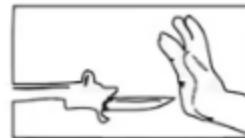


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BREAKING NEWS: Moroccan Forces Torture Khaya Family Visitors during Holiest Holidays of All Three Abrahamic Faiths

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 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.



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

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. Mubaraka Alhaaafathi 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 McDonough 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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MEDIA PACKET

1. [FACEBOOK \(LIVE STREAMING\)](#)
2. [WEBSITE](#)
3. [BACKGROUND: WESTERN SAHARA](#)
4. [SULTANA KHAYA'S STORY](#)
5. [DEMANDS - KHAYA FAMILY](#)
6. [HRAC TEAM MEMBERS](#)
7. [RESOURCES](#) - Articles & Organizations
8. [PETITION](#)