



END OF COLONIALISM, REFERENDUM FOR INDEPENDENCE!

48° EUCOCO WORKSHOP POLITICS AND INFORMATION

Thank you very much to all the 45 participants who attended this political workshop. The occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco represents one of the most serious and enduring violations of international law. Yet, this issue has long been ignored by the international community and overshadowed by dominant geopolitical narratives. In the spirit of the Timor-Leste conflict, we must learn the lessons of courage and solidarity, where Portugal, as a beacon of freedom, led the way to self-determination, shining hope for a people in search of justice. During our workshop, we reaffirmed that the issue of Western Sahara is not a political conflict between Algeria and Morocco, but a true decolonization issue. Morocco is engaging in illegal occupation, and the Sahrawi people have the right to self-determination, a universal right that must be respected by all member states of the international community. The idea of "autonomy" proposed by Morocco, supported by countries such as France and Spain, is incompatible with the decolonization process because it denies the Sahrawi people the opportunity to freely express their will. The only legitimate and lasting solution is a free and fair referendum that allows the Sahrawi people to determine their own destiny. In pursuing this goal, we must alert the International Union of Lawyers and Jurists. We also discussed the role of the UN Security Council in the mission of MINURSO. The Security Council has failed to maintain peace and to guarantee a solution on the Western Sahara case. A more decisive intervention is urgently needed to support the holding of the referendum uphold the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination and extend the mandate to include the monitoring of human rights in the occupied territory. The MINURSO mission is the only one in the world without a mandate to monitor human rights. Additionally, we emphasized the importance of working closely with UN Security Council members to ensure the respect of the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination. This requires effective diplomatic coordination and constant engagement to counter Moroccan propaganda.

Political communication and media use have been an important part of our work. A major obstacle to the Sahrawi cause is the media silence regarding Western Sahara and the Sahrawi people, the silence that is partly fueled by Moroccan government propaganda. Morocco has invested considerable resources to build a specific narrative around the Western Sahara issue, one tied to a supposed historical claim to the territory. This narrative was explicitly rejected by the International Court of Justice in 1975 and reaffirmed by the European Court of Justice in 2016, 2018, 2021, and 2024 stating that Western Sahara is a separate and distinct territory from Morocco. Despite this, Morocco continues to manipulate information and the media, obstructing the work of the UN and international

bodies such as the UN Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee). In this regard, it has been proven that Morocco funds petitioners to defend its cause and hamper the decolonization process at the Fourth Committee.

To counter these actions, a media awareness strategy is necessary, which should include the engagement of traditional media outlets, such as newspapers, TV channels, and local and national radio stations, to give visibility to the issue of Western Sahara. It is also crucial to use social media to reach a younger audience, with multimedia content such as videos and infographics explaining the causes of the Western Sahara conflict. Furthermore, it is essential to strengthen the solidarity network with the Sahrawi people on both local and national levels, involving young people, universities, student unions and collectives in order to create an international solidarity network that breaks the media silence and actively supports the Sahrawi cause. In this regard, it's necessary to mention an important initiative discussed during the workshop: the establishment of the **International Federation of Journalists and Media Professionals in Solidarity with the Sahrawi Cause**, created during the first international media conference held on May 2nd and 3rd, 2024. This federation aims to raise global awareness about the Sahrawi cause, defend the rights of Sahrawi journalists, and promote accurate information regarding the struggle for self-determination of the Sahrawi people. The next conference will be in May 2025.

The UN has been responsible for this issue for 60 years, but its credibility and ability to respond to the demands of upholding the right to self-determination are increasingly questioned. We must never forget that UN resolutions are truly important and must be supported. We need to denounce the political and informational strategies of the Moroccan government and rely on the GA Resolutions of the UN, which have recognized the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people and the role of Polisario Front in this decolonization process as GA Resolution No. 34/37.

It is also necessary to promote solidarity projects and cultural initiatives. Strengthening the network of solidarity municipalities and promoting the twinning between European countries and the refugee camps in Tindouf is also essential. We encourage civil missions to both the occupied territory and the refugee camps. Furthermore, initiatives like the "*March for Freedom*", organized by Claude Mangin-Asfari, a symbolic march that will cross France and Spain to raise public awareness of the Sahrawi cause and demand the release of Sahrawi political prisoners, are important actions that should be supported. Cultural initiatives, such as exhibitions, festivals, and exchange projects, are key tools for raising awareness about the conflict and involving citizens directly.

We also discussed the importance of the recent European Court of Justice ruling (October 4, 2024), which annulled the trade agreements between the European Union and Morocco concerning Western Sahara. However, this legal victory must be accompanied by concrete actions. It is necessary to establish a list of companies operating illegally in the occupied territory and to promote campaigns of pressure and boycotts. The boycott of products from the occupied territories is growing, with several European cities taking significant actions like banning the import of goods produced by Israel settlements in the Palestinian territories.

It is also essential to collaborate with the European Parliament to pressure for an end to the illegal exploitation of Sahrawi natural resources, ensuring that the European Commission and the Council of EU will respect the decisions of the European Court of Justice. Finally, direct sanctions against Morocco must be demanded for its illegal exploitation of Western Sahara's resources.

In addition, during our discussions, several interventions highlighted the need to organize a campaign to denounce that Morocco will be the organizer of the Football World Cup 2030 in collaboration with Spain and Portugal. Our aim is to put FIFA in a difficult position.

Furthermore, we emphasized the need to connect the Sahrawi issue with other important themes, such as the race for energy in the Sahel regions.

Conclusion

The issue of Western Sahara is one of justice and decolonization. International silence and the complicity of certain countries, such as France and Spain, cannot be tolerated. We must firmly support the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination and mobilize all available means to raise public awareness, counter Moroccan propaganda, and ensure real change. The Sahrawi people are counting on us: we cannot let them alone.