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Situation in the Occupied territories of Western Sahara since 13th of November 2020



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Introduction

Eighty percent of Western Sahara has been militarily occupied since 1975 by the Kingdom of Morocco. In 1991 a cease-fire was signed between the parties. Since 1975 the Saharawi population has been under a Moroccan regime of repression, social, economic and political apartheid.

After the invasion of Western Sahara in 1975 by the Moroccan Kingdom and until the cease-fire agreement in 1991, an endless list of war crimes, that are mentioned in several reports of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other International NGO's, were committed by the Moroccan invaders against the Saharawi civil population, amongst them the bombing with Napalm and White Phosphorus of the civil population, civilians thrown out of planes, massacres and mass murders, forced disappearances, incarceration in secret prisons and torture of children, women and men amongst others.

It would be expected that with the cease-fire agreement signed by the Moroccan Kingdom and Polisario Front, the legitimate representative of the Saharawi, under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union and the presence of a UN Mission on the ground the plight of the Saharawi population would come to a halt, but it did not.

The Kingdom of Morocco not only did not respect the signature of the cease fire, tried continuously to occupy the Guergarat region enlarging the area of occupied territory, but also attacked the civil population, robbed the natural resources and made illegal trade agreements. The Kingdom did not stop there however, it also expelled MINURSO functionaries without any reprisal from the security council. All the above are also documented by AI, HRW and other international NGO's as well as the UN.

1. Methodology

This report is based on the information recollected through direct contact with the victims and the reports of the following Human Rights Organizations on the Ground: ISACOM; CODAPSO; CODESA, Asociación Hijas de Saguia and the news groups Al Gargarat and Equipe Media and intends to highlight and show the level of repression that the Saharawi civil population is suffering without any protection from the International Community.

The total shut-down of the occupied territories, where no International Organization, Journalist or Researcher is allowed to enter in order to interview the victims allows only contact through phones. A number of activists on which I rely to contact families and victims were forced to hide only a few days after the cease-fire since the Moroccan authorities are searching them to detain them.

2. The end of the Cease-fire and the increase of repression upon the Saharawi population

Since 13th of November 2020, and after the violation of the cease-fire by Morocco with the military incursion in El Guergarat and the attack of Civilian protester in the buffer zone and the consequent declaration of Polisario Front of the end of the cease-fire, the situation of the Saharawi population in the occupied territories of Western Sahara has seen a rapid deterioration with a large-scale repression by the Moroccan military, paramilitary, police and militias on the ground. In fact, the Saharawi population is under total Moroccan control and unable to escape the repression. The Covid pandemic and the measures taken help to cover up the fact that the Saharawi population in the occupied territories are now hostages.

The cease-fire is now terminated and we are in face of a war scenario where the immediate action of the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) as well as that of the UN Security Council and the African Union is urgent.

MINURSO the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara continues on site, but without any a mandate that could protect the civilians, nor did it fulfill any action to prevent the planting of several thousand Landmines in El Guergarat by Morocco in a territory that is not under the administration of the Kingdom of Morocco.

The Saharawi population in the occupied territories did never resort to any violent protest nor before nor after the cease-fire.

Their protests are non-violent and use chanting of slogans, exhibition of the Saharawi National Flag, drawing of graffiti's mentioning the right to self-determination, calls upon the international community and UN, gatherings and meetings demanding the self-determination and the immediate release of the political prisoners, protests of the Saharawi unemployed youth chanting slogans, sit-ins and other peaceful actions.



All these actions have as a direct result the intervention of the Moroccan occupation forces who dismantle the protests resorting to violence.

The actions of the Saharawi media teams are also immediately squashed with violence, filming, recording, or taking photographs of the protests and consequent action of the Moroccan occupation forces are not allowed.

Children and young people have been victims of a wave of abductions, ill-treatment, torture and arbitrary detentions. The children are specially targeted as a means to an end - in order to terrorize the Saharawi population and show their total control over the Saharawi. Most of the Families were menaced that their children would suffer further reprisals if their parents would speak out or participate in any kind of protest.

The present actions of the Moroccan authorities on the ground are so violent that children and their families are in a state of terror.

Saharawi Human Rights activists, journalists and known members of the community are under constant surveillance, menaced, and their houses under a siege in all cities of the occupied territories.

The numerous violation of International Humanitarian Law and International Law by the action of the Moroccan Kingdom against the Saharawi Population have been repeatedly denounced to ICRC as well as to the UNSC, the UN Secretary General, all relevant UN mechanisms and the African Union. However, in the recent weeks we have seen an increase of Moroccan military, paramilitary, militia and commando groups, as well as an broad spectrum of victims, which now include even Saharawi that aren't known for their outspoken opposition to the Moroccan occupation.

The increase of Moroccan military, paramilitary, police, militias and “Commando Groups” in occupied Western Sahara can only be analyzed as an intent to hold the Saharawi population hostage and to use their plight as a weapon.



The Health situation in the occupied territories is also alarming, with an increase of COVID cases and dozens of deaths reported in recent days. No medical attention nor actions to prevent the epidemic and a general refusal to treat the Saharawi Population by the Moroccan medical staff put the lives of the Saharawi population at risk.

2.1. Some examples of the repression suffered by the Saharawi population since November 13th

November 13th

- After the cease-fire breach in El Guergarat with the attack against Saharawi protesters, dozens of Moroccan police and military armored vehicles were deployed in occupied El Aaiun to quell any form of protest against Morocco or demonstrations in support of Polisario decision to the resumption of war.

In the evening in Smara avenue, dozens of Saharawi gathered in a show of support for Polisario chanting slogans against the Moroccan illegal occupation but the police quickly intervened and violently ended their protest.

Between 13 and 17th of November

- Numerous raids have been carried out by paramilitaries and police forces in the City of El Aaiun:
 - Ajana Ghalia - wife of Saharawi political prisoner Mohamed Bani of the Gdeim Izik Group
 - Fatimetou Dahwar – aunt of Saharawi political prisoner Hassan Dah of the Gdeim Izik Group
 - Ahl Belamech,
 - Ahl Ahmaniha



- Ahl Kaziza,
- Ahl Mulay Ismaili
- Ahl Dahi, Ahl Chighali
- Ahl Khattar Almujaahid
- Ahl Babeit
- Ahl Al-Adham (a member of this family was beaten by security agents)
- Ahl Al-Gargar (their son Ahmed Gargar was arrested).

November 14th

- The Sahrawi student, Mohamed Mouloud Obeidha (minor) was abducted and arrested in the night from the 16th to 17th of November he was brought to the local prison of El Aaiun / Occupied Western Sahara.
- The Saharawi activists Ali Saadoni and Nurdin Al-Argubi had to go into hiding since the Police is actively searching them after November 13th, their houses are surveilled and their families were approached several times by the police. The two activists were abducted on the afternoon of 10th November by two police agents that were identified as well-known torturers named Ali Al-Buifri and Uld Touhima (nickname). Saadoni and Al-Arguibi were subjected to physical and psychological tortures in the outskirts of the city, they were threatened to be incarcerated and even raped if they continue expressing their demands for freedom and the end of Moroccan occupation.
- Assault on the home of Al-Karkar's family and the arrest of their son, Ahmed Habadi Muhammad Fadel.
- Detention and torture of young Saharawi by Moroccan commando groups
During the nights of 14 and 15 November Moroccan Command groups invaded Saharawi families' houses, mistreated and tortured entire families and made arbitrary arrests of young Saharawi in an attempt to muzzle the protests in the streets of the occupied territories against the Moroccan occupation and in support of the Polisario Front.



According to Hmad Hamad, vice-president of the NGO CODAPSO, the arbitrary arrest of the young Ahmed Elgargar and Mohamed Abidha on Saturday night, 14, was confirmed, which took more young people to the streets demanding their release.

Both Ahmed and Mohamed Elgargar Abidha were tortured and their whereabouts were not known after their arbitrary detention.

Also the communication group Equipe Media issued a warning on Twitter :

“Special commands invade the homes of Saharawi. Dozens of young people were arrested, mistreated and tortured by the Moroccan occupation forces in detention campaigns in large scale. Marrocos is violating international humanitarian law @ MINURSO__ preferred to shut up

November 15th

- Two journalists from @Nushatta (independent media organization) Mohamed Haddi and Cherif Bakhil are being searched by the special commands of the Moroccan occupation authorities. Commandos invaded their homes of in El Aaiun, occupied Western Sahara, with the intention of kidnapping them.
- Mohamed Boudnane, a Saharawi civilian, was arrested when he was about to renew his identity card.

The police claimed to have a warrant for the arrest of the young man due to alleged confessions of another young man who was arrested. The charge was that of participating in a demonstration that took place last week.

Boudnane did not participate in this demonstration, but Moroccan militias have been kidnapping, detaining, interrogating and torturing hundreds of youths and children since November 13 after the Moroccan ceasefire violation. The interrogations and brutal torture by the Moroccan occupation authorities lead to forcibly confessions and they also use the contacts on the young people's mobile phones to make accusations.

- In Dakhla the Moroccan occupation forces forcibly dispersed a peaceful march of unemployed Saharawis with signs demanding the right to work.



- Raids and assaults on various homes and intimidation of families, including the elderly, women and children:
 - House of Mr. Mohamed Ould Ahmania.
 - House of Mr. Khattari Ould Balamash.
 - House of Mr. Moulay Ould Muhammad Al-Ismaili (and beating of his son Ayoub).
 - House of Mr. Shghali's family home (and the transfer of his son Ali to prison pending trial).
 - House of the Dahi family
 - House of Mr. Mohamed Akhnafar.
 - House of Mr. Mujahid Aly, Poya Mayara.
 - House of the Aly Ould Zain El-Din family.

November 16th

- 12-year-old Hayat, born on 10/8/2008, was arrested while she was assisting classes in Al-Nahda School in Occupied Aaiun at 10:00 a.m. and taken to the headquarters of the Moroccan security, where she was subjected to psychological and physical torture. Indeed, she was subjected to ill-treatment by police officer with the aim to make her suffer only because she drew a small Sahrawi national flag on her school smock.

The employees of Al-Nahda School took upon themselves to be police informants that monitor the innocent behavior of children to report and deliver the 12-year-old child to the hands of torturers.

At the Moroccan Security Headquarters, the girl was intimidated, harassed and tortured. Hayat was forced to sing the Moroccan anthem, kneeling and to kiss the image of the King of Morocco. Furthermore, she was subjected to all sorts of insults, kicked on the stomach brutally.



She was pulled by her hair. Unfortunately, it did not stop there: the Moroccan state agents molested her sexually all the while she was insulted and threatened, and also hearing threats against her family.

After this event, the Moroccan police surrounded her house trying to avoid any contact of the family with Saharawi journalists or human rights defenders.

Her Father was threatened, as well if he would speak to anyone and that his daughter would suffer the consequences.

- Three Saharawi Minors, Nasrallah Baya (14 years), Yahya Mohamed Taleb (17 years) and Bujari Lamaidy (14years) , were arrested in the occupied city of Bojador, after participating in a non-violent protest demanding independence and the immediate withdrawal of the Moroccan occupying forces from Western Sahara. The minors were presented before the Persecutor of the King in the First Instance Court of the Moroccan occupying state and released after two days in arbitrary detention.
- In the evening, a young saharawi Brahim Babeit was arrested in Bojador and granted provisional release with accusation that he had thrown stones against the Moroccan police.
- Transfer of Mr. Ahmad Habadi Muhammad Fadel Al-Karkar to El-Aaiún prison.
- Raids and assaults on the houses of journalists who are members of the Media Activists and Human Rights Foundation teams: Muhammad Huda and Sharif Ibrahim Bakhil.
- In the afternoon and evening of 16th November, arrests, beatings, searches and home invasions by Moroccan occupiers continued through their military and paramilitary groups and commandos in the cities of Occupied Western Sahara.
- At 8:00 pm Moroccan plainclothes agents attacked activist Said Hadad at Av. Smara in El Aaiun with batons.
Hadad is a person with special needs and simply protested peacefully for the implementation of the referendum agreed in 1991 and the right of the Saharawi people to self-determination and an end to illegal Moroccan occupation.
- In the city of Dakhla there were demonstrations that were forcibly dispersed and followed by house-to-house searches and kidnappings.



November 17th

- The young Eliás Al-Heretani was arrested and tortured in the city of Dakhla
- The arrest by the Moroccan Army in the Hawza area, which is 100 km from the occupied Smara, of the following saharawi: Hamza Al-Mami Lmazuki, Ayoub Saleh Ahmad Alilal and Mami Ahajiba. They were interrogated by the Moroccan Gendarmerie. Hamza Al-Mami Lmazuki was detained and informed that he would have a trial.

November 19th

- Sultana Khaya, a known human rights activist, was returning to Bojador when she was stopped at the entry check-point of the city. For over one hour she was insulted, verbally and physical harassed and threatened with death by the occupation agents at the check-point.
- When she arrived at her house the family came out to greet her, the Moroccan occupation police immediately surrounded the house and started to beat everyone randomly with police batons, their fists and with their boots, forcing them to enter the house.
- During this attack, 75-year-old Minatou Dah, the mother of Sultana Khaya was so hardly struck that she fell to the ground. The house is still surrounded by the Moroccan occupation authorities, in the house are Women and children as can be seen in the video that was life streamed on Facebook.

November 20th

- In El Aaiun, the occupying forces (police and paramilitaries and intelligence services) were harassing all minors and young people on the streets, removing their cell phones and searching them. The goal is to erase all videos and images that show the brutality of the occupation forces against the Saharawi population and to control all communication.
- At 7.44 pm (local time) in Bojador, the Moroccan occupation forces brutally beat El Ouaara Khaya, sister of the human rights activist, Sultana Khaya.



The attack occurred after El Ouaara was going to open the door to her cousin who was coming to visit, but the police who are surrounding the house since yesterday, prevented the cousin to enter and beat El Ouaara brutally when she opened the door. The attack was so vicious that El Ouaara fell down to the ground with a bleeding head wound and lost consciousness.

- Human rights activist Zakaríá Mohamed Sidi Laroussi Al-Bukhari was arrested and released after hours of questioning.
- Mahfouda Lefkir , known human rights activist, denounced the intentional medical negligence of which her father, the well-known activist Bomba Lafkir is a victim, the hospital refused to treat her father.
- Mahfouda Lefkir, a former political prisoner, released a video in which she denounces that her father has been for more than a week in the Hospital on a stretcher without any medical assistance.
- Bomba Lefkir, an elderly man with diabetes, took a serious fall at home and went to Ben Mehdi hospital in El Aaiun a week ago. As he was not given any treatment, the family tried to admit him to the military hospital in El Aaiun but was not accepted, returning to Ben Mehdi hospital which then did not want to readmit him.
- The activist's daughter says in the video that her father does not receive any treatment for the sole reason of being a Saharawi activist, which peacefully claims his people's right to self-determination and the end of the occupation.
- "Labadil, labadil Antakrir el Massir" shouts Mahfoud in the middle of the Hospital, which means "there is no other solution than self-determination."

November 21st

- Around 200 agents of Moroccan police and paramilitary forces surrounded the house and adjacent streets of Ahmed Ettanji, President of Équipe Média, in the neighborhood of Lahohoum, in the center of El Aaiun. Ahmed Ettanji was getting married, and the police



terrorized his relatives and friends and prevented guests to join his wedding and put him under house arrest, threatening him with detention and forced entry.

- The house of Sahrawi artist, musician and song writer Malaynin Haddi was surrounded and threatened with arrest unless he stopped displaying his art and performing his songs supporting the freedom of Western Sahara.

November 23rd

- Erragueb El Balek was detained in Smara after participating in a demonstration the night before.
- The 20-year-old spent three days in Smara prison before being sent to the Black prison in El Aaiun, the capital of the occupied territories in Western Sahara.
- According to Moroccan authorities, the young man has an arrest warrant since April 2019 and is accused of stealing a television from a school.
- A witness denies the charge. With an arrest warrant for a year and seven months and El Balek being perfectly located, it is surprising that the police did not question him earlier.
- The young man was detained on a street in Smara and tortured he was presented to court in El Aaiun without the presence of a defense lawyer.

November 28th

- At 9:30 p.m., members of the Moroccan police and auxiliary occupation forces attacked the home of Sahrawi human rights defender Ali Salem Salem Tamek, member of the executive board of CODESA, by throwing stones. located in the Al-Mustaqbal neighborhood in the occupied town of El Aaiun.
- Teams of the Moroccan occupying forces attempted to loot his house, after throwing stones and used intimidation, and sexual harassment against its inhabitants on the second floor of the building.



- This attack led to injuries of the Sahrawi human rights defender Jamila Al-Hussein Al-Mujahid, aged 24.
- The Moroccan occupation forces attacked, terrified, intimidated and sexually assaulted the children and women, who were gathered as a family, and who were listening to Sahrawi music.
- The young Rakeb Albalek was arrested in Smara and taken to El Aaiun prison.

November 30th

- Comando teams of the Moroccan occupation forces launched a wide campaign of arrests and raids of homes in the “Al-Awda” neighborhood in El Aaiun.

December 1st

- Jamal Salem Abhi (16 years old) was arrested in front of Imam Malik School.
Yassin Asilymah Hilal (16 years old) was arrested during a raid into his family home
Mounir Khenki " (18 year old) was arrested during a raid into his family home
Badr Bonowarh (16 years) was arrested inside the police station when he went there with his mother who enquired why her house was raided looking for the young boy who did not commit any crime.

December 5th

- Jamal Salem Abhi, Yassin Asilymah Hilal , Mounir Khenki and Badr Bonowarh were transferred to the local prison in El Aaiun. According to CODESA the arrest of the four young saharawi is related to their participation in a peaceful protest where they had exhibited the Saharawi National Flag (see video: <https://youtu.be/4eaDm9IIo74>)



December 9th

The Chamber of first instance of El Aaiun issued verdicts against three Sahrawi political detainees, Ahmed El Karkar, Nasrallah Al-Karhi and Aali Shgali Wadán, accused of throwing stones at police officers. They were sentenced to 10 months in prison.

Some of the houses currently under siege or surveillance some of them for over two months in El Aaiun, Smara and Bojador

- The home of the family of the political prisoner, Mohamed Bani of the Gdeim Izik Group
- The home of the family of the former political prisoner Muhammad Salem Abba
- The family home of the former political prisoner Brahim Sabbar
- The family home of the former political prisoner Dafa Ahmed Babu
- The family home of the former political prisoner Fatimetu Dahwar
- The home of the family of the former political prisoner Zainaha AbedElhadi
- The home of the family of the former political prisoner Najat Khnaibila
- The home of the family of the former political prisoner and president of ISACOM Aminetou Haidar
- The family home of the former political prisoner Al-Saleh Al-Zegham
- The home of the human rights activist Hassana Duihi
- The house of the family of the former political prisoner Mahfouda Bomba Lefkir
- The home of the family of the former political prisoner Bachri Bentaleb
- The home of the family of the former political prisoner and vice-president of CODAPSO Hmad Hammad
- The home of the family of the former political prisoner and president of CODAPSO Mohamed Dadach
- The family home of the former political prisoner and member of the executive board of CODESA Ali Salem Tamek.



- The home of the family of the activist Salma Limam
- The home of the family of the Sahrawi journalist Salha Boutenguiza
- Home of the journalist Hayat Khattari
- The family home of the journalist, Ahmed Ettanji
- Home of the family of the journalist Embarek Mammen
- Home of the family of the journalist of Equipe Media Mohamed Mayara
- Home of the family of the Executive Manager of Al Garagarat media Essabi Mohamed Yahdih
- Home of the family of the Editorial director of Al Garagarat media Walid Elammari
- The home of the Dambar family activists and known human rights defender
- The home of the human rights activist Hammadi Al-Naseri
- The home of the human rights activist Soukaina Jedahlo
- The home of the human rights activist Lahsen Dalil
- The home of the human rights activist Fatma Elhafidi
- The home of the human rights activist Yahdiha Haimouda
- The home of the human rights activist Gabel Banahi
- The home of the human rights activist Aglijilha
- The home of the human rights activist Fatima Elhafidi
- The home of the human rights activist Sultana Khaya
- The home of the human rights activist Babi Zainabo
- The home of the human rights activist and sister of political prisoner Houcein Zawi, Umm Saad Zawi
- The home of the human rights activist Almaluma Abdullah.

Occupied city of Dakhla

The siege of Dakhla is different from other cities due to the intensity of security forces and the fact that entire neighborhoods are under total siege. Furthermore when two Saharawi



meet, immediately a group of plain cloths agents surrounds them and forces them to separate.

Neighborhoods under siege:

- Ksaikisat neighborhood
- Um Tunsí neighborhood
- Bichat neighborhood
- Al-Amal neighborhood

Conclusion:

Although this are only a few examples they illustrate clearly the repression and endangerment of the life of the civilian Saharawi population in the occupied territories in Western Sahara. The Saharawi population cannot escape from the territory since it is surrounded by a 2720km long Moroccan military wall on the east, the Atlantic Ocean (with all port controlled by Morocco) on the West and to land borders on the north and south controlled by Morocco.

A pattern can then be drawn and this report aims to show that this violence is aimed at the common goal of silencing the Saharawi population and activists while creating an environment of fear and intimidation to dissuade others from expressing their opinions.

ICRC's mandate and mission statements are clear:

- ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence.
- protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance.
- prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles.

It is urgent that the ICRC deploys a mission to the occupied territories and to the Moroccan prisons where Saharawi political prisoners are being tortured and ill-treated on a daily basis.

The UN Security Councils mandate is also clear:

- to maintain international peace and security;
 - to cooperate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights;
- And has the possibility to dispatch a mission to the conflict area.

It is urgent that the UN Security Council acts to protect the Saharawi Civil population in the occupied territories of Western Sahara



The Constitutive Act of the African Union and the Protocol on Amendments to the Constitutive Act of the African Union which lay out the aims of the AU are also clear:

- Defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States;
- Promote peace, security, and stability on the continent;
- Promote and protect human and peoples' rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant human rights instruments;

It is urgent that the African Union dispatches a mission and protects the Saharawi civil population