

Interrupting the Siege: US-based activists report on their extended visit to the Khaya Family Home and Community, 2022

by the *Just Visit Western Sahara Project*

JUST Visit Western Sahara (JVWS) is a network of groups and individuals committed to peace and justice for the Saharawi people, protection of their human rights, respect for international law, and encouraging Americans and international travelers to witness the beauty and appeal of Western Sahara and to see the reality of the Moroccan occupation for themselves. This is a draft report and will be updated as additional materials are compiled.

Executive Summary

From March to June 2022, US based-activists visited occupied Western Sahara and snuck into the Khaya family home to interrupt a 480 day siege. This report documents, with photographs, the remarkable experience of these volunteers and the Khaya family. The report provides some context for the intervention which is the direct result of Moroccan invasion, occupation and annexation of the territories and the subsequent resistance on the part of the Khaya sisters and other Saharawis.

The report provides a chronology of the intervention including the dramatic moments after they entered the besieged home and the local community exploded with a spontaneous celebration. The report then documents the 82 days in which the home is repaired, electricity and water permanently restored and modest medical care is provided. Human rights observations and testimony is then gathered and some of it graphically portrayed in this report. **(Content warning: images and descriptions of torture and abuse).**

Although direct attacks on the Khaya house temporarily stop, the Moroccan forces gradually resume attacks on community members who visited the home. The Khaya sisters continue to livestream their protests everyday on the rooftop with visitors. US based volunteers provide round-the-clock watch and observe a midnight attack on the house with a large truck which attempts to destroy the home and kill the inhabitants. One volunteer, Ruth, goes on a hunger

strike to draw attention to the appalling treatment of the Khaya family and calls for an end to the siege, freedom of movement for the Khaya family, and an international human rights investigation.

The report concludes with the expulsion of a 2nd team of invited volunteers by Moroccan forces and the subsequent accompaniment of Sultana Khaya to Spain by the remaining US based volunteers to obtain medical treatment.

Please distribute the report widely, and support the rights of the Khaya sisters and other Sahrawis to struggle for their right to self-determination and an end to the Moroccan occupation.

Trigger Warning: This report includes graphic photos of injuries sustained by the Khaya family and supporters as well as reports of rape and sexual assault.

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KHAYA FAMILY BACKGROUND

Western Sahara, a non-self-governing territory as recognized by the United Nations, has been occupied by Morocco since 1975. A 1991 ceasefire agreement included the right of Western Saharans to hold a referendum; however, a referendum was never held. On November 13, 2020, Morocco broke the ceasefire, when the Moroccan army entered the demilitarized town of Guerguerat.

Sultana Khaya, a Human Rights Defender in Boujdour, Western Sahara, reached out to U.S. based organizations at the end of 2021 to ask for international observers to come to her home to witness and provide unarmed civilian protection. This was due to a siege on her family home by the Moroccan Occupation Forces, which began November 19th, 2020. Since that date, Moroccan Occupation Forces have been based in her town, with a post outside her home, limiting freedom of travel.

Over the course of the next 482-days, the Khaya sisters were forcibly confined to their home and the family has faced many forms of abuse, including home invasions, sexual violence and injections of unknown substances. The Khaya sisters have been raped by Moroccan security forces in front of their 84-year-old mother. Furthermore, their water has been poisoned, furniture and property destroyed, and electricity cut-off.

FIELD VOLUNTEERS

Four Field Volunteers (FVs) were selected to participate in this delegation with a focus on skills and experience related to: Arabic language and Middle Eastern customs, commitment to nonviolence, medical assistance, communication, technology, and delegation participation. It was also important for the team members to be U.S. based as attempted visits to the Khaya family home with delegation members from other countries have been barred from entry by Moroccan Occupation Forces.

On March 16th, 2022, four U.S. based JVWS field volunteers were able to enter the home: Merwyn Demello, Adrienne Kinne, Ruth McDonough, and Tim Pluta. Two field volunteers returned to the United States on March 24th, and two remained in the home to provide unarmed civilian protection. They are present in Boujdour, Western Sahara, at the home of Sultana Khaya as of the drafting of this report (May 19, 2022).*

* UPDATE: The remaining field volunteers exited Western Sahara on June 1, 2022 together with Sultana Khaya who likewise departed to receive necessary medical treatments.

UNARMED CIVILIAN PROTECTION

Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) is the practice of unarmed civilians deploying to areas experiencing violent conflict, with a goal to interrupt the cycle of violence. There are many UCP models, and all have commitment to three practices: 1) nonviolence, 2) the continuum of nonpartisanship, and 3) creating space for local peace and justice efforts to organize.

PARTNERS

Nonviolence International

Vision - Nonviolence International seeks a world of justice, peace, and environmental sanity where the worth and dignity of all people is fully realized and conflicts are resolved without resorting to violence.

Mission - Nonviolence International advocates for active nonviolence and supports creative constructive nonviolent campaigns worldwide. We are a backbone organization of the nonviolent movement providing fiscal sponsorship to partners all over the globe. We tell the transformative stories of dynamic emerging nonviolent movements that give us hope in difficult times and are reshaping what we view as possible. By telling these inspirational stories and supporting these movements we help to create a peaceful and just future.

Organizational Information - Nonviolence International (NVI) was founded by Palestinian activist Mubarak Awad in 1989. NVI is a 501(c)(3) organization registered in Washington, DC, USA. NVI is also a non-governmental organization in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Solidarity 2020 and Beyond

Solidarity 2020 and Beyond is a global network and initiative that is truly activist-driven and movement-centered, driven by bottom-up people power, local wisdom and needs.

Solidarity 2020 and Beyond was envisioned and developed by a team of three Rotary Peace Fellows, returning from our peace building program in Bangkok, Thailand, as COVID -19 was spreading globally. Each of us had different, but complementary interests and areas of expertise—support and training for strategic nonviolent resistance, movement building and

human rights; inter-religious dialogue and peacebuilding and transitional justice; and media, journalism and storytelling through documentaries for justice and change. We had in common a commitment and life-long dedication to engaging with grassroots communities across the world working for dignity, human rights, and peace with justice.

Human Rights Action Center

The Human Rights Action Center (HRAC) is a voice for the voiceless and an advocate for human rights for all of the world. HRAC partners with leaders in the creative arts world (music, theater, film, written word) to focus awareness on areas of critical importance in the struggle for human rights and lend a hand to some of the less-publicized cases of human rights abuse and neglect.

HRAC was founded by Jack Healey, human rights activist and pioneer. An effective and innovative leader in the human rights movement for 60 years, Jack helped move the topic of human rights from closed-door diplomatic negotiations to widespread awareness, public debate, and direct citizen action. Colleagues credit him with making human rights a major focus of governments, advocacy organizations, and individuals around the world.

Karama Sahara

Karama Sahara is a non-governmental organization based in the Washington DC area. Members and honorary members are human rights activists, scholars, and civil society advocates. Karama Sahara's primary objective is bridging the gap between the Saharawi civil society and the American public.

TERMINOLOGY

Western Sahara: A non-self-governing territory as recognized by the United Nations

Saharawi: An indigenous person in Western Sahara

Moroccan Occupation Forces: Moroccan originating security forces from a host of agencies that are actively occupying Western Sahara; when able to clearly identify a specific agency, we will name that agency

Moroccan Settler: A person of Moroccan citizenship who has relocated his or her place of residence to Western Sahara

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The four field volunteers, assisted by Human Rights Action Center, Nonviolence International, Solidarity 2020 and Beyond, and local actors entered the Khaya Family home on March 16, 2022, in order to call for:

- An end to a siege on the Khaya family home,
- A stop to the rapes and physical violence,
- An international investigation to be commenced immediately in regards to the atrocities the Khaya sisters have suffered for their human rights defense.

This document will give a chronological summary of the observations and experiences of the field volunteers, to include:

- Physical injuries sustained by Sultana Khaya and her family,
- Damage to the home,
- Observations related to chemical poisoning of home and well water,
- Medical reports to include continued needs,
- Surveillance of the home by Moroccan Occupation Forces,
- Physical attacks by Moroccan Occupation Forces that have targeted family and supporters of Sultana Khaya, with documentation,
- Direct observation of threats and attacks by Moroccan Occupation Forces of Sultana Khaya, her family, and her supporters,
- Testimonials offered to the field volunteers by family and supporters of Sultana Khaya of physical and sexual assaults they have suffered.

Based on the experience and observations of the field volunteers in the home of Sultana Khaya, since March 16th, 2022, which corroborate additional evidence and testimonials included in this report, the field volunteers continue to call for:

- A permanent end to the siege of the Khaya family home,
- A permanent end to the rapes and physical and sexual assaults,
- An international investigation team to be sent to the Khaya family home as soon as possible.

Due to increased threats and violence by Moroccan Occupation Forces over the course of the past weeks, there is deep concern among the field volunteers that the Khaya family and supporters will be gravely injured and possibly even killed if the field volunteers are unable to remain in her home or are forcibly removed.

UPDATE: All Field Volunteers have departed Western Sahara. Sultana Khaya is currently out of the country receiving necessary medical treatments and continuing to speak out about the Saharawi cause. The situation in Boujdour has remained the same per reports from Saharawis.

FIELD VOLUNTEERS' OBSERVATIONS & EXPERIENCES

This is a chronological summary of the experiences and observations of field volunteers (FVs) present in the Khaya Family home. Two FVs exited the home on March 24th, 2022, and two FVs are present as of the writing of this report.

At the end of this report is an appendix of reports gathered by the FV medic.

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March 16th, 2022:

FVs entered the family home of Sultana Khaya in the morning; this was the first successful attempt to get outside observers into the home.



From left to right: Ruth McDonough, FV; Mitou Khaya; Adrienne Kinne, FV; Sultana Khaya, Human Rights Defender; Elouraara Khaya.

FVs assess damage to the Khaya family home by Moroccan Occupation Forces and find the following: visual evidence of damage to windows and doors, walls, and plumbing; visual evidence of seizure of possessions, furniture, and wall utilities; visual evidence of chemical stains dripping from windows. FV could smell noxious fumes emanating from walls and the well; unsure of the chemical, but it smelled something like acetone.



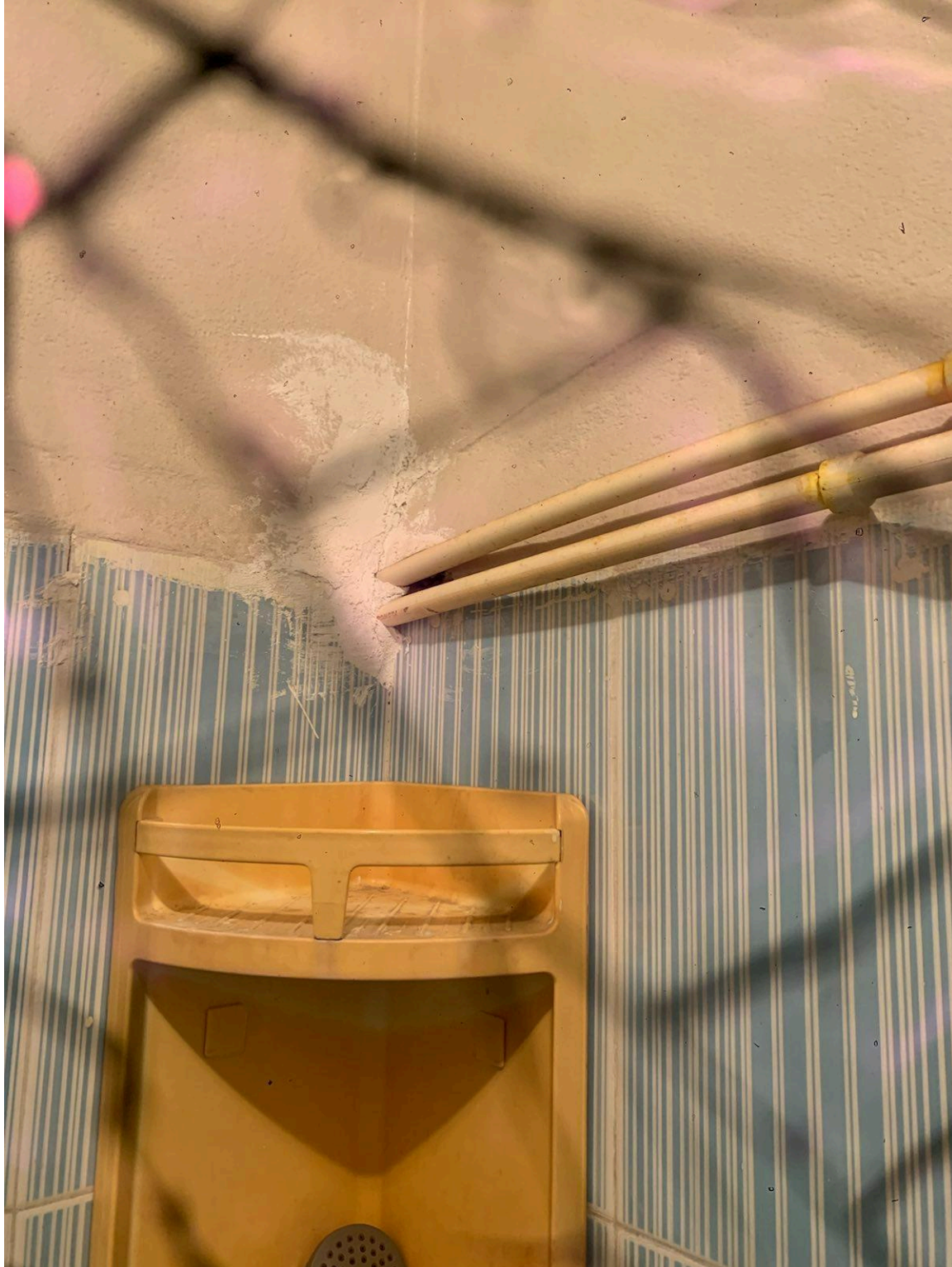
Damage to front windows of the Khaya Family Home in occupied Boujdour, Western Sahara.



Damage to front windows of the Khaya Family Home in occupied Boujdour, Western Sahara.



Bathroom cabinet ripped off of the wall.



Repair work to plumbing after lines were cut by Moroccan Occupation Forces.



Door broken in during one of many brutal raids on the house by Moroccan Occupation Forces.



Lighting fixtures ripped out of the ceiling, seven fixtures were replaced over the course of the FV stay in the Khaya family home, Boujdour, Western Sahara.



Rooms stripped of rugs, cushions, and all other furniture; this was formerly the main living room and was full of furniture. Now it is empty with unknown substances staining the walls and floor.



Stains on walls under windows, where chemicals were poured into the home.



This was a fully furnished bedroom; all furniture was seized/destroyed by Moroccan Occupation Forces during one of the many raids on the home.



There was a TV on this wall; it was ripped off the wall and taken away by Moroccan Occupation Forces.



Door to the roof was welded shut from the outside by Moroccan Occupation Forces in an attempt to prevent Sultana Khaya from going to the roof to protest; she had to make a hole in the wall to gain access to the roof.



Cabinet doors were ripped off by Moroccan Occupation Forces during one of their raids on the home.



Extensive damage to plumbing in bathrooms; repairs made with what supplies the Khaya family was able to access.



Extensive damage to plumbing in bathrooms; repairs made with what supplies the Khaya family was able to access.



Extensive damage to plumbing in bathrooms; repairs made with what supplies the Khaya Family was able to access.



Extensive damage to plumbing in bathrooms; repairs made with what supplies the Khaya Family was able to access.

On March 16, approximately three hours after FV arrived, community members came into the home reporting that the Moroccan Occupation Force guards had left their posts, the first time they had done so in 482 days. Over the rest of the day, family members and community members gathered at the home.



Community gathers in Khaya family home for the first time in 482-days.



Women accompany Sultana Khaya to the rooftop for daily protests which she started during the siege on her home.

March 17th, 2022:

The FV Medic focuses on an initial medical evaluation and follow-up of the Khaya sisters and their 83-year old mother, given the lack of treatment for diabetes among other conditions over the course of the 482-day siege on their home (see appendix for medical reports).

Reports from the community suggest that Moroccan security forces widened their perimeter to remain largely out of the view of the Khaya family home, but remained in Boujdour.

FV received reports that Moroccan Occupation Forces abducted 14-year old Lilah Mohammed Habibi and his friend as they walked home after visiting nonviolent activist Sultana Khaya in Boujdour, Western Sahara. They forced the boys into their car and took them to the police

station. Lilah was interrogated, yelled at, and violently struck on his arms and hands. He was ordered never to go to the Khaya house again. Later that day, both boys were released.

FVs make the decision to put in place a rotation of nightwatch shifts with the objective of raising an alert in the event of a home invasion by Moroccan Occupation Forces.

March 18th, 2022:

FVs received reports from family and friends of Sultana Khaya that they were prevented from entering Boujdour at one of the dozen Moroccan Occupation Forces checkpoints along the main road. Other successful visitors shared that they were only able to get to Boujdour after many failed attempts, having also been turned away at checkpoints.

FVs received reports from Saharawis in Boujdour regarding a continued Moroccan Occupation Force presence in the area around the Khaya family home but out of view of its occupants.

FVs on night watch observe plain clothed Moroccan Occupation Forces posting at corners and watching the home overnight.

March 19th, 2022:

Members of the community see the FV medic for medical evaluations and treatment recommendations.

Members of the community volunteer to meet with a FV to give video testimonials of the abuses they have endured at the hands of Moroccan Occupation Forces.

FV who has been trained in medical and mental health sciences identify that the Khaya family and occupied Boujdour community is in need of trusted providers who can provide short-term and long-term care. **NOTE:** Most medical providers in Western Sahara come from Morocco, and are not trusted by Western Saharans as reported by the Sahrawi community.

March 20th, 2022:

FVs continued to provide basic medical care and recommendations, collect video testimonials, meet with community members, and assess needs.

FVs on night watch continued to witness unusual night activity around the home of Sultana Khaya, with cars posted on corners and making repeated passes of the home, and men posted on corners watching the home.

March 21st, 2022:

Democracy Now! Interview with Sultana Khaya and FV Adrienne Kinne airs: intended to raise awareness about the siege on the Khaya family and the demands to end the siege, stop the rapes, and initiate an international investigation of what has been happening at the Khaya family home.

FVs and Saharawis in the home heard noises in the neighborhood and received reports of Sahrawi women being attacked outside the Khaya family home. Women leaving the home were shoved, stopped, harassed, and their phones were taken. One FV stepped outside to accompany a member of the Saharawi community; the FV witnessed Moroccan Occupation Force members pushing Sahrawi women to the ground.

March 22nd, 2022:

FVs continue to assess physical injuries of the Khaya family members and community members and take video testimonials.

Saharawi women and elders are attacked and prevented from entering the Khaya family home.



Women being pushed in the street by Moroccan Occupation Forces posted in the community; they are not allowed to enter the Khaya family home.

March 23rd, 2022:

FVs continue to provide basic medical care and recommendations, collect video testimonials, meet with community members, and assess needs.

FVs on night watch continue to witness unusual night activity around the home of Sultana Khaya, with cars making repeated passes around the home.

March 24th, 2022:

Two FVs leave the home to begin their return to the United States. They encountered seven checkpoints in the course of two hours traveling on the main road, being maintained by Moroccan Royal Gendarmes (uniformed), Moroccan Police (uniformed), and Moroccan Occupation Forces (plain clothed). Later received word that their driver was detained by Moroccan Occupation Forces for driving them to the Laayoune.

Remaining FVs ensure that their continued presence in the Khaya family home is visible to Moroccan Occupation Forces.

FVs maintain night watch given concerns about increased visible presence of Moroccan Occupation Forces in the vicinity and drivebys of marked Moroccan police cars.

March 30th, 2022:

FV received reports that Lilah, the boy who was detained March 17th for visiting the Khaya family home, was taken back into custody. Moroccan Police refuse to release the 14-year old who is being held in an adult detention center.

April 1st, 2022:

FV received reports that Lilah Mohammed Habibi was released after being in police custody for 2 days where he was beaten. He has returned to his home.

April 6th, 2022:

FV witnessed Moroccan Occupation Forces surrounding the Khaya family home. Women who are able to gain entry continue to join Sultana Khaya on the roof of her home for daily protests.

April 12th, 2022:

FV witnessed Sultana Khaya being assaulted by a Moroccan settler outside her home. The unknown Moroccan settler threatened to kill everyone in the house. As the confrontation escalated, FV intervened by stepping between Sultana and the settler. The settler then ran away.

April 13th, 2022:

Abed Al-Mounim Hamadi, son of prominent human rights defender Hamadi Mohamed-Lamin Nasiri, was beaten by Moroccan police and lost consciousness.



April 15th, 2022:

FVs witnessed the Moroccan Police Chief driving through the neighborhood and note that the streets are empty with no pedestrian or vehicle traffic. FVs received reports that Moroccan Occupation Forces have locked down the neighborhood.

In the evening, prominent women's right and human rights activists, Boulsan Tufa, and her sister visited the Khaya family, despite many barriers to the home

April 16th, 2022:

FV received reports with documentation that six women who joined the Khaya Sisters yesterday, were brutalized today at their homes. Moroccan Occupation Forces tried to break their hands to punish them for holding Sahrawi flags. Some are needing urgent medical attention, with limited options to pursue care.



Moroccan Occupation Forces brutally attack and tortured the women indicated above and were told they were being punished for participating in the nonviolent protest on the Khaya family rooftop the previous day.

The following 11 photos, pages 36-45 document the Moroccan Occupation Forces torture of visitors to the Khaya house on April 16.





















Full Press Release:

BREAKING NEWS: Moroccan Forces Torture Khaya Family Visitors during Holiest Holidays of All Three Abrahamic Faiths

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara – On the morning of, April 16, 2022, and Ramadan 14, 1443, a most holy time of the three Abrahamic religions, Moroccan security forces in Boujdour, Western Sahara, attacked several women and at least one child in the neighborhood around the home of Sultana Khaya. One woman, Zainabou Babi, was arrested this morning, detained and severely beaten, before being released at approximately 4:00 PM local time. Local contacts who have met with Zainabou via video communications share that her legs are severely beaten and bruised and that her hands likewise appear beaten, and have possibly been broken. Medical care is unavailable to Sahrawis in the area, but attempts are underway to transport her to a location where she can be observed.

Early reports from American guests in the Khaya family home suggest that the police are cracking down on community members who participated in a peaceful protest the night before. Other participants of the protest have had their homes surrounded by agents overnight.

Um Almunnein Al-Kharashi was forced back into her home as she attempted to walk to the Khaya family home this morning. Mubarak Alhaafathi and her young son were also pushed back into their home as they attempted to leave and their door is now blocked shut by guards. Fatima Mint Mbaririk Babi was also hit by agents and forced back into her home. Six men attacked Faatima Al-Haafathi, covering her mouth and eyes as they beat her. Luara Khaya was kicked twice in her back by police this morning as she walked around her home to assess the situation.

Nasra Abd Lmoula Babi, a community member and regular visitor to the Khaya home, contacted Sultana Khaya at 1:50 pm Boujdour time to share that she has also been hit by the police multiple times and has been told that she is being punished for coming to the Khaya family home. Men from the community have remained indoors due to the threat of arbitrary detention, violence, and arrest.

This is the latest escalation of force by Moroccan agents in Boujdour following the arrival of four U.S. guests in mid-March which allowed the community the first opportunity to gather peacefully in over 482 days of lockdown. The guests were invited to witness the atrocities that the community has been subjected to for calling for a free Western Sahara. Ruth McDonnough shares that “even from inside the Khaya family home, we can sense the ongoing threat to the family and the Saharawi community more broadly. This situation requires an official international investigation as soon as humanly possible.”

Moroccan agents first put the Khaya house under arbitrary detention in November 2020. They subjected the family to human rights abuses that included home invasions, destroying and removing all furnishings, pouring noxious chemicals on the walls, beatings, sexual violence, and injections of unknown substances. The Khaya sisters have been raped by Moroccan security forces in front of their 84-year-old mother who was bound and forced to watch. Furthermore, their water has been poisoned, furniture and property destroyed, and electricity and water cut-off. On March 16, 2022, international unarmed civilian protectors clandestinely entered the Khaya home, bringing a reprieve of the siege and the rapes.

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April 17th, 2022:

FV received reports with photographs of the brutalization of more activists in the neighborhood by Moroccan Occupation Forces. Those attacked were told that they were being assaulted for standing in solidarity with Sultana Khaya.

April 19th, 2022:

FV witnessed Sultana Khaya install flagpoles on her roof, one for each of the women who can no longer join her as a result of injuries they sustained at the hands of Moroccan Occupation Forces.



April 20th, 2022:

FV received reports of Moroccan Occupation Forces seen attacking Sultana Khaya's nephew, Mohammed Fadel Khayamore in retaliation for his support of Sultana and his presence on the roof assisting her install flagpoles the day prior. FVs received further reports from Mohammed directly that he was able to escape the attackers and is in hiding.

There is concern that Moroccan Occupation Forces might try to abduct Mohammed in the future, as he has been directly supplying the Khaya family home and the FVs. The FVs have not left the home due to the threat of being deported which would leave the Khaya family at grave risk.





Club with nails embedded in the end, used by Moroccan Occupation Forces to beat / torture Saharawis with the intent to inflict as much bodily damage as possible. This one was seized by Mohammad from MOF when defending himself from their attack.

May 5th, 2022:

Field volunteer Ruth McDonough begins hunger strike to demand an end to the rapes and siege, and for an international independent investigation of the abuses of the Khaya sisters. Solidarity fasts held around the world including Edward Horgan in Ireland.



May 10th, 2022:

Morocco sends an unsolicited ambulance to visit the Khaya home. The ambulance was filled with men pretending to be medical workers who had previously attacked and raped the Khaya Sisters. Sultana Khaya turned them away.





Full Press Release

Moroccan Agents Impersonate Medical Personnel

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara, May 11, 2022 — Morocco sent an unsolicited ambulance to the Khaya home in Boujdour, purportedly to provide medical services to the American guest who is on Day 9 of a hunger strike. Ruth McDonough stopped eating in protest of Moroccan Occupation forces human rights abuses. However, both Sultana Khaya and Waara Khaya recognized the occupants of the ambulance to be the very men who carried out the human rights abuses, including rape. They were accompanied by the district commander, Siddik Lalou, who is the agent responsible for pouring toxic substances inside the Khaya home.

The ambulance arrived at the house on the afternoon of May 9th demanding to take McDonough to a hospital. In previous visits they have kicked down the door of the house to violently enter. This time, they knocked and greeted Sultana Khaya as if they had never met her before. Sultana shouted their names and called out to them, “How could a criminal be a healthcare worker?”

McDonough is fasting in support of Sultana Khaya’s list of demands to the Moroccan occupiers:

1. Permanently stop the rapes in the Khaya home.

2. Permanently end the siege of the Khaya home.
3. Allow an independent, non-partisan, international human rights organization to enter the Khaya home in Boujdour to investigate and report what has happened for the public record.

The “medical” visitors did not succeed in entering the house and left.

Sultana Khaya is a Saharawi human rights defender promoting the right of self-determination for the Saharawi people and ending violence against Saharawi women, through nonviolent efforts. She serves as the president of the Saharawi League for the Defense of Human Rights and the Protection of Western Sahara’s Natural Resources, and is a member of the Saharawi Commission against the Moroccan occupation (ISACOM). She was short-listed for the Sakharov Prize and winner of the Esther Garcia Award. As an outspoken activist, she has been targeted by the occupying Moroccan forces, enduring abductions, beatings, rapes and having one eye gouged out.

Just Visit Western Sahara is a network of groups and individuals committed to justice for the Sahawari people, protection of their human rights, respect for international law, and encouraging tourism to reveal the beauty and appeal of travel to Western Sahara.

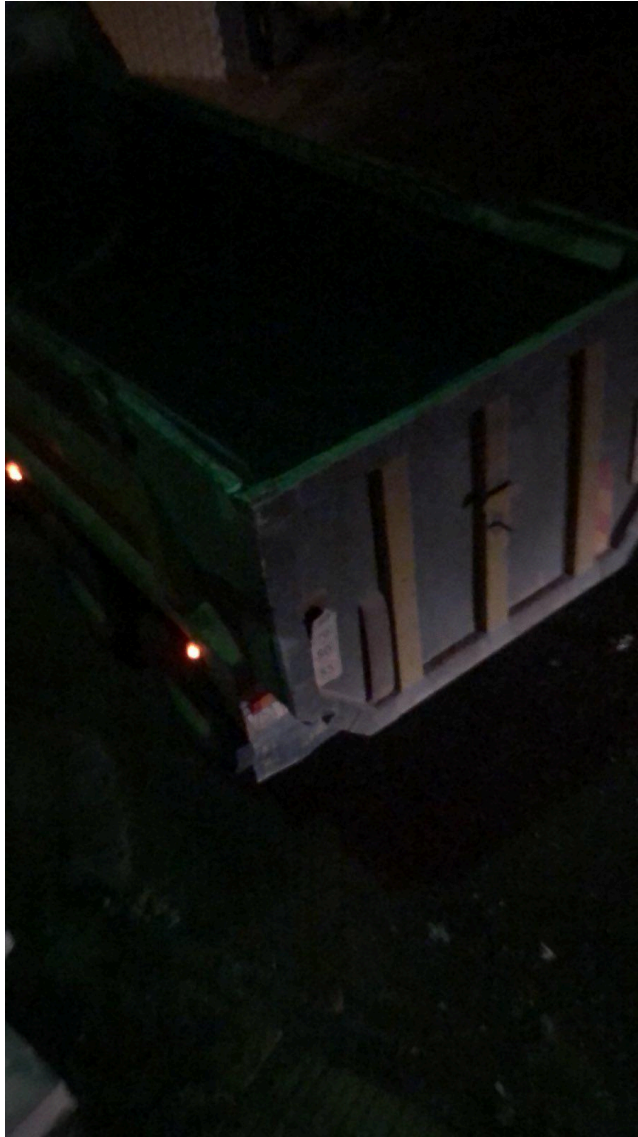
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May 13th, 2022:

Ruth McDonough ends her fast and calls on people around the world to continue fasting for Western Sahara.

May 15th, 2022:

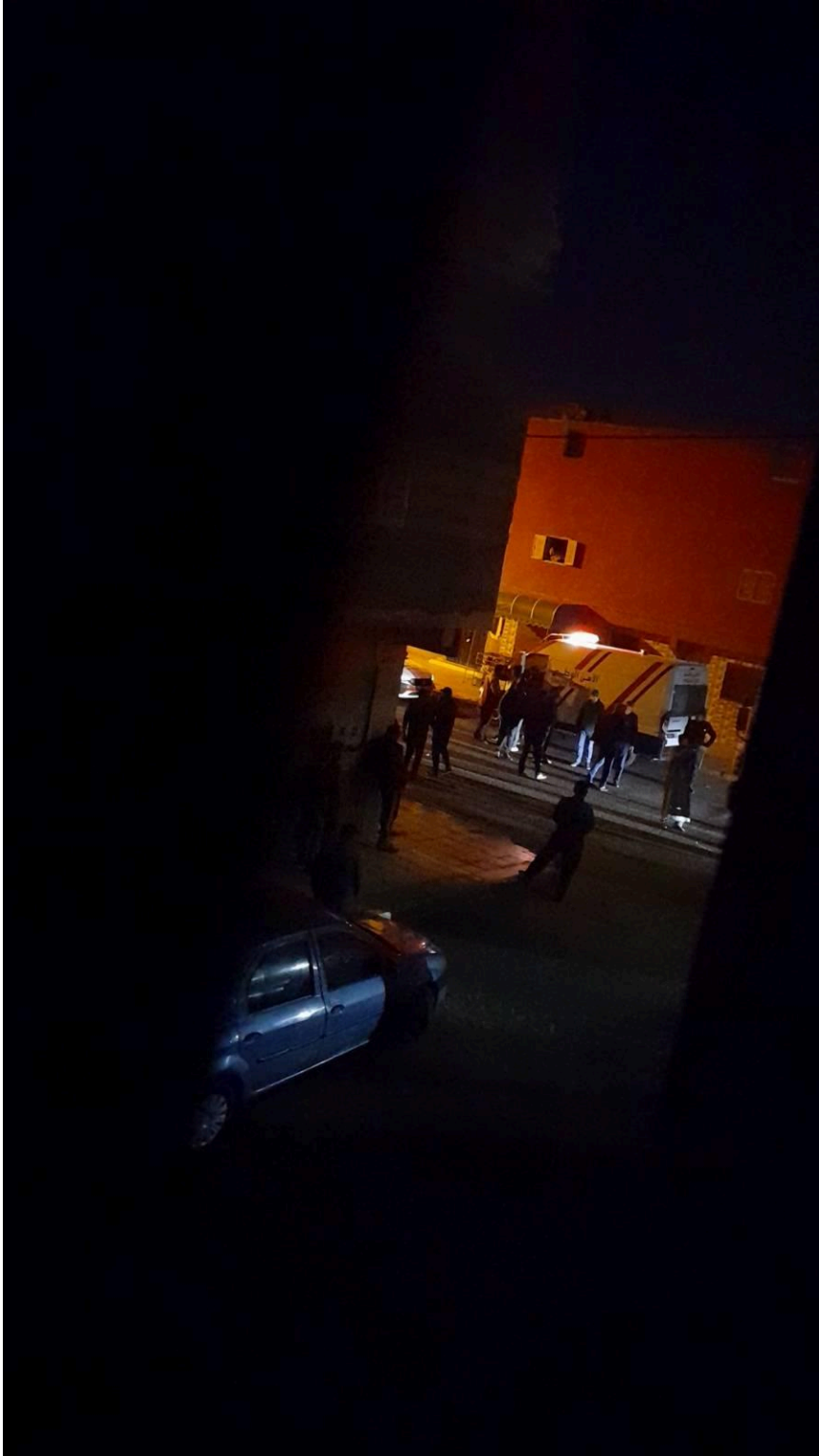
Near midnight, a large and empty dump truck that had been seen circling the neighborhood hours earlier rammed the front of the Khaya family home. This was repeated two more times, until locals intervened to stop the driver. Field Volunteers and US-based team teleconferenced within minutes of the truck slamming into the home. (Following eight photographs.)

















Full Press Release

Large Truck Crashes Into Khaya Home at Midnight

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara, May 15/16, 2022 — At midnight a truck repeatedly crashed into the home of Khaya Sisters. It smashed the house and garage doors 3 times. Local people stopped the truck from smashing into the front door and halted the attack.

Witnesses shared that the truck first attempted to hit the east side of the house but the street was too narrow so it went to the other side. The truck appeared to be empty.

The first Moroccan “police” car on the scene drove by, appearing to ignore the attack. Within minutes, approximately 30 Moroccan agents appeared, some who had previously participated in home invasions and assaults on the Khaya family, including rape.

No investigation took place. No one questioned any witnesses. The driver of the truck is unknown. “Police” escorted the truck away.

Sultana Khaya said, “The whole house shook. For a huge truck to crash three times into the door of my home is an obvious attempt to harm my family and my American guests.”

Dr. Stephen Zunes, professor at University of San Francisco and expert on Western Sahara said, “This seems like a bizarre and despicable attempt to harm or injure the Khaya sisters and their guests.”

The Khaya Sisters are human rights defenders in Western Sahara who advocate against violence towards women and for self-determination of the Saharawi people. They have been the subject of a siege for more than 500 days and in March were visited by American tourists who have been staying in the home.

The Americans are part of a US coalition called Just Visit Western Sahara. It is a network of groups and individuals committed to peace and justice for the Saharawi people, protection of their human rights, respect for international law, and encouraging Americans and international travelers to witness the beauty and appeal of Western Sahara and to see the reality of the Moroccan occupation for themselves.

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Field Volunteer Statement Regarding Observations and Experiences in Laayoune, Western Sahara and Casablanca, Morocco :: May 22, 2022 through May 26, 2022



On May 22, 2022 three U.S. Passport holding field volunteers arrived in Casablanca, Morocco. The field volunteers included Wynd Kaufmyn, Adrienne Kinne, and Lacksana Peters. The trip was organized by JUST Visit Western Sahara (JVWS), a network of groups and individuals committed to peace and justice for Saharawi people, protection of their human rights, respect for international law, and encouraging Americans and international travelers to witness the beauty and appeal of Western Sahara and to see the reality of the Moroccan occupation for themselves.

The purpose of the trip was four-fold: 1) meet with U.S. Embassy officials ostensibly responsible for human rights monitoring in Morocco and Western Sahara; 2) deliver much needed medical supplies to the community and field volunteers; 3) relieve field volunteers who had previously arrived in Boujdour, Western Sahara on March 16th, and had been staying at the home of Sultana Khaya, a Sahrawi Human Rights Defender whose home had been, and continued to be under siege, by Moroccan Occupation Forces since November 19th, 2020; and, 4) report on their observations and experiences in occupied Western Sahara.

On May 23, 2022, the three-women delegation traveled to Rabat, Morocco to meet with staff at the U.S. Embassy, for an appointment that had been discussed prior to their arrival. That meeting was not kept by embassy staff, but the delegation did deliver a report on the field volunteers' experiences and observations in the Khaya family home and community that covered the time period from March 16th - May 20th, 2022 (report available). As a result of that

failed meeting, the delegation made the decision to travel to Laayoune early, and coordinated with Saharawi hosts to arrange for transportation from Laayoune to Boujdour as well as an interpreter.

The delegates boarded a Royal Air Maroc flight in Casablanca, Morocco, the afternoon of May 23rd and landed in Laayoune, Western Sahara at approximately 6:30 PM. The delegates had entered Morocco legally and were invited by residents of Western Sahara to come and visit them as well as check on the well-being of the field volunteers in Boujdour and allow their safe return to their homes, while also continuing the field volunteer presence at the Khaya family home as a deterrence against the human rights abuses Sultana Khaya, her sister and her mother had been subjected to since the siege on their home began in November 2020 by Moroccan Occupation Forces.

As the three delegates made their way to passport control in the Laayoune airport, they were separated and for all purposes kidnapped from the other travelers by men who refused to identify themselves or state on whose authority they were acting. The delegates were sequestered in a small room in the building. They repeatedly asked why they were being detained. The initial response was that they were being subjected to a random COVID-19 antigen test - all three of which came back negative (see attached paperwork). When the delegates were still not allowed to leave and continue on their travels, they asked again why they were being detained and on whose authority. They also asked for the names of those detaining them. None of these questions were answered.

Several Moroccan female agents, police, and/or state sponsored actors monitored the three delegates in the small room, coming and going. Two were in uniform, four were in plain clothes. Several men were lurking outside the door and taking pictures of the delegates in the room. When asked who these men were and why they were taking our pictures, one of the men who seemed to be in charge (wearing a baseball cap, jeans and a polo shirt) told them to stop. After being in the room for over an hour, Wynd Kaufmyn got up to address the men outside. She counted 12 of them and asked them each for their names and their positions. None would answer. She also asked them to explain why they were detaining her. They didn't. She went back into the room.

After a while, the man who seemed to be in charge came into the room and shouted at the top of his lungs, "What is your mission?" This was the first time the women were asked what brought them to Western Sahara. They responded that they were human rights defenders and were going to Boujdour to check up on their friends in Sultana's Khaya's house. He shouted, "That is political." Wynd Kaufmyn explained it was not political because they were just there to check on the well being of the inhabitants of the house, not to take a stand one way or the other on any issues.

After a while, agents came into the room and surrounded the delegates, demanding that they gather their things and stand up. Then they physically forced the delegates outside on the tarmac. Wynd Kaufmyn felt the guy in charge pinch her arm in a pain hold and touch her breast. She screamed and told him to get his hands off of her. Adrienne Kinne also felt one of the several individuals pushing her toward the plane pinching her arm hard enough to leave a visible bruise and demanded that the person stop.

Once outside, the delegates saw a plane that was pulling up about 100 yards away. The delegates sat down and started talking to the crowd of agents standing around them. In loud, teacher voices, they explained that they were there to just visit Western Sahara and check on their friends. They read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (to which Morocco is a signatory) which gives human rights defenders legitimacy.

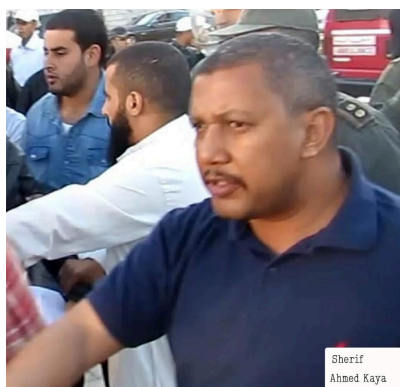
After a while (it was probably about 8:00 pm by this time) the delegates were forced onto the plane (see attached boarding passes). As soon as they entered the plane, they began shouting that they were there against their will and that they were trying to visit their friends in Boujdour. They demanded to see the pilot of the plane. Two refused to sit down. They continued to shout and said they wanted to get off the plane, or at least be told why they were being deported, in writing.

Adrienne Kinne was grabbed from behind and pulled towards a seat. Wynd Kaufmyn grabbed Adrienne's legs to stop them. Both of them were pushed, pulled, and finally forced to sit down. Wynd Kaufmyn's shirt and bra were pulled up to expose her breast to the plane. She had a sports bra on and it took some effort for them to do this. Wynd had been resisting passively until that point but

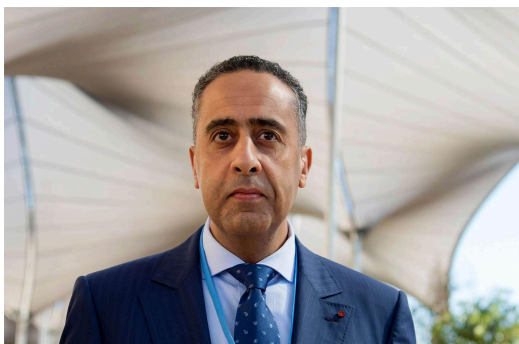
when she was sexually assaulted, she started to flail and managed to pull away from the agents to pull her bra and shirt back down. Adrienne Kinne's arms were visibly bruised from being pulled backwards to her seat.

After finally being forcibly seated, each delegate surrounded by agents, the plane took off and landed in Casablanca at about 10:30 pm. Once in the airport at Casablanca, they were told they were welcome in Morocco, but not Western Sahara. They went back to their hotel. They were followed the rest of their time in Casablanca by some of the same plain clothed Moroccan agents who had forced them on the plane in Laayoune.

Saharawis would later identify two of the unnamed men the women had encountered in Laayoune as known Moroccan agents and oppressors of Saharawis in Western Sahara:



Mohsine Serghini (alias, top photo) and Ahmed Kaya (second photo)



Director General of National Security and Territorial Surveillance, Abdellatif Hammouchi; responsible for our forcible deportation



One of the Moroccan agents who followed the delegation to their hotel in Casablanca; asking hotel staff where the delegates were going.

The delegates met with staff at the U.S. embassy to discuss the current situation in Western Sahara, to include: 1) the previously delivered “ Field Volunteers’ Report on Conditions in Khaya Family Home and Community,” 2) their forcible deportation from Laayoune and presence of Moroccan agents in Casablanca who were monitoring their movements, 3) the activities of the U.S. embassy human rights staff in Western Sahara, and 4) the fate of the medical supplies the delegation had meant to deliver to Boujdour.

The delegates asked if the U.S. embassy staff had traveled to Boujdour, Western Sahara (they had not), and the staff further indicated that they would not be allowed by Morocco to visit Boujdour now or in the future. Lacksana Peters discussed the fate of the medications she had brought with her for the Sahrawis

and field volunteers in Boujdour, to include the possibility of embassy staff ensuring the safe passage of the medication to Boujdour, to which a clear answer was never returned. This was complicated by the reality that Saharawis and the field volunteers would not accept items for ingestion or application to their bodies that were delivered by Moroccans, to include representatives from a Moroccan human rights organization, due to the violent and repressive experiences they have met at the hands of Moroccan Occupation Forces to include previous injections of unknown substances.

Following the meeting on May 24th, the women made plans to return to the United States and departed Morocco on May 26th, 2022.

It was particularly concerning to read that Abdellatif Hammouchi visited the U.S. in June to speak with senior officials regarding security considering his past implications with use of torture, his forcible deportation of human rights defenders and journalists from Western Sahara, and his restriction of freedom of movement in Western Sahara.



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Sultana Khaya & US Guests Leave Western Sahara:
Thousands Give Hero's Welcome in Canary Islands**

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara/Canary Islands, June 1, 2022 — Sultana Khaya, Ruth McDonough and Tim Pluta arrived at the Las Palmas airport to be greeted by thousands of supporters that gathered to honor them. Khaya left her beloved homeland in Western Sahara to obtain medical treatment.



For the last 554 days Khaya and her family had been forcibly confined to their house. Moroccan Occupation Forces periodically invaded, beat, used sexual violence and injected them with unknown substances. They raped Khaya and her sister in front of their 86-year-old mother. Furthermore, their water was poisoned, furniture and property destroyed, and electricity cut-off.

The presence in Khaya's house of US-based volunteers since March 16th stopped the invasions, however; it did not stop the arbitrary detention of the Khaya family, nor the brutal beatings of community members that visited the home. On May, 16, the [Moroccan forces smashed a large truck](#) 3 times into the house in the middle of the night in an apparent unsuccessful attempt to either to harm the residents and/or make the home uninhabitable.

Khaya is a Saharawi human rights defender whose work focuses on promoting the right of independence for the Saharawi people and ending violence against Saharawi women, through nonviolent activism. She serves as the president of the Saharawi League for the Defense of Human Rights and the Protection of Western Sahara's Natural Resources, and is a member of the Saharawi Commission against the Moroccan occupation (ISACOM). She is a nominee for the Sakharov Prize and winner of the Esther Garcia Award.

A. INITIAL MEDICAL REPORTS

1. Sultana Khaya
2. Elouaara Khayya

CONFIDENTIAL - Preliminary History and Physical

March 20, 2022

Sultana Khaya

40 year old, Saharawi female from Western Sahara presents with multiple sites of pain and psychological distress following 483 days of enforced, in-house isolation with her mother and sister that included for all of them reported beatings, break-ins by masked men, cutting off of electricity and water, destruction of property, in-home exposure to toxic chemicals and substances, harassment, humiliation, intimidation by torture and sexual assault, and rape.

BP: 110/88

Pulse: 75

Temp: 36.7

Head exam and palpation reveals multiple areas of swelling on the crown, parietal ridges, occiput, forehead, bilateral temporal areas, and bilateral suborbital arches.

Eye exam reveals ocular prosthesis in R eye post beating and eye-gouging incident in 2007.

Ear, nose, and throat exam was incomplete due to lack of otolaryngoscope

Sultana reports mild decrease in hearing post beatings, mild to moderate decrease in smell post exposure to unknown chemical substances, and throat soreness and dysphonia post strangulation attempt.

Heart and lungs clear

No reported digestive problems

No reported genito-urinary problems

This preliminary report prepared and respectfully submitted by
Tim Pluta MD, PhD

CONFIDENTIAL - Preliminary History and Physical

April 2, 2022

Elouaara Khayya

BP: 128/80 pulse: 80 temp: 36.6

Birth date estimate end of 1973

49 year old Saharawi female presents with “general body pain all over” post multiple violent physical and psychological traumas between 2005 and the present that include beatings with fists and hard blunt objects, kicking, rape, torture, humiliation, purposeful exposure to toxic substances, household break-ins, and 482 days of violently enforced confinement within her home among other physically and psychologically damaging torments. Since March 16, 2022, when a peace team of nonviolent unarmed protectors arrived at her house, Elouaara has not experienced any of the above mentioned abusive treatment. While this appears to have allowed her some time to stabilize, it is urgently recommended that Elouaara be completely evaluated both physically and psychologically in a very safe environment by professionals trained in treatment of people who have suffered such abuse.

HEENT

Visual exam and palpation of scalp and forehead reveal multiple scars from blunt object trauma, and a sore area of approximately 10 cm in diameter in the temporal-parietal area of the right side.

There is a visible scar above the left eye at the hairline with associated tenderness and mild swelling. The original wound was inflicted on November 20, 2021 a Moroccan security agent with a police club (**video available**).

Since Saharawi people are banned from being treated in Moroccan hospitals, she spent 21 days laying on the floor of her home without being able to stand up due to severe head pain, difficulty breathing, and dizziness.

Traditional Saharawi herbal medicines were used to treat her along with unknown medication prescribed by a Spanish physician during a phone call. A nurse was contacted, but when she arrived at the house security agents prevented her entry.

Sometime after May 2021, following distribution of toxic liquids into the Khaya home by Moroccan security agents, Elouraara reports that the smells were so overwhelming that soon after exposure, a white, foamy excretion drained from her right ear (**see photo below**) and a slightly viscous, putrid yellow discharge drained from her nose.



Ringing and other sounds in her ears hindered her hearing and she reports that there was “high pressure” in her chest along with difficulty breathing and severe coughing. These and other toxic liquids were thrown, drained and poured into the house an estimated total of 48 times during the 482 days of arbitrary detention (**videos available**). Elouraara had an extremely high exposure to the liquids since each time she cleaned up the toxins with rags and a mop.

She currently reports a mild decrease in hearing, bilaterally.

Smell and taste are normal and were reported to be severely affected right after initial exposure.

On November 13, 2021 Elouaara was severely beaten by security agents outside of her home. While lying on the ground, Moroccan police chief Hakim Amar kicked her in the face dislodging

3 permanent teeth from the left side of the mandible (**see photo below**), along with 2 ceramic prosthetic implants, one from each side of the mandible.



Elouaara reports pain in the upper shoulders and lower cervical vertebrae that began following multiple violently forced backward rolls on a cement floor by security agents while forcing her back into the house (**video available**).

She also reports permanent mid and lower back pain from multiple beatings with police clubs and having a heavy metal door closed on her torso and limbs.

Following the door incident, there continues to be significant residual pain and swelling just below the left knee, and significant pain on the distal frontal aspect of the left tibia. She also

complains of significant pain in the lateral aspect of the tibial-femoral joint of the right leg and mentions that there is pain in her right hip that radiates down to her foot.

As a direct result of the numerous beatings, Elouraara reports specific moderate to severe pain in the lumbar region of her back where she had surgery to donate bone marrow in 1992. A blow to the abdomen with the point of a police club on an unknown date, resulted in vomiting of blood. **(see photo below)**



On May 21, 2021, Elouraara reports that a large number of black-hooded security agents entered the Khaya home under cover of darkness and sexually assaulted her and her sister.

On December 5, 2021, again numerous Moroccan security agents clandestinely entered the Khaya home from the roof during hours of darkness, entered the sleeping quarters of Elouraara, her sister, Sultana, and their mother, where they proceeded to sexually assault the sisters, forcibly lowering Elouraara's pants and underpants, inserting their fingers and wooden poles into Elouraara's vagina, and fondling her entire body underneath her clothing, while forcing her mother to watch. She was then severely beaten. **(see photos below)**











Due to pain from untreated healed fractures of the middle and ring fingers Elouraara is unable to fully close her left hand into a fist.

Conclusions

Following years of severe, cruel, and purposefully inflicted mental and physical abuse by Moroccan security agents, it is my opinion that Elouraara Khaya is in a medical condition that requires immediate evacuation to a hospital setting, outside of Western Sahara and Morocco, for a full medical evaluation by professionals trained in the treatment of torture victims and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Recommendations

- Rule out (R/O) healed skull fracture on left side of frontal hair line.
- R/O cervical spinal injury C5-C7
- R/O right leg lateral meniscal tear
- R/O right leg quadricep tendon and/or muscle tear at insertion

- R/O nerve damage in right hip or lower back
- R/O Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Further evaluate left tibia traumas from metal door closing on leg
- Evaluate systemic exposure to toxic liquids
- Evaluate moderately limited ROM on flexion of left hand digits

This preliminary report prepared and respectfully submitted by
Tim Pluta MD, PhD

B: VIDEO TESTIMONIALS BY SAHARAWI COMMUNITY MEMBERS

(available upon request)

1. Nasrathum, 23 March 2022
2. Fatima, 24 March 2022
3. Mubaraka, 25 March 2022
4. Mina Baali, 28 March 2022
5. Mulu'a 1 April 2022
6. Birshri bin Talib, 14 April 2022
7. Fatimatou Duwwar, 14 April 2022
8. Thehaba, 14 April 2022
9. Mohammed Didaash
10. UmAlmumnien
11. Zainebou Babi

C. PRESS RELEASES

1. 16 March 2022; Tourists Break Moroccan Siege in Western Sahara: U.S. and International Women's Rights Defenders Invited into Khaya Home Until Rapes Stop
2. 17 March 2022; Khaya Sisters Celebrate the Halt of 482 Days of Isolation and Abuse: U.S. and International Women's Rights Defenders Calling for End to Rape and the Moroccan Siege
3. 17 March 2022; Human Rights Defender in Western Sahara Invites Diplomats to Her Home Now that Siege has Been Broken by International Tourists: Sultana Khaya Challenges Members of US Embassy, EU Delegation, and other Embassies to Witness and Discuss Human Rights Abuses and Meet With the Unarmed Civilian Protectors
4. 21 March 2022; Women and Elders are Attacked and Prevented Access to Khaya Home: Delegation calls for International Investigation of Khaya Sisters' Abuse in Western Sahara
5. 31 March 2022; Siege & Terror Continue in Boujdour, Western Sahara
6. 12 April 2022; Moroccan Settler Attacks Sultana Khaya and Issues Death Threats to American Tourists in Western Sahara
7. 14 April 2022; The United States Appeases Saharawi Activists While Giving Morocco Green Light To Continue Human Rights Abuses in Occupied Western Sahara
8. 16 April 2022; BREAKING NEWS: Moroccan Forces Torture Khaya Family Visitors during Holiest Holidays of All Three Abrahamic Faiths
9. 19 April 2022; Sultana Khaya Continues Rooftop Protest in Western Sahara After Moroccan Forces Brutalize Co-protestors
10. 21 April 2022; Moroccan Forces Attack Khaya Rooftop Protester: International Investigation Imperative
11. 4 May 2022; US Citizen Begins Hunger Strike to Stop Human Rights Abuses in Western Sahara
12. 11 May 2022; Moroccan Agents Impersonate Medical Personnel
13. 14 May 2022; US Citizen Starts Relay Hunger Strike to Stop Human Rights Abuses in Western Sahara
14. 15 May 2022; Large Truck Crashes Into Khaya Home at Midnight
15. 23 May 2022; US Human Rights Delegation Deported in Western Sahara
16. 1 June 2022; Sultana Khaya & US Guests Leave Western Sahara: Thousands Give Hero's Welcome in Canary Islands

* Press releases: https://www.nonviolenceinternational.net/khaya_siege_updates

**Media Release
March 16, 2022**



Human Rights Action Center
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**Tourists Break Moroccan Siege in Western Sahara:
U.S. and International Women's Rights Defenders Invited into Khaya Home
Until Rapes Stop**

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara — At the invitation of the Khaya family in Boujdour, Western Sahara, US-based volunteers have arrived at their home to protect them from human rights abuses and break the 482-day siege of the house imposed by Moroccan occupation forces.

Supported by the [Human Rights Action Center \(HRAC\)](#) and a network of other human rights groups, the international [unarmed civilian protection \(UCP\)](#) volunteers, Ruth McDonough, Adrienne Kinne, and others, are currently guests in the Khaya family home. HRAC promotes adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



UCP Volunteer with Sultana Khaya in her home.

Since November 2020, the Khaya Sisters have been forcibly confined to their home and the family has endured ongoing abuse, including home invasions, sexual violence and injections of unknown substances. The Khaya sisters have been raped by Moroccan security forces in front of their 84-year-old mother. Furthermore, their water has been poisoned, furniture and property destroyed, and electricity cut-off.

Referring to her experience, Sultana Khaya shared, “I am not the first Saharawi woman to be raped by the occupiers. I am simply the first woman to speak publicly

about it. I have to expose the reality of the occupation. And I need to pave the way for the next generation of Saharawi women.”

Sultana Khaya is a Saharawi human rights defender whose work focuses on promoting the right of self-determination for the Saharawi people and ending violence against Saharawi women, through active participation in nonviolent efforts and demonstrations. She serves as the president of the [Saharawi League for the Defense of Human Rights and the Protection of Western Sahara’s Natural Resources](#), and is a member of the [Saharawi Commission against the Moroccan occupation \(ISACOM\)](#). She is a nominee for the [Sakharov Prize](#) and winner of the [Esther Garcia Award](#). As an outspoken activist, she has been targeted by the occupying Moroccan forces while engaged in peaceful protests, enduring abductions, beatings, and having one eye gouged out.

According to Ruth McDonough, “*Violence against women must stop everywhere. I am here to support Saharawi women who are demanding their rights.*”

Jack Healey, founder of HRAC and former Executive Director of Amnesty International, USA, said, “*I insist that the U.S. government stand up for human rights in Western Sahara.*”

The HRAC visitors call for an end to the rapes, freedom of movement for the Khaya family and all visitors, and an independent international investigation of these human rights abuses. HRAC supports a more detailed list of [demands](#) made by the Khaya sisters which include removal of forces and barricades around their house and neighborhood and the remediation of their poisoned water reservoir.

Grounded in international law, [Unarmed Civilian Protection](#) is a nonpartisan strategy that revolves around the use of nonviolent methods by civilians to protect other civilians under threat. Such protection is provided on invitation from local actors and supports local agency and infrastructures for peace.

[Human Rights Watch](#), [Amnesty International](#), and other highly respected investigative groups have documented widespread detentions, the torture of dissidents, and violent suppression of peaceful protests by Moroccan forces in Western Sahara.

On 1 July 2021, the [UN Special Rapporteur](#) on the situation of human rights defenders, [Mary Lawlor](#), condemned the reprisals against Sultana Khaya and expressed “particular concern about the apparent use of violence and the threat of violence to prevent and obstruct women human rights defenders in their peaceful human rights activities.”

Morocco invaded the Western Sahara in 1975, and has occupied it since then. The Western Sahara has UN status as the world's last major non-self-governing territory. In 1991, the United Nations promised to hold a referendum for self-determination for the people of Western Sahara. To this day, the referendum has not transpired.

Human Rights Action Center takes no political position on the Western Sahara. HRAC insists that human rights are respected and international law is followed.

###

Media Release
March 17, 2022



Human Rights Action Center
Supporting the Equal Rights and Freedoms of All People

Contact Information:

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**Khaya Sisters Celebrate the Halt of 482 Days of Isolation and Abuse:
U.S. and International Women's Rights Defenders Calling for End to Rape
and the Moroccan Siege**

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara — After 482 days of isolation, the Khaya family hosts scores of family, friends and neighbors in a celebration of joy over the breach of the siege of Western Sahara by Moroccan Occupation Forces. As guests in the family home in Boujdour, 4 US-based unarmed civilian protection (UCP) volunteers listen to the stories of Saharawis' arrests, beatings, torture, and rape, all the while being graciously served tea and refreshments.



A Sahawari elder who did not want to be identified out of fear of retribution by Moroccan Occupation Forces, told one of the volunteers, Ruth McDonough, "I admire my daughter for her powerful action which has brought about the uplifting of the siege."

A Sahawari woman told the visitors, "We are celebrating now, but we know that this is not

over."

The visitors looked with horror at the state of the home while, Adrienne Kinne, almost [choked from the stench of the bathroom](#) because of the poisoning of the water supply by Moroccan Occupation Forces. "We were in tears as we celebrated breaking the siege together and heard

strong appreciation for us as US citizens standing together with Saharawi women in solidarity for human rights stopping violence against women.”

The HRAC visitors call for an end to the rapes, freedom of movement for the Khaya family and all visitors, and an independent international investigation of these human rights abuses. HRAC supports a more detailed list of [demands](#) made by the Khaya sisters which include removal of forces and barricades around their house and neighborhood and the remediation of their poisoned water reservoir.

Sultana Khaya is a Saharawi human rights defender promoting the right of self-determination for the Saharawi people and ending violence against Saharawi women, through nonviolent efforts. She serves as the president of the Saharawi League for the Defense of Human Rights and the Protection of Western Sahara’s Natural Resources, and is a member of the Saharawi Commission against the Moroccan occupation (ISACOM). She is a nominee for the Sakharov Prize and winner of the Esther Garcia Award. As an outspoken activist, she has been targeted by the occupying Moroccan forces, enduring abductions, beatings, and having one eye gouged out.

Supported by the Human Rights Action Center (HRAC) and a network of other human rights groups, HRAC promotes adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



###

**Media Release
March 17, 2022**



Human Rights Action Center
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Contact Information:

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**Human Rights Defender in Western Sahara Invites Diplomats to Her Home
Now that Siege has Been Broken by International Tourists**

**Sultana Khaya Challenges Members of US Embassy, EU Delegation, and
other Embassies to Witness and Discuss Human Rights Abuses and Meet With
the Unarmed Civilian Protectors**

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara — Sultana Khaya in Boujdour, Western Sahara with US and international tourists, requests that honorable diplomats pay a visit to her home to celebrate the breaking of the siege and ensure the safety of their citizens. Furthermore, the unarmed civilian protectors demand that the human rights of Saharawis be respected and the violence against women stop. The previous day the visitors broke the 482 day siege of the Khaya Sisters' house who have endured repeated rapes and attacks by the Moroccan Occupation Forces in their own home.



Earlier today, the tourists, volunteers with the Human Rights Action Center, joined Saharawi women and the Khaya sisters in their daily vigil on their rooftop. Ruth McDonough said, “Our presence as Americans helped to break the siege but these women are the ones who are leading and all that I hope for them is for their voices to be heard and followed because it’s what they say that everyone needs to hear.”

Jack Healey, President of the Human Rights Action Center, and former ED of Amnesty International, USA said, “there is no legal or moral justification for attacking the Khaya home or harassing or disturbing the US and international tourists. No laws have been broken.”

The HRAC volunteers call for an end to the rapes, freedom of movement for the Khaya family and all visitors, and an independent international investigation of these human rights abuses. HRAC supports a more detailed list of [demands](#) made by the Khaya sisters which include removal of forces and barricades around their house and neighborhood and the remediation of their poisoned water reservoir.

Sultana Khaya is a Saharawi human rights defender promoting the right of self-determination for the Saharawi people and ending violence against Saharawi women, through nonviolent efforts. She serves as the president of the Saharawi League for the Defense of Human Rights and the Protection of Western Sahara's Natural Resources, and is a member of the Saharawi Commission against the Moroccan occupation (ISACOM). She is a nominee for the Sakharov Prize and winner of the Esther Garcia Award. As an outspoken activist, she has been targeted by the occupying Moroccan forces, enduring abductions, beatings, and having one eye gouged out.

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####

**Media Release
March 21, 2022**



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**Women and Elders are Attacked and Prevented Access to Khaya Home:
Delegation calls for International Investigation of Khaya Sisters' Abuse in
Western Sahara**

After international visitors broke the 482-day siege of the Khaya family home in Boujdour, Western Sahara, it has been a bustling center of joyous reunions and international friendship. However, a new celebration was interrupted when women leaving the house were beaten and robbed by Moroccan Forces. One of the women, who does not want to be identified, said, "They whispered to us that 'when the visitors leave, we will be given the same treatment as Sultana Khaya has endured.'" These same threats appear on social media platforms.



Moroccan Security Forces Harassing Women outside the Khaya home.

Khaya had been under de-facto house arrest for 482 days during which Moroccan forces poisoned the family's water supply, beat and raped Khaya and her sister in front of their 84 year-old mother, and injected her with unknown substances.

The four international visitors who broke the siege of the Khaya home 6 days ago have been listening to the [stories](#) of the people in Boujdour. They want the rapes and siege to stop. Ruth McDonough, a U.S. and British citizen, said,

“Although I had read Sultana Khaya’s call for an end to the rapes and terrorization of her family before we arrived to the house, nothing prepared me for the devastating signs of these abuses, including horrific scars and bashed-out teeth. I am overwhelmed by what the Khaya sisters and their mother have endured for 482 days.

“An international investigation into the targeting of the Khaya family is imperative as they represent the experiences of the Saharawi community as a whole.”

Morocco’s security forces have often been [accused](#) by Moroccan and international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, of torturing activists and terrorism suspects.

Despite the continued beatings and threats, Saharawi women flocked out into the street to demonstrate that they will not be intimidated.

###

**Media Release
March 31, 2022**



Human Rights Action Center
Supporting the Equal Rights and Freedoms of All People

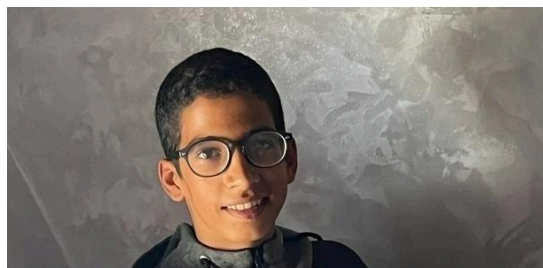
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Siege & Terror Continue in Boujdour, Western Sahara

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara – On Thursday, March 17, Moroccan security forces abducted 14-year old Lilah Mohammed Habibi and his friend as they walked home after visiting nonviolent activist Sultana Khaya in Boujdour, Western Sahara. They forced the boys into their car and took them to the police station. Lilah was interrogated, yelled at, and violently struck on his arms and hands. He was ordered never to go to the Khaya house again. Later that day, both boys were released.



On Wednesday, March 30, young Lilah was outdoors at a soccer field when three older boys asked him to pass them a bag that was closeby. As soon as Lilah put his hand on the bag, Moroccan agents immediately took him into custody. The owners of the bag told the police that it was no problem and that even if he had stolen the bag, they had no interest in pressing charges. Nonetheless, the police refused to release the boy. He is being held in an adult detention center with no visitors allowed, even his family. Lilah's mother said, "This is retaliation for my nonviolent protests of the Moroccan Occupation."

The Moroccan forces have claimed that the home of Sultana Khaya is no longer under siege after international human rights defenders entered it on March 15, 2022. Before that Khaya had endured 482 days of arbitrary detention during which Moroccan forces periodically invaded the home, destroyed furnishings, poisoned the water supply, beat and raped Khaya and her sister in front of their 84 year-old mother, and injected them with unknown substances. Upon entry into the house, the international visitors found putrid black stains in the water well, on the interior and exterior house walls, on the floor, on the family members' clothing, and on what was left of their belongings, including Khaya's identity documents. The toxic smell seemed to be a combination of nail polish remover (acetone) and excrement.

Khaya told one of her international guests, "This is not about me. It's about the suffering of all Saharawi women under occupation."

Saharawi activist, Hamoud Allili, [compiled over an hour of footage](#) from scores of peaceful demonstrations showing protestors brutally attacked, sometimes leaving permanent physical disabilities.

At the request of community members, the international guests have been taking videos while they give testimony of the torture that they have endured at the hands of Moroccan agents. The internationals continue to call for an independent international investigation into human rights abuses.

###

Media Release
April 12, 2022



Human Rights Action Center
Supporting the Equal Rights and Freedoms of All People

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**Moroccan Settler Attacks Sultana Khaya
and Issues Death Threats to American Tourists in Western Sahara**

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara – On, April 8, 2022, and Ramadan 6, 1443, at approximately six o'clock in the evening, a Moroccan settler attacked Sultana Khaya in Boujdour, Western Sahara. He shouted insults and curses. He spit on Sultana when she came to the door and struck her in the face. He threatened to kill and liquefy everyone in the house, especially Sultana Khaya and her American tourist guests. Moroccan agents who have had the house under a siege for more than 500 days, did nothing but merely observe this aggression.

Ruth McDonough, one of the American guests, said, “one day of this treatment would be unacceptable, but the Khaya family have endured it for more than 500 days. It is long overdue for Moroccan forces to end the siege and violent home invasions of the Khaya sisters. We call for the international community to launch an independent investigation of abuses to the Khaya family as soon as possible.”



Moroccan agents first put the Khaya house under arbitrary detention in November 2020. They subjected the family to human rights abuses that included home invasions, destroying and removing all furnishings, pouring noxious chemicals on the walls, beatings, sexual violence, and injections of unknown substances. The Khaya sisters have been raped by Moroccan security forces in front of their 84-year-old mother who was bound and forced to watch. Furthermore, their water has been poisoned, furniture and property destroyed, and electricity and water cut-off. On March 16, 2022, international unarmed civilian protectors were able to enter the Khaya home, bringing a reprieve of the siege and the rapes.

####

Media Release
April 14, 2022

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The United States Appeases Saharawi Activists While Giving Morocco Green Light To Continue Human Rights Abuses in Occupied Western Sahara

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara – On December



15, 2021, Saharawi human rights defenders met in El-Ayune with David Fisher, Political Advisor of the American Embassy in Morocco, specifically to talk about human rights violations in the Western Sahara. They especially highlighted the abuse of Sultana Khaya and her family in Boujdour which included rape, sexual torture, arbitrary detention, and injections of unknown poisons. They told Fisher, “We hold the U.S. government responsible for the grave human rights violations of the Saharawis under the Moroccan occupation.”



Despite extensive documentation by respected human rights groups such as [Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#), the U.S. State Department virtually ignores the human rights abuses in the Western Sahara in their annual [Human Rights Report](#) issued on April 12, 2022. Completely missing from the report was any of the information transmitted to David Fisher at the meeting on December 15th.



Moroccan Occupation Forces took this as a green light to continue the abuse and torture of Saharawis. On April 13, 2022, Abed Al-Mounim Hamadi, son of prominent human rights defender, Hamadi Mohamed-Lamin Nasiri, was beaten by Moroccan police and lost consciousness. His father said that, "my son was tortured mercilessly, resulting in a concussion, his upper teeth bashed in, bruises over his

whole body, and vomiting blood.” Nasiri went on to say, “I will begin a sit-in to denounce this criminal operation and to demand an investigation to hold those responsible to account.”

###

Media Release
April 16, 2022



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**BREAKING NEWS: Moroccan Forces Torture Khaya Family Visitors during
Holiest Holidays of All Three Abrahamic Faiths**

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara – On the morning of, April 16, 2022, and Ramadan 14, 1443, a most holy time of the three Abrahamic religions, Moroccan security forces in Boujdour, Western Sahara, attacked several women and at least one child in the neighborhood around the home of Sultana Khaya. One woman, Zainabou Babi, was arrested this morning, detained and severely beaten, before being released at approximately 4:00 PM local time. Local contacts who have met with Zainabou via video communications share that her legs are severely beaten and bruised



These women who participated in the nonviolent protest on the Khaya family rooftop on April 15, 2022 were tortured by Moroccan Occupations Forces on April 16, 2022.



**Injury to the leg of a woman victim
of Moroccan Occupation Forces**

and that her hands likewise appear beaten, and have possibly been broken. Medical care is unavailable to Sahrawis in the area, but attempts are underway to transport her to a location where she can be observed.

Early reports from American guests in the Khaya family home suggest that the police are cracking down on community members who participated in a peaceful protest the night before. Other participants of the protest have had their homes surrounded by agents overnight.

Um Almunnein Al-Kharashi was forced back into her home as she attempted to walk to the Khaya family

home this morning. Mubarak Alhaafathi and her young son were also pushed back into their home as they attempted to leave and their door is now blocked shut by guards. Fatima Mint Mbaririk Babi was also hit by agents and forced back into her home. Six men attacked Faatima Al-Haafathi, covering her mouth and eyes as they beat her. Luara Khaya was kicked twice in her back by police this morning as she walked around her home to assess the situation.

Nasra Abd Lmoula Babi, a community member and regular visitor to the Khaya home, contacted Sultana Khaya at 1:50 pm Boujdour time to share that she has also been hit by the police multiple times and has been told that she is being punished for coming to the Khaya family home. Men from the community have remained indoors due to the threat of arbitrary detention, violence, and arrest.

This is the latest escalation of force by Moroccan agents in Boujdour following the arrival of four U.S. guests in mid-March which allowed the community the first opportunity to gather peacefully in over 482 days of lockdown. The guests were invited to witness the atrocities that the community has been subjected to for calling for a free Western Sahara. Ruth McDonnough shares that “even from inside the Khaya family home, we can sense the ongoing threat to the family and the Saharawi community more broadly. This situation requires an official international investigation as soon as humanly possible.”

Moroccan agents first put the Khaya house under arbitrary detention in November 2020. They subjected the family to human rights abuses that included home invasions, destroying and removing all furnishings, pouring noxious chemicals on the walls, beatings, sexual violence, and injections of unknown substances. The Khaya sisters have been raped by Moroccan security forces in front of their 84-year-old mother who was bound and forced to watch. Furthermore, their water has been poisoned, furniture and property destroyed, and electricity and water cut-off. On March 16, 2022, international unarmed civilian protectors clandestinely entered the Khaya home, bringing a reprieve of the siege and the rapes.

###

April 19, 2022

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Sultana Khaya Continues Rooftop Protest in Western Sahara After Moroccan Forces Brutalize Co-protestors

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara – What does Sultana Khaya do when her fellow protesters are beaten, tortured, trapped in their homes, and hospitalized? She installs a flagpole for each woman who can't be present so that she may carry on the daily rooftop protests for self-determination of Western Sahara.



She takes a break to yell at the plainclothes officers that perpetually surround her home. “You torture and beat and rape us on our land. [But we persist.] It's what we have to do for our homeland justice will prevail”

Sultana Khaya has been protesting for human rights and self-determination on her rooftop in Boujdour, Western Sahara since November 2020 when Moroccan Occupation Forces began their arbitrary detainment and siege of her house. For the following 482 days, the forces invaded the house, cut the electricity, destroyed or removed all furnishings, and poured noxious chemicals on the walls and in the water supply. Furthermore, they beat and raped Sultana and her sister, Waari, in front of their 84-year-old mother who was bound and forced to watch. On March 16, 2022, international unarmed civilian protectors (UCP) entered the Khaya home, bringing a reprieve of the siege and the rapes.



The UCP guests in Sultana's home opened the space for other Saharawis to join Sultana on her rooftop for nonviolent demonstrations. The Khaya house is called "The Free Zone." The picture above is of one such protest on April 15, 2022. In the following days, every single woman in this picture had been beaten, some sexually molested, some requiring hospitalization. One woman had bones broken in both feet and both hands in addition to severe bruising over her entire body.





Sultana continues to protest on her rooftop. She yells at the Moroccan Occupation Agents below, “You're trying to make me look unstable! But you are the unreasonable ones! You won't succeed in flipping the script to make it seem like I am in the wrong.”

She added, “You should take shame that you are acting this way during Ramadan!”

###

Media Release
April 21, 2022



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Moroccan Forces Attack Khaya Rooftop Protester
International Investigation Imperative

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara – On the evening of April 20th, Moroccan Occupation Forces in occupied Boujdour, Western Sahara, continued their violent and brutal attacks against members of the Western Sahara community that participate in nonviolent rooftop protests at the home of Sultana Khaya, an influential Human Rights Defender. This time they targeted her nephew, Mohammed Fadel Khaya.

The attack occurred a few hours after the conclusion of an organizing call with peace and social justice activists in the United States and around the world. Mohammed was seen being chased on the streets by men driving four cars. Early reports indicate that he was beaten before fending off his attackers and fleeing. He is currently waiting in an undisclosed location as an increased number of Moroccan agents in the neighborhood currently make it impossible for him to return to his family's home. There is a high level of concern that if he falls into the hands of Moroccan security agents, he will be imprisoned and tortured. Mohammed knows what to expect as he has spent three and half years of incarceration at the hands of Moroccan Occupation forces.

This assault on Mohammed is the latest in an alarming string of attacks by Moroccan Occupation Forces that have targeted anyone who has participated in human rights protests at the home of Sultana Khaya. Over this past weekend, Moroccan Occupation Forces brutally assaulted several women who have been participating in the daily protests Sultana conducts on her home rooftop. Earlier this week Mohammed Fadel was visible on the rooftop with Sultana as she installed flagpole stands to hold the flags for the women who can no longer stand beside her in solidarity.

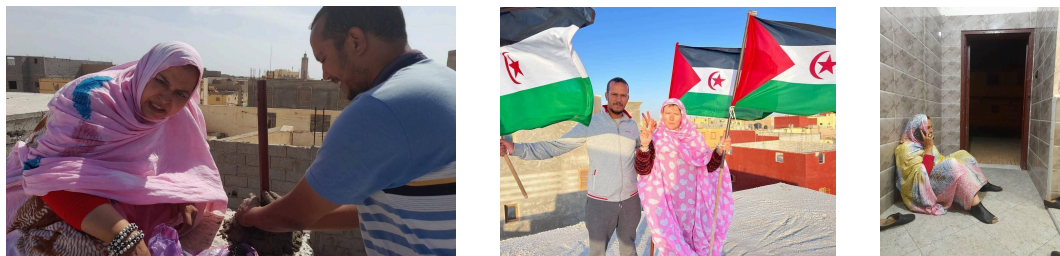


Photo left, Mohammed Fadel Khaya helping Sultana Khaya install flagpole holders on her rooftop; middle, Muhammad with Field Volunteer, Ruth McDonough, taken hours before he was assaulted; right, Sultana Khaya waiting to receive word about the the safety of her nephew, Mohammed Fadel.

The following was a message from Sultana Khaya after she learned about this latest attack:

“Urgent: A short while ago, a group of occupation gangs affiliated with the Moroccan occupation police in the occupied Boujdour attempted to kidnap the Sahrawi defender Mohammed Fadel Khaya. He was able to escape from them and [deleted for Muhammad’s safety].

It is also known that the Moroccan occupation forces are waging a fierce campaign against the Sahrawis in the occupied city, targeting the Sahrawi activists in order to prevent them from reaching the home of the liberated family of Khaya.”



Photos above: Club used by Moroccan Occupational Forces to beat Saharawis, with nails embedded in the end to increase damage and pain during assaults. This was the club being used to attack Mohammed Fadel until he seized the club from them and used it to defend himself before fleeing.

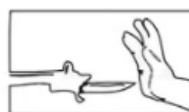
Field volunteers in Boujdour are continuing to reach out to human rights organizations and the international community with a plea to initiate an international investigation into the human rights abuses being perpetrated by Moroccan Security Forces against Sahrawis for nonviolently protesting for their human rights.

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nonviolence
international

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**US Citizen Begins Hunger Strike to Stop Human Rights Abuses in
Western Sahara**

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara, May 4, 2022 – Ruth McDonough, a US/British citizen, began a hunger strike on Wednesday, May 4, in order to bring attention to human rights abuses occurring in Boujdour, Western Sahara. Dr. Tim Pluta, US/Irish citizen, will be supporting McDonough as caretaker.

Both McDonough and Pluta have been guests in the home of the Khaya family since March 15, 2022. Their arrival came on day 482 of an arbitrary detention in which Moroccan agents had periodically broken and entered the Khaya family home, attacked, beaten, and raped Sultana Khaya and her sister, Waara, in front of their 84 year old mother, Mitou. The agents had also destroyed nearly all furniture, cut electrical wires, turned off the water, poisoned the well water, tortured the sisters and injected Sultana with unknown substances, and forcibly prevented visitors entrance to the house.

Sultana Khaya is a human rights defender promoting the right of self-determination for the Saharawi people and ending violence against Saharawi women, through nonviolent efforts. She serves as the president of the Saharawi League for the Defense of Human Rights and the Protection of Western Sahara's Natural Resources, and is a member of the Saharawi Commission against the Moroccan occupation (ISACOM). She was short-listed for the Sakharov Prize, an honorary award for individuals or groups who have dedicated their lives to the defense of human rights and freedom of thought. She was the winner of the Esther Garcia Award for popular struggle.

McDonough undertook the hunger strike to support Sultana Khaya's list of demands for the occupying forces of Morocco:

1. Permanently stop the rapes in the Khaya home.
2. Permanently end the siege of the Khaya home.
3. Allow an independent, non-partisan, international human rights organization to enter the Khaya home in Boujdour to investigate and report what has happened for the public record.

McDonough said as she began the strike, “The Saharawi people have endured heinous human rights abuses since the beginning of the Moroccan Occupation of the Western Sahara in 1975. As an outspoken Saharawi activist, Sultana has been targeted by the occupying Moroccan forces, enduring incarceration, beatings, rapes and having one eye gouged out among many other abuses. This must stop.”

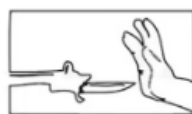
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nonviolence
international

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Moroccan Agents Impersonate Medical Personnel

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara, May 11, 2022 — Morocco sent an unsolicited ambulance to the Khaya home in Boujdour, purportedly to provide medical services to the American guest who is on Day 9 of a hunger strike. Ruth McDonough stopped eating in protest of Moroccan Occupation forces human rights abuses. However, both Sultana Khaya and Waara Khaya recognized the occupants of the ambulance to be the very men who carried out the

human rights abuses, including rape. They were accompanied by the district commander, Siddik Lalou, who is the agent responsible for pouring toxic substances inside the Khaya home.



The ambulance arrived at the house on the afternoon of May 9th demanding to take McDonough to a hospital. In previous visits they have kicked down the door of the house to violently enter. This time, they knocked and greeted Sultana Khaya as if they had never met her before. Sultana shouted their names and

called out to them, “How could a criminal be a healthcare worker?”

McDonough is fasting in support of Sultana Khaya’s list of demands to the Moroccan occupiers:

1. Permanently stop the rapes in the Khaya home.
2. Permanently end the siege of the Khaya home.
3. Allow an independent, non-partisan, international human rights organization to enter the Khaya home in Boujdour to investigate and report what has happened for the public record.

The “medical” visitors did not succeed in entering the house and left.

Sultana Khaya is a Saharawi human rights defender promoting the right of self-determination for the Saharawi people and ending violence against Saharawi women, through nonviolent efforts.



She serves as the president of the Saharawi League for the Defense of Human Rights and the Protection of Western Sahara's Natural Resources, and is a member of the Saharawi Commission against the Moroccan occupation (ISACOM). She was short-listed for the Sakharov Prize and winner of the Esther Garcia Award. As an outspoken activist, she has been targeted by the occupying Moroccan forces, enduring abductions, beatings, rapes and having one eye gouged out.

Just Visit Western Sahara is a network of groups and individuals committed to justice for the Sahawari people, protection of their human rights, respect for international law, and encouraging tourism to reveal the beauty and appeal of travel to Western Sahara.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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US Citizen Starts Relay Hunger Strike to Stop Human Rights Abuses in Western Sahara

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara, May 14, 2022 — Ruth McDonough, US/British citizen and human rights activist, has been on a solidarity hunger strike in Boujdour, Western Sahara since May 4, 2022. McDonough began the hunger strike in order to bring attention to the brutal human rights abuses that the occupying Moroccan government continues to use to oppress the indigenous Saharawi people in Western Sahara, Africa.

After 10 days on the hunger strike, Dr. Tim Pluta, US/Irish citizen, who has been caretaking McDonough, placed her on a re-nourishment schedule due to changes in her vital sign trends. She is currently safe and in stable condition.

Individuals from dozens of countries around the world will continue McDonough's hunger strike by taking turns in 24-hour solidarity fasts. This relay hunger strike will continue until their demands are met:



1. A permanent end to the rapes in the Khaya home.
2. A permanent end to the occupying Moroccan forces' siege of the Khaya home.
3. Allow an international, non-partisan human rights organization to enter the Khaya home to do a full report of human rights abuses that have occurred there.

Anyone interested in participating in the relay hunger strike by committing to do a 24 hour fast in solidarity with McDonough and Saharawi activist Sultana Khaya, can sign up at:

karamasahara.org/register/

McDonough said when she began the strike, “The Saharawi people have endured heinous human rights abuses since the beginning of the Moroccan Occupation of the Western Sahara in 1975. As an outspoken Saharawi activist, Sultana has been targeted by the occupying Moroccan forces, enduring incarceration, beatings, rapes and having one eye gouged out among many other abuses. This must stop.”

Sultana Khaya is a human rights defender promoting the right of self-determination for the Saharawi people and ending violence against Saharawi women, through nonviolent efforts. She serves as the president of the Saharawi League for the Defense of Human Rights and the Protection of Western Sahara’s Natural Resources, and is a member of the Saharawi Commission against the Moroccan occupation (ISACOM). She was short-listed for the Sakharov Prize, an honorary award for individuals or groups who have dedicated their lives to the defense of human rights and freedom of thought. She was the winner of the Esther Garcia Award for popular struggle. As an outspoken activist, she has been targeted by the occupying Moroccan forces, enduring abductions, beatings, rapes and having one eye gouged out.

Just Visit Western Sahara is a network of groups and individuals committed to justice for the Sahawari people, protection of their human rights, respect for international law, and encouraging tourism to reveal the beauty and appeal of travel to Western Sahara.

###



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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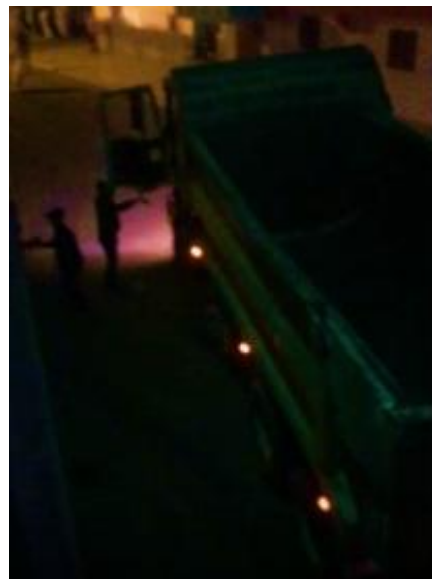
email: info@justvisitwesternsahara.com

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Large Truck Crashes Into Khaya Home at Midnight

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara, May 15/16, 2022 — At midnight a truck repeatedly crashed into the home of Khaya Sisters. It smashed the house and garage doors 3 times. Local people stopped the truck from smashing into the front door and halted the attack.

Witnesses shared that the truck first attempted to hit the east side of the house but the street was too narrow so it went to the other side. The truck appeared to be empty.



The first Moroccan “police” car on the scene drove by, appearing to ignore the attack. Within minutes, approximately 30 Moroccan agents appeared, some who had previously participated in home invasions and assaults on the Khaya family, including rape.

No investigation took place. No one questioned any witnesses. The driver of the truck is unknown. “Police” escorted the truck away.

Sultana Khaya said, “The whole house shook. For a huge truck to crash three times into the door of my home is an obvious attempt to harm my family and my American guests.”

Dr. Stephen Zunes, professor at University of San Francisco and expert on Western Sahara said, “This seems like a bizarre and despicable attempt to harm or injure the Khaya sisters and their guests.”

The Khaya Sisters are human rights defenders in Western Sahara who advocate against violence towards women and for self-determination of the Saharawi people. They have been the subject of a siege for more than 500 days and in March were visited by American tourists who have been staying in the home.

The Americans are part of a US coalition called Just Visit Western Sahara. It is a network of groups and individuals committed to peace and justice for the Saharawi people, protection of their human rights, respect for international law, and encouraging Americans and international travelers to witness the beauty and appeal of Western Sahara and to see the reality of the Moroccan occupation for themselves.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 25, 2022

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US Human Rights Delegation Deported in Western Sahara

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara, May 23, 2022 — A US delegation of women with the JustVisitWestern Sahara initiative were deported from Western Sahara by the Moroccan authorities at Laayoune Airport. The US delegation was invited by the Khaya sisters who have been subject to a brutal long-term siege.



The US delegation of three US women includes Adrienne Kinne, former President of Veterans for Peace, Dr. Wynd Kaufmyn, a community college professor, and Laksana Peters, a retired teacher. Moroccan authorities cited vague national security concerns but were not able to provide any legal justification for denying entry to these US visitors.

Although the US government has recognized the illegal Moroccan annexation of Western Sahara, the State Department has expressed repeated concerns about human rights in Morocco and Western Sahara including the treatment of the nonviolent Khaya Sisters.

The US delegation is scheduled to meet with Tim Pluta and Ruth McDonough, a team of US citizens who have been staying with the Khaya sisters since March 15. Despite their presence, Moroccan occupation forces have continued harsh torture, beatings, sexual assaults, arrests, enforced isolation of the family, and threats to community members who visit the Khaya home or seek to provide food and support. Last week, a large truck smashed into their house 3 times in an attempt to either kill the residents or damage the home in such a way that it would need to be condemned, providing an excuse for the occupying forces to forcibly remove the occupants.

The Khaya sisters are human rights defenders in Western Sahara who advocate against violence towards women and for self-determination of the indigenous Saharawi people. They have been subjected to a continuous and brutally violent siege for more than 18 months..

Wynd Kaufmyn expressed dismay at the repressive nature of the Moroccan government to visitors and wondered how a tourist industry could ever succeed with such mistrust and mistreatment of Americans. “If we can be treated this way, can you imagine how the local Saharawi women are treated? I have spent a lot of money on these tickets and to just be turned around with no explanation is outrageous.”

All the Americans involved are part of a US coalition called Just Visit Western Sahara. It is a network of groups and individuals committed to peace and justice, which have been denied to the Saharawi people, protection of human rights, respect for international law, and encouraging Americans and international travelers to witness the beauty and appeal of Western Sahara, and to see the reality of the Moroccan occupation for themselves.

###



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Sultana Khaya & US Guests Leave Western Sahara:
Thousands Give Hero's Welcome in Canary Islands**

WASHINGTON, D.C./Boujdour, Western Sahara/Canary Islands, June 1, 2022 — Sultana Khaya, Ruth McDonough and Tim Pluta arrived at the Las Palmas airport to be greeted by thousands of supporters that gathered to honor them. Khaya left her beloved homeland in Western Sahara to obtain medical treatment.

For the last 554 days Khaya and her family had been forcibly confined to their house. Moroccan Occupation Forces periodically invaded, beat, used sexual violence and injected them with unknown substances. They raped Khaya and her sister in front of their

86-year-old mother. Furthermore, their water was poisoned, furniture and property destroyed, and electricity cut-off.



The presence in Khaya's house of US-based volunteers since March 16th stopped the invasions, however; it did not stop the arbitrary detention of the Khaya family, nor the brutal beatings of community members that visited the home. On May, 16, the [Moroccan forces smashed a large truck](#) 3 times into the house in the middle of the night in an apparent unsuccessful attempt to either to harm the residents and/or make the home uninhabitable.

Khaya is a Saharawi human rights defender whose work focuses on promoting the right of independence for the Saharawi people and ending violence against Saharawi women, through

nonviolent activism. She serves as the president of the Saharawi League for the Defense of Human Rights and the Protection of Western Sahara's Natural Resources, and is a member of the Saharawi Commission against the Moroccan occupation (ISACOM). She is a nominee for the Sakharov Prize and winner of the Esther Garcia Award.

[Just Visit Western Sahara](#) (JVWS) is a network of groups, including Nonviolence International, Solidarity 2020 and Beyond, and other groups and individuals committed to peace and justice, protection of human rights, respect for international law, all of which have been denied to the Saharawi people, JVWS further encourages Americans and international travelers to witness the beauty and appeal of Western Sahara, and to see the reality of the Moroccan occupation for themselves.

####

D. MEDIA PACKET

1. [FACEBOOK \(LIVE STREAMING\)](#)
2. [BACKGROUND: WESTERN SAHARA](#)
3. [SULTANA KHAYA'S STORY](#)
4. [Demands - Khaya Family](#)
5. [Field Volunteers](#)
6. [Resources](#) - Articles & Organizations
7. [Petition](#)