



تجمع المدافعين الصحراويين عن حقوق الإنسان
COLLECTIF DES DEFENSEURS SAHRAOUI DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
COLECTIVO DE DEFENSORES SAHRAUIS DE LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS
THE SAHRAWI HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS COLLECTIVE

Statement by the Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders (CODESA) on the continuation of its organisation and activism



Those up to date on the establishment and development of the Saharawi human rights movement in the occupied Western Sahara are aware of the history and trajectory of the Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders' Struggle (CODESA) group.

It began operating as an independent Saharawi human rights organisation in 2002 in the form of "the collective of Saharawi human rights defenders in Western Sahara" and was built on the wealth of experience of Sahrawi activists from within the Sahara branch of the Forum for Truth and Equity (founded in Al-Aaiun in 2000). The movement was a rich expression of ideas accumulated during the struggle, and became a vital link for Sahrawi activists during more than two decades of constructive and committed work. This was a local and universal victory for humanity and human rights.

The group of activists share an intellectual vision that derives from human rights principles and they possess the analytical and scientific tools to develop a strategy for this organization; all while taking into account the fundamental changes in the international legal and human rights system in relation with the legal status of the occupied Western Sahara.

The Saharawi activists and others around the world hold the strong conviction that it is necessary to apply international humanitarian law as a reference when dealing with the legal status of occupied Western Sahara, and should be applied to the legal responsibilities of the international community and the Moroccan authorities, who have had the Sahrawi people under occupation (UN Security Council Resolution No. 380 issued on November 06, 1975, General Assembly Resolution No. 37/34 issued on November 21, 1979 and General Assembly Resolution 19/35 issued on November 11, 1980).



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A series of consultations that began in 2018 highlighted the need to prepare an organisational reform. In keeping with a vision of openness, and to pave the way for contributions from women, the young, and other activist factions, a preparatory committee (tasked to prepare the statute and the NGO's regulation documents) was created in January 2019, in full knowledge that an initial meeting was banned in 2007 by the Moroccan occupation.

On this basis, the members of CODESA:

1- Affirm that CODESA is an independent, democratic Sahrawi human rights organization with a progressive vision. It is not private property nor a matter of personal preferences, but rather a collective and common historical legacy of our struggle that embodies the sacrifices of martyrs, victims of forced disappearance and political arbitrary detention, as well as victims of torture and systematic repression against Sahrawi civilians.

2- Stress that the Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders cannot be arbitrarily reduced to the just an executive office, which was a temporary organizational mechanism dictated by exceptional circumstances, and the result of the ban of the first constituent assembly conference by the Moroccan occupation. The first congress was meant to be held in occupied city of Al-Aaiun in 2007, with the participation of 141 congress participants who are now members of the organisation.

3- Emphasize the organizational and active continuation of the Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders in its work committed to defend human rights and the people's causes, foremost of which is the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination. Meanwhile, leaving the organisation remains a personal decision for all members, but it cannot lead to the denial of the other members' right to continue working within the framework of the organisation.

4- Renew their support for the work of the Preparatory Committee in its preparation for the holding of the first constituent assembly conference and praise the involvement and contribution



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of all its members and activists in this new organizational dynamic.

5- Vow to continue the work of late members of the CODESA such as:

- The late Saharawi HR defender, Fdaili Mouloud Errami Gaoudi, who was the secretary general's deputy of the CODESA
- The martyr who died in political detention in Western Sahara, Hasanna El-Wali who was a congress participant and a member of the CODESA
- The Saharawi political prisoner Yahya Mohamed El Hafed, who has been sentenced to 15 years in prison and was a congress participant and member of the CODESA. The organisation has led an international campaign for his release since 2009.
- The Saharawi political prisoner Cheikh El Kouri Banga who has been sentenced to 30 years as one of the Gdeim Izik detainees. He was a congress participant and remains a member of the CODESA.

6- Express their willingness to work for the success of any coordinated and uniting efforts with all serious Sahrawi human rights groups, to address the crimes against humanity that have been committed by the Moroccan occupation against Sahrawi civilians.

The Collective of Sahrawi human rights defenders

CODESA

September 04, 2020

Occupied Al-Aaiun, Western Sahara