

## **SOLIDARITY WITH WESTERN SAHARA**

### 40<sup>th</sup> Ordinary General Assembly – February 17, 2018

The CNJC reaffirms its solidarity with Western Sahara and its commitment to the right to national self-determination, as included in the International Human Rights Instruments and as recognized by over 80 countries, mostly in Africa and Latin America. In 2017, the CNJC paid two visits to refugee camps to show solidarity with the Sahrawi people. It is in this context that the CNJC is presenting this resolution as a reaffirmation of its role denouncing and raising awareness of the situation of the Sahrawi people.

The wave of decolonization processes in the 1970s drove the Sahrawi people to rise up against Spanish occupation, and in 1974 the Spanish State promised a self-determination referendum for the Western Sahara. Nevertheless, in 1975 the secret Madrid Accords were signed between Spain, Mauritania and Morocco, in which Spain agreed to end their presence as the administrative power in the territory. This was followed by the Green March, which resulted in the occupation of the Western Sahara by Morocco. In spite of the ruling by The Hague International Court of Justice and the withdrawal of Mauritania in 1979, Morocco continued to occupy Sahrawi territory, including nearly all the populated areas and the deposits of phosphorite (a valuable natural resource used to produce phosphates), as well as its rich fishing grounds. The remaining 20% is an unfertile area in the interior desert, controlled by the Polisario Front. In addition, Morocco built the longest wall in the world at over 2,700 km, which separates the two zones together with one of the largest minefields in the world. The RASD calculates that there are 7 million anti-personnel mines taking up a broad area beyond the wall. Since 2006, the Polisario Front has destroyed 15,508 of them, and it intends to deactivate 4,985 more in 2018. Nevertheless, in 2017 these mines caused 34 victims.

The situation has become so deadlocked that the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), established by United Nations Security Council Resolution 690 in 1991, is still present in Sahrawi territory although it has not able to complete its mission or protect human rights in the occupied areas. The Settlement Plan established a transition period to prepare a referendum under the supervision of the MINURSO in which the population of the Western Sahara would choose between independence and becoming a part of Morocco.

Currently, ACNUR estimates that over 165,000 Sahrawi individuals live in the refugee camps built in the Algerian desert, where they have been for over 40 years. 60% are under the age of 30. The living conditions there do not meet their basic needs, which prevents them from living in a dignified manner.

Meanwhile, about 150,000 Sahrawis continue to live in the occupied territories where their rights are constantly trampled, especially their right to association, to a fair trial, to physical integrity and access to employment. In addition, the wall created by Morocco still separates thousands of families after more than forty years.

Finally, many Sahrawis, especially young people, live in the diaspora as the only option to have a dignified life and to be able to help maintain their families in the refugee camps, where international aid shrinks each year.

Over all these years, the Sahrawi people have continued to organize pacific protest actions to denounce the illegality of the Madrid Accords, the occupation of their land, the human rights abuse they repeatedly suffer and their inability to hold a self-determination referendum in decent conditions that can be recognized by the international community.

As corroborated by multiple international observational missions and organizations such as Amnesty International, Morocco has responded to these protests in the occupied territories with hundreds of arrests for political reasons, cases of torture, trials held in irregular conditions and without minimum guarantees, disproportionate prison sentences, unhealthy living conditions and humiliation in prisons.

In this context, the National Youth Council of Catalonia has maintained the Western Sahara as a priority region for cooperation. This cooperation materializes through a biennial collaboration agreement with the Union of Young Sahrawis (UJSario), visits to refugee camps and awareness-raising and political activities in Catalonia.

The National Youth Council of Catalonia would like to reinforce its position of solidarity with the Western Sahara, and as a result we ask:

- That the Government of Catalonia pressure the Spanish State to fulfil its responsibilities and carry out the self-determination referendum requested by the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and agreed upon by the United Nations.
- That the Government of Catalonia condemn the violations of Human Rights perpetuated by Morocco with the complicity of Spain in the occupied territories and refugee camps.
- That the Directorate General for Development Cooperation maintain the Western Sahara as a priority area in the Mediterranean in its future Cooperation Management Plan, and that resources be guaranteed in order to continue to operate long-term, quality cooperation projects.
- We also denounce the passive role of the UN and the MINURSO, and we demand that they put an end to this inactivity and take measures to protect the rights of the Sahrawi people.

The National Youth Council of Catalonia commits to:

- Strengthen our ties of cooperation and solidarity with UJSario and the Sahrawi people.
- Increase our awareness-raising and political activity in Catalonia, with special emphasis on the youth population.
- To promote cooperation as a network in Catalonia among youth associations that work in favour of the Sahrawi cause.

Resolution presented by the secretariat of CNJC, JERC, SCI, JEV, CJB and  
AECS