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Morocco Cracks Down on Nonviolent Demonstrators with Brutal Violence and Rape Threats:

UN Special Envoy to Western Sahara Pays Long Awaited Visit to Capital in El-Aaiún

Western Sahara, Sept 6, 2023 - Sahawaris peacefully demonstrated in the capital city of El-Aaiún in response to the arrival of the United Nations Special Envoy to Western Sahara, Staffan de Mistura. It is Mistura's first visit to this occupied territory since his appointment two years ago. He has been criticized for his absence from the public eye and his lack of vigor to resolve the issue of decolonizing this last colony in Africa. The protesters demanded that the UN investigate Moroccan human rights abuses in the occupied territories of Western Sahara.



When Mistura arrived, the people of El-Aaiún were put under lockdown, and the streets were barricaded. Morocco's occupation forces and hostile settlers surrounded the homes of Sahrawi human rights advocates and the families of political prisoners. Peaceful demonstrators were attacked by male security forces, who were surrounded by rings of police women to hide what

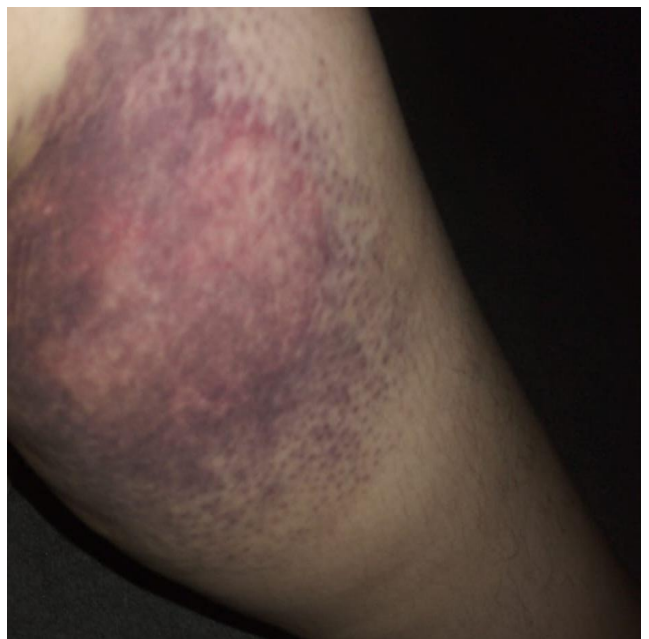
was happening. Waari Khaya, who was violently beaten, said, "The rapist Kaya returned. He was one of the thugs who had beaten and sexually molested me when I was imprisoned in my own home. While he pummeled me, he threatened to rape me again if I did not stop protesting. I will not stop until my country is free."

Dozens of demonstrators were injured. Salha Bountingiza, a Sahawari journalist, was taken to the hospital for her injuries, where she was attacked yet again. Hisham Boumehraz, newly appointed by Abdellatif Al Hammouch, General Director for Moroccan National Security, told her, "I will rape you until you die." He forbade hospital staff from administering treatment to her, even as she lay unconscious in the hospital bed. Saharawis rarely use the Moroccan controlled hospitals precisely because they fear this kind of treatment. Many Saharawis call Moroccan hospitals "torture chambers."

Mistura's first tour of the region in January 2022 included Rabat, Mauritania, Algeria, and the Saharawi refugee camps. His second tour to Rabat in July 2022 was to include a visit to the occupied western Sahara, however, That leg was mysteriously canceled. Dr. Sidi Mohamed Omar, representative of the Polisario Front at the United Nations, points out that the Secretary-General's latest report reveals that Mr. de Mistura was unable to visit the territory in July 2022 because he did not accept the "preconditions" demanded by Rabat, in which he would be restricted in the places he could visit and the people he could meet.



Waari Khaya's upper arms were among the various injuries she endured.



Salha Bountingiza had a number of injuries, including a shin fracture below the knee.

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