

19 November 2009

Arrest of Aminatou Haidar in Laayoune

Various media sources, including El País, have reported that Aminatou Haidar, the pacifist Sahrawi human rights activist with the highest number of international awards, was arrested and questioned on 13 November 2009 on her arrival in Laayoune from Las Palmas. Two Spanish reporters, Pedro Barbadillo and Pedro Guillén, were also arrested and questioned, but later released. According to Morocco's official version of the events, Ms Haidar refused to complete the airport arrival form correctly, since she wrote Western Sahara instead of Morocco in the section for nationality. It should be remembered that Western Sahara is the name recognised by the UN and that the status of this territory must be decided by the Sahrawi people themselves through self-determination. Ms Haidar was finally expelled from Western Sahara by Morocco on 14 November 2009, having been held for 24 hours at the airport in Laayoune, the Sahrawi capital. Her Moroccan passport was taken from her and she was sent, against her will, back to Spain, to Lanzarote in fact, where she still is now. The Spanish authorities would also seem to have been negligent in handling her case since – as she has valid residency papers – they allowed her to enter the country without a passport, but her lack of a passport is one of the reasons being used to prevent her return to Laayoune. Her lawyer described the humanitarian care shown to Ms Haidar as degrading, since once the media had left, she was moved out of the airport, leaving her at the mercy of the elements at night.

Is the Council aware of these events? What is its view, bearing in mind the advanced status of relations between the EU and Morocco? Given that EU citizens were also involved, has the Council taken any steps to defend their rights, or does it intend taking any such steps? Furthermore, in view of the forthcoming negotiations between the EU and Morocco on the 2010 fisheries agreements, amongst other matters, is the Council intending to act in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions, by respecting the rights of the Sahrawi people, particularly as regards their sovereignty over their territory and waters? Finally, given that Spain takes over the Presidency of the EU on 1 January 2010 and that the roots of the current situation lie in the fact that Western Sahara was a Spanish colony until 1975, is the Council planning to make finding a just and lasting solution to the conflict, one that respects the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination, one of its priorities for the first half of 2010, and to act accordingly?

Answer:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2009-5975&language=EN>

www.anagomes.eu