

Press Release

Joint International Conference on the 50th Anniversary of the Occupation of Western Sahara

The *Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders in Western Sahara (CODESA)*, in partnership with the *European Lawyers for Democracy and Human Rights (ELDH)*, held an **international online conference** on **Thursday, 6 November 2025**, via the *Zoom* platform, under the title:

“50 Years of the Occupation of Western Sahara: The Continuing Denial of the Sahrawi People’s Right to Self-Determination.”

The session, which lasted two and a half hours, brought together international experts and human rights lawyers who delivered legal, political, and human rights-focused presentations examining the ongoing developments of the Sahrawi cause from multiple perspectives.

Speakers :

- **Mr. Urko Aiartza**, lawyer from the Basque Country, provided a legal analysis of **UN Security Council Resolution 2797**, noting that it was not adopted in its original draft form but underwent several amendments, and emphasizing that any just solution must be based on respect for the **right to self-determination**.
- **Prof. Manfred Hinz**, expert in international and European law, analyzed the **rulings of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU)** concerning Western Sahara, affirming that **Western Sahara and Morocco are two distinct and separate entities**, and that any economic agreement between Morocco and the European Union is **illegal** unless it has obtained the **consent of the Sahrawi people through their legitimate representative, the Polisario Front**.
- **Ms. Um Al-Mu'minin Yaya**, Sahrawi human rights defender and member of the Executive Bureau of CODESA, presented an overview of the forthcoming CODESA human rights report entitled “*50 Years of Moroccan Occupation of Western Sahara*.” The report documents serious crimes and grave human rights violations committed by the Moroccan occupying power since 1975, including **genocide, enforced disappearance, settlement policy, and the plundering of natural resources**.
- **Mr. El Mahjoub Maliha**, Sahrawi human rights defender and Head of External Relations at CODESA, addressed the issue of **illegal exploitation of natural resources** in Western Sahara, highlighting the involvement of **foreign companies** in the unlawful extraction of **phosphate, energy, maritime, and agricultural resources**.

Recommendations:

The conference concluded with several key findings and recommendations, including:

- A call for the **dispatch of an international fact-finding mission** to the occupied part of Western Sahara to assess the situation of human rights and natural resource exploitation on the ground;
- Confirmation that the **Moroccan occupying power continues to commit grave human rights violations and plunder Western Sahara’s natural resources**;
- An emphasis on the **need for systematic documentation of these crimes and violations**, and for **holding the responsible actors internationally accountable**.

The conference witnessed **active engagement** from participants, who posed numerous questions and contributed to discussions on ways to **strengthen human rights advocacy and international solidarity** with the Sahrawi people.

Occupied Laayoune – Western Sahara, 6 November 2025
Executive Bureau of the Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders in Western Sahara (CODESA)