

have declined despite the adoption of a new charter proposed by the ruling monarchy last year at the height of street protests," once again call that reputation into question.

ROBERT F. KENNEDY CENTER DELEGATION TO MOROCCAN-CONTROLLED WESTERN SAHARA AND SAHRAWI REFUGEE CAMPS IN ALGERIA—SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

On Friday, August 31, 2012 an international delegation of the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights (RFK Center) concluded a visit to evaluate the human rights situation in Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara and the Sahrawi refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria. The RFK Center delegation met with victims of human rights violations, a broad range of representatives of civil society, representatives of the international community, and government officials. The delegation also noticed that the conflict stalemate has a serious impact on the rights of the Sahrawi population in both Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara and refugee camps.

MOROCCAN-CONTROLLED WESTERN SAHARA

Though the Moroccan Constitution now incorporates advances that include the criminalization of torture, arbitrary detention, and forced disappearances, the delegation observed the need for increased implementation of these changes. In spite of these guarantees, these freedoms are often undermined by the King's authority as the "guarantor of the independence of the Nation and the territorial integrity." In conjunction with article 3 of the Moroccan Law of Associations, these provisions have led to the prohibition of associations of certain groups and individuals such as those Sahrawi advocating for the right to self-determination of Western Sahara.

Large Police and Military Presence in Capital City of El-Ayouun: Most Sahrawi interviewed expressed concern about the uniformed and plain-clothed police and military personnel posted on almost every corner. Sahrawi who were not pro-Moroccan reported that they were followed and verbally abused in the streets by police. The RFK Center delegation was under surveillance by security officers for the duration of their time in El-Ayouun.

Police and State Brutality: Characteristic of the situation, the RFK Center delegation witnessed firsthand a police attack on a peaceful demonstrator. One uniformed police officer and three State agents attacked the woman who subsequently needed medical attention. Moroccan government dismissed the delegation's report of the incident, and instead attempted to discredit it. Two of the State agents involved in the beating (Mohammed Al Hasouni and Mohamed Natchi) were described as human rights violators in reports by other victims interviewed. The delegation heard innumerable reports of non-violent protestors who were detained and tortured for participating in peaceful demonstrations. Other cases included: 1) police brutally beat a mentally disabled man who was involved in demonstrations in 2005, 2008, and 2012. 2) The emblematic case of Said Dambar, a 26 year-old man who was shot and killed by a Moroccan police officer after being beaten in 2010. His family still waits for an autopsy, a murder investigation, and to learn the whereabouts of this body.

Nearly absolute impunity for human rights violations: In spite of the numerous denunciations of cases of torture received by the delegation, the Prosecutor of First Instance in El-Ayouun informed the delegation that, over the past five years, only one state agent was successfully prosecuted for committing an act of torture.

Violation of the Sahrawi people's rights to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and freedom of association:

The delegation met with representatives of a group of seven people criminally prosecuted under spurious charges for expressing their opinions. The group was arrested and charged with treason upon their arrival in Morocco after criticizing the Moroccan government from Algeria. The group was imprisoned and is now on provisional release, pending a final decision.

Pro-independence Sahrawi human rights groups are barred from registering and are deemed illegal to register as civil society organizations. Registration is essential for allowing the organizations to effectively advocate in their communities. Notably, The Collective of Saluawi Human Rights Defenders (CODESA), Moroccan Association of Human Rights (AMDH) El-Ayouun Chapter, and the Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State El-Ayouun, Western Sahara (ASVDH).

Assaults, threats, illegal searches, surveillance, and criminal prosecutions by high-level authorities designed to discredit and stigmatize the work of human rights defenders and attorneys who represent victims of human rights abuses (e.g., RFK Human Rights Award laureate Aminatou Haidar).

Concerns of retaliation against those who met with the RFK Center delegation.

SAHRAWI REFUGEE CAMPS—THE SAHARA DESERT

The RFK Center delegation did not observe any restriction on the freedom of movement or association.

Basic Needs—There are concerns regarding: food ration quality, quantity, and variation; exposure to extreme heat (which can reach 115 degrees); limited electricity; need for permanent housing; and limited sanitation.

The camps house over 100,000 people and have been in existence for 37 years in harsh physical and psychological situation that put at risk their well-being.

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Moroccan government should:

Immediately stop the harassment, violence, persecution, and intimidation of pro-independence Sahrawi people;

Investigate, prosecute, and punish those involved in past and present human rights violations;

Immediately suspend government agents under investigation for human rights violations and establish an effective vetting program;

Ensure effective access to due process and judicial guarantee, without discrimination, and regardless of political positions;

Release prisoners falsely accused of committing a crime, while exercising their right to freedom of expression and association.

2. The U.S. government should support the inclusion of a permanent human rights monitoring and reporting mandate to the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

3. The international community should encourage further negotiations to guarantee the fulfillment of the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people as established in several UN resolutions and in the decision of the International Court of Justice.

HONORING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF SUMMIT ROAD AT THE SCOTTS BLUFF NATIONAL MONUMENT

HON. ADRIAN SMITH

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 21, 2012

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Summit Road at the Scotts Bluff National Monument. The road opened on September 19, 1937 after four years of work. Efforts to design and build the road continue to allow Nebraskans and Americans from across the country to enjoy one of the most spectacular views in our nation.

Today we celebrate not only the achievement of building the Summit Road, but also the beauty and historic significance of this National Monument.

Scotts Bluff served as an important landmark for Americans as they moved West during the Nineteenth Century. Pioneers often faced extreme hardship travelling to and settling new lands. They risked everything to give their families a better life, and laid the foundation for the Good Life Nebraskans cherish.

I hope all of my colleagues will join me in celebrating the Scotts Bluff National Monument on this important anniversary.

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 21, 2012

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, on January 20, 2009, the day President Obama took office, the national debt was \$10,626,877,048,913.08.

Today, it is \$16,014,424,023,771.68. We've added \$5,387,546,974,858.60 dollars to our debt in 3.5 years. This is \$5.4 trillion in debt our nation, our economy, and our children could have avoided with a balanced budget amendment.

RECOGNIZING THE GIRL SCOUT COUNCIL OF THE FLORIDA PANHANDLE AND THE GIRL SCOUTS OF THE USA ON THEIR 100TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 21, 2012

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Girl Scout Council of the Florida Panhandle and the Girl Scouts of the USA on the occasion of their 100th anniversary.

Over the last century, the Girl Scouts of the USA has been committed to service and empowering America's youth. Today, this organization continues to bestow in young girls the courage, confidence, and character necessary for success in life. They afford young girls the opportunity to grow and develop physically,