

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2480/08

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to the Council

Subject: Human rights situation in Western Sahara

The direct negotiations between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Polisario Front have still to result in tangible progress with a view to achieving 'a just, lasting ... political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara' (United Nations Security Council Resolution 1754), in order to bring an end to Western Sahara's colonial problem. The reason for this is the obstructionist policy being pursued by Morocco, which is seeking to impose, through its proposal of autonomy, a unilateral solution that would deny the Sahrawi people their universal right to self-determination recognised in international resolutions. In his report S/2007/619, published in October 2007, the UN Secretary-General reiterated the international community's concerns over the situation concerning Western Sahara. Nevertheless, the Moroccan authorities are still pursuing their policy of oppression and repression against the Sahrawi community. According to the annual report for 2006 of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the human rights situation in Western Sahara is of great concern, and in its 'World Report 2008', Human Rights Watch, in corroborating the UN finding of systematic violation of Sahrawi human rights, talks of 'excessive and extreme use of force' and 'unfair trials', harassment, the stifling of freedom of movement and freedom of expression, and manifold arrests.

How can the European Union tolerate a situation so serious and prejudicial to peace and cooperation? Why has the Council not yet protested to or questioned the Moroccan authorities, in private or in public, asking them to end their campaign of repression and policy of obstructing the peace process in Western Sahara? Why has it not called for the immediate release of Sahrawi political prisoners? Why has it not demanded that Morocco lift the ban on an ad hoc delegation of the European Parliament visiting those areas of Western Sahara occupied by Morocco? Does Morocco's repressive policy in Western Sahara not violate the terms of the EU-Morocco Association Agreement, which stipulates respect for human rights and democratic principles? What is preventing the Council from aligning itself with the UN and effectively supporting its efforts to implement its resolutions on Western Sahara and ensure that the direct negotiations between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Polisario Front lead to a peaceful solution which guarantees self-determination for the people of Western Sahara?