 February), I went to Ahmed Naciri's house, taking every possible precaution. I spent the morning at his home, gathering testimonies from members of his family and neighbours who had come to meet me.

Early in the afternoon, we were informed that a Sûreté Nationale van was in front of the house. Ahmed went outside to negotiate. The head of intelligence demanded that he get the foreigner out of the house, which Ahmed refused to do. After a long discussion, I decided to leave so as not to get them into more trouble than they were already in. I pretended that I had been invited to tea, but the head of intelligence informed me that I was staying with people whose activities undermined the security and integrity of the kingdom. After a quick interrogation at the police station, I was taken to my hotel to collect my belongings, then put in a taxi bound for Agadir, which I reached seven hours and ten police checkpoints later. I didn't have to pay for the taxi. At noon the next day, I took another taxi in the opposite direction to try to get back to Laâyoune, to catch my return flight 4 days later, but I was stopped before entering Tan-Tan and deported again to Agadir, despite my promise not to leave the hotel until my departure.

Cristina Martínez Benítez de Lugo

Anti-colonial activist from the Movement for Sahrawi Political Prisoners

Spanish nationality

Expelled on 6 and 18 August 2019

I have been expelled twice from Western Sahara. This is the way to prevent international observers to attend a trial fixed in advance. I will recount here the circumstances of these expulsions during which the Spanish government did nothing to defend me.

On July 19, 2019, Algeria won the football African Cup. Sahrawis in the occupied territories took to the streets to celebrate and demand self-determination. The repression was fierce. Young Sabah Mint Ozman was killed, crushed by a Moroccan police car. The police fired guns, threw stones, beat people, and sprayed water under pressure. During the night, they raided homes, looting and destroying them, and took several young people away. Some were released, but ten were arrested and charged. The trial was scheduled for August 7.

I went to Al Ayun on August 6, mandated by a human rights observatory, to attend the trial. At passport control at the airport, the police were outraged by the reason for my trip, ordering me to turn back. I tried to call the consulate in Rabat, which did not answer. The Moroccan official shouted at me that the consul had nothing to do with it, that we were in Morocco - whether I liked it or not - and that Morocco was a sovereign country. But we were in Western Sahara. They sent me back on the same plane to Casablanca. There, I was detained and my passport was confiscated. I was compelled to sleep in an airport hotel without being allowed to leave, and I was sent to Madrid the next day. They kept my Madrid-Casablanca-El Aaiún ticket. They did not stamp my passport with an exit stamp from Morocco. I was not given reasons for my expulsion nor a report of what had happened.

At midnight on the 6th, I managed to contact the Spanish consulate in Casablanca. They told me that if Morocco expelled me, there was nothing they could do. I called again when my passport was confiscated, and they told me that it was normal, that I would get it back the next day. I saw no sign of concern from the person I spoke to. The fact that this seemed to me to be a violation of my rights did not interest him.

The trial was postponed to the 19th. I wrote to the Spanish General Sub-Directorate of Protection and Consular Assistance to denounce the fact that I had been denied access to Al Ayun, deprived of my freedom of movement since Morocco had detained me and confiscated my passport. I asked for protection for my next trip to Al Ayun, on the 18th, so that I could attend the trial on the 19th. Protection and Consular Assistance replied regretting "the incident" that occurred during my trip and directed me to the consulate in *Oran* to inform me of the procedure to follow.

On August 18, I was expelled a second time. This time, the police were waiting for me at the gangway of the plane that was making a stopover in Casablanca. I insisted with the Spanish consulate in Casablanca, but they said that they could not intervene.

After this second expulsion, on the 19th, I received an email from Protection and Consular Assistance acknowledging its error and giving me an email address for the Consulate General in Rabat. In conclusion, this General Sub-Directorate did not deal with my case at all, referring me - belatedly - to a consulate, erroneous or not, whereas I had denounced the inefficiency of the consulate. It is regrettable that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not contact me at any time, except to evade the question, and that Spain finds it normal that a Spanish citizen is expelled from Western Sahara. They did not ask Morocco for an explanation and they did not give me satisfaction, leaving me unprotected, just like the Sahrawis.

Morocco cannot expel anyone from Western Sahara or from a transit zone to get there. I requested protection from the ministry, and four years later, during an international campaign, I reiterated it to Borrell, this time before the European Union, for myself and for everyone. I requested his intervention with the Moroccan authorities to put an end to this situation, which is unique in the world, and I urged him to make it be possible to get to this non-self-governing territory whose administration falls to Spain, and whose access, Morocco, the occupying power, is not internationally authorized to restrict.

Elli LORZ
Photographer
French-Irish nationality
Expelled In September 2021

I'm a member of the Hans Lucas photo studio. Since 2013 I've gradually specialised in the Western Sahara conflict, which has led me to spend varying amounts of time in the occupied territory. The territory is forbidden by Morocco to foreign observers and is heavily monitored, which means it's a tough working environment, because you have to find ways to bypass the surveillance to document, and every day there's a risk of being deported.

Between May 2019 and October 2020 I was based in El Aaiun to carry out the final part of my documentary project. On 12 October, a friend alerted me that Moroccan intelligence was trying to locate me and I left the territory with my vehicle two days later. Between 14 and 15 October, two of my external hard drives were secretly dismantled and replaced by empty, unknown drives. The handwritten testimonials were stolen and replaced with blank sheets of paper. Handling these items on 15 October triggered an allergic reaction on my hands, then on the areas of my face that I had touched with my hands. I consulted a doctor in Rabat on 16 October, who alerted me to this reaction from my hands. Here again, I suspect the Moroccan police were involved. From El Aaiun to Tangier, I was being monitored by police officers on foot, on scooters, or with vehicles for the longer journeys. As my ferry was cancelled and postponed, I was exposed to the police for 7 days. I was aware that they'd be preparing to expect me at the port and that this stage represented a risk for me. When I explained my situation at the entrance to the French consulate in Tangier, the consul refused to assist me, to open the gate for me or to keep my computers and SD cards safe.

As I also have Irish nationality, I contacted Foreign Affairs in Ireland and the Front Line Defenders ngo, who followed up my situation on the phone until I left the country. I tried to lodge a complaint for theft against X on 20 October at the Tangier police headquarters in order to keep a record of the thefts or the obstruction of the complaint. My passport was confiscated and I was held at the police station for 6 hours. The exchanges and incidents that took place at the police headquarters revealed a spirit of revenge in reaction to their belated knowledge of my visits to the occupied Sahara. At 10pm, the police told me to 'get the hell out of Morocco'. I arrived at the port of Tangier Med an hour before my ferry was due to leave. After a regular search of my car by customs, I was escorted 3 km away to a hangar in the freight port for a so-called 'scanner'. I was forced to leave my car unlocked and wait outside the hangar. During this time, one of my computers was dismantled and the hard drive stolen. The theft was carried out by plainclothes police officers and the head of customs supervised and informed a third party on the phone. The head of customs refused to take my complaint and I was taken back to the passenger area. A small crowd had gathered there : auxiliary forces, police officers, the Royal Navy and other officials. Abdellatif Hammouchi introduced himself to me as the chief of police and took my passport. My vehicle was searched 3 times. I boarded the ferry at 2am, after 3 hours of searches, and we left the port escorted by two frigates until we left territorial waters. I documented the events at the police station and in the port with my telephone (audio and video recordings) .

In June 2021, I discovered that the spying with Pegasus software on Claude Mangin's telephone started on 8 October and coincided with the Moroccan authorities' discovery of my presence in occupied Sahara and their targeting of my work. In September 2021, I took a flight to Marrakech. When I disembarked, the police informed me that I was banned from entering the country since 20 October 2020. I was held for 8 hours in the airport, and deported during the night to the other side of France to dissuade me from trying to visit again. I then lodged an appeal with the administrative court in Marrakech. My appeal was deemed inadmissible and I was told that the reason for the ban on entering the country could not be disclosed on the grounds that I was a threat to Morocco's security. As my work is published under a pseudonym, the ban on entry is a confession by the Moroccan authorities that they illegally accessed my work. Thefts instead of a police seizure make the censorship and lack of freedom of expression in Western Sahara invisible. The ban on entry is a Moroccan administrative sanction imposed on us for an indefinite period. Expulsions and bans on access to the territory limit solidarity and isolate Sahrawis under occupation, allowing violations to continue with great impunity. All this is part of the logic of Moroccan oppressive mechanisms in Western Sahara.



The members of a delegation of 62 young people from Norway and 6 from Sweden, the Netherlands, Lithuania, the United States, Canada and Poland were arrested and expelled by the Moroccan police **between 17 and 21 January 2016**, in the south of Morocco and in Western Sahara, where they were going to meet young people and the population of the occupied territory of Western Sahara.



The 52 young members of a Red Solidarity Party delegation from Norway, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and Lithuania were arrested and deported by Moroccan **police between 21 and 25 January 2017** at the Ifni, Guelmim and Tan Tan checkpoints and at El Ayoun airport on their way to Western Sahara to meet young people and the population of the territory occupied by Morocco.



Two Norwegian students were expelled on **01/11/2024** by the Moroccan police when they were at the home of Sidi Mohamed Daddach, a human rights activist in El Ayoun. They had come to investigate the views of Sahrawi citizens on the renewable energy projects being developed in occupied Western Sahara.



Two young members of the Youth Committee of the Norwegian trade union Styrke were expelled by Moroccan police on **04/11/2024** from the Mina Bali house in El Ayoun where they had come to meet Saharawi civil society about renewable energy projects and the situation in occupied Western Sahara.