

Situation in Western Sahara

European Parliament resolution of 25 November 2010 on the situation in Western Sahara

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council concerning Western Sahara,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 1920 (2010), which extended the existing mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO),
- having regard to the UN Secretary General's latest reports to the Security Council on the situation concerning Western Sahara of 14 April 2008, 13 April 2009 and 6 April 2010,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by Morocco on 3 May 1979,
- having regard to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an association between the European Union and the Member States of the one part, and the Kingdom of Morocco, of the other part, especially Article 2 of that agreement,
- having regard to the EU statement of 7 December 2009 concerning the 8th Session of the EU-Morocco Association Council and the joint statement issued at the first EU-Morocco Summit of 7 March 2010,
- having regard in particular to the conclusions drawn from the visits by Parliament's ad hoc delegation for Western Sahara in September 2006 and January 2009 which called for the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to be expanded, subject to the agreement of all parties concerned, so as to assign to it competence to monitor respect for human rights in Western Sahara, and which called on the Commission, also or if appropriate, by means of its Delegation in Rabat, to monitor the human rights situation in Western Sahara and regularly send missions there,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on Western Sahara, in particular that of 27 October 2005¹,
- having regard to the statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on Western Sahara of 10 November 2010,
- having regard to statements by the Council and Commission of 24 November 2010 on the situation in Western Sahara,
- having regard to Rule 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas several thousand Sahrawi left their cities and pitched tents in the outskirts of El

¹ OJ C 272 E, 9.11.2006, p. 582.

Aaiun, setting up the Gdaim Izyk camp in peaceful protest at their social, political and economic situation and living conditions,

- B. whereas after several weeks they numbered some 15 000 persons, according to United Nations observers, and whereas dialogue was established with the authorities,
- C. whereas on Sunday, 24 October 2010, Nayem El-Garhi, a Sahrawi teenager aged 14, was killed and five others were injured by Moroccan military forces while they were trying to reach the camp in the outskirts of El Aaiun,
- D. whereas on 8 November 2010 a still unknown number of people, including police officers and security officials, were killed during Moroccan security forces' action with the aim of dismantling the protest camp of Gdaim Izyk; whereas there have also been reports of a significant number of wounded civilians as security forces used teargas and batons to clear the camp,
- E. whereas these incidents occurred on the same day on which the third cycle of informal talks on the status of Western Sahara opened in New York, with the participation of Morocco, the Polisario Front and the observer countries, Algeria and Mauritania,
- F. whereas journalists, EU national and regional parliamentarians and Members of the European Parliament were prevented from entering El Aaiun and Gdaim Izyk camp, while some were even expelled from El Aaiun,
- G. having regard to the violent death of the Spanish citizen Babi Hamday Buyema in circumstances which have not yet been established,
- H. whereas after more than 30 years the decolonisation process of Western Sahara remains unfinished,
- I. whereas the EU remains concerned about the conflict in Western Sahara and its regional consequences and implications, including the human rights situation in Western Sahara, and fully supports the efforts by the Secretary General of the United Nations and his Personal Envoy to find a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution which will allow the self-determination of the people of the Western Sahara as provided for in the resolutions of the United Nations,
- J. whereas several reports have shown that natural resources of Western Sahara are being exploited without any benefit to the local population,
 - 1. Expresses its greatest concern about the significant deterioration of the situation in Western Sahara and strongly condemns the violent incidents which occurred in Gdaim Izyk camp while it was being dismantled and in the town of Laâyoune;
 - 2. Calls on all parties to remain calm and refrain from any further violence;
 - 3. Deplores the loss of human life and expresses its solidarity with the families of the dead, the injured and the disappeared;
 - 4. Notes the setting-up by the Moroccan Parliament of a committee of inquiry to investigate the course of events which led to the intervention by the Moroccan authorities, but considers that the United Nations would be the most appropriate body to conduct an

independent international inquiry in order to clarify the events, the deaths and the disappearances;

5. Regrets the attacks on the freedom of press and information that many European journalists have suffered and demands that the Kingdom of Morocco permit free access to, and free movement in, Western Sahara for the press, independent observers and humanitarian organisations; deplores the ban imposed by the Moroccan authorities on entry to Western Sahara for parliamentarians, journalists, the media and independent observers;
6. Insists on the necessity to call on UN bodies to propose the setting-up of a human rights monitoring mechanism in Western Sahara;
7. Welcomes the resumption of informal meetings between Morocco and the Polisario Front under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary General's Personal Envoy, even under such tense circumstances, and calls on the regional actors to play a constructive role;
8. Recalls its support for the resumption of the informal talks between the parties to the conflict with a view to achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions;
9. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the necessary humanitarian aid with increased funding be allocated to Sahrawi refugees, estimated to number between 90 000 and 165 000, living in the region of Tindouf in order to help them to meet their basic needs for food, water, housing and medical care and to improve their living conditions;
10. Expresses its concern about the detention and allegations of harassment of Sahrawi human rights defenders in the Western Saharan territory; calls for human rights defenders held in prisons in the territory or in Morocco to be treated in accordance with international standards and to be tried swiftly and justly;
11. Calls on the EU to demand that the Kingdom of Morocco abide by international law regarding the exploitation of the natural resources of Western Sahara;
12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the UN Secretary General, the Secretary-General of the African Union, the EP Delegation for Relations with the Maghreb Countries, the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean, the Parliament and Government of Morocco, the Polisario Front, and the Parliaments and Governments of Algeria and Mauritania.