

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0198/03
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to the Council

Subject: Western Sahara - Visit of European Parliament Ad Hoc Delegation - Human Rights

The European Parliament Ad Hoc Delegation for the Western Sahara visited Laayoune, the capital of this non-self-governing territory, on 12 March 2002. A meeting with members of the civil society, including Saharawi human rights activists, was held in Laayoune Parador Hotel.

The meeting took place at the request of the European Delegation, which raised the question of the safety of the civil society members. The Delegation chair, Catherine Lalumiere MEP, promised to give every guarantee that the participants in the meeting would not undergo intimidation by the Moroccan authorities following this meeting. After their meeting with the MEPs, the president and a large number of members of the local human rights NGO 'Forum for Truth and Justice: Sahara Section' who participated in the meeting were prosecuted by the occupying Moroccan authorities. The Saharawi participants were the president of the NGO, Mr Moutik Lahoussine, Mr Eddymaoui Abdessalem, Mr Ennassiri Ahmed, Mr Elmoussaoui Edkhil and Mr Mohamed Elmoutaouikil.

Mr Moutik Lahoussine was fired from his job (in the company Sepomer Sahara SARL) due to his meeting with the European Parliament Ad Hoc Delegation. The other members of the Saharawi delegation were detained on several occasions and prosecuted for political reasons.

Several members of the Sahara section of the Truth and Justice Forum and Saharawi human rights militants have currently been targeted by intimidation measures.

What is the Council doing against these violations of human rights?

As the Kingdom of Morocco is the occupying power in Western Sahara, what kind of action at diplomatic level is the Council taking in this respect to improve the situation of the above-mentioned persons who met the Ad Hoc Delegation?

What kind of measures can the Council provide concerning the next European Parliament missions to this non-self-governing territory?