

Sultana's home raided by police, activists arrested

In an early morning raid today, masked agents terrorized and assaulted the home of the Saharawi human rights defender Sultana Khaya, stole belongings and took three activists to an undisclosed location.

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Dozens of masked Moroccan agents in the occupied city of Boujdour broke into the home of renowned Sahrawi human rights defender Sultana Khaya in the early morning of the 10th of May and detained three well-known activists who have been staying with her for the past months. The raid follows months of harassment and assaults against Sultana and her family in and around their home, where Sultana has been held under house arrest since last November 19th.

The arrested activists are former political prisoner and student activist Salek Baber, student activist Khaled Bouvfraya who leads the Sahrawi student organization in the city of Rabat, and Babuizid Muhammed Saaed Labhi, president of the well-known Saharawi human rights organization CODESA.

During the raid police also physically assaulted the Khaya family and stole documents and valuables. While Sultana and her family remain at home, the location of the three activists is unknown.

According to the family, dozens of masked agents in civilian clothing, belonging to the Moroccan police in Boujdour, broke into their home at 5:30am as they were all asleep.

Police entered the home from the roof after climbing on top of the building next door. Sultana says that she heard the police when they walked down the stairs as she was in her bed on the second floor of the house. The three arrested activists, Khaled Bouvfraya, Salek Baber and Babuizid Muhammed Saaed Labhi, were also sleeping on that floor.

The police first attacked Sultana and held her down while covering her nose and mouth with a rag. Sultana says that the rag was covered with type of liquid and that afterwards she could not smell anything.

Police then took the three young activists by force downstairs to the first floor. The three activists were then taken out of the back of the home, through the door on the left side of the house close to the kitchen. The activists were put into cars and taken away.

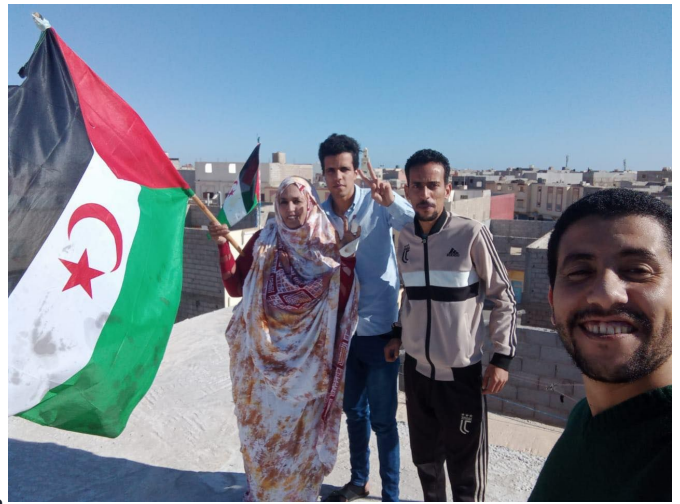
As the activists were being arrested, agents went downstairs where Sultana's mother, sister Lawyara, brother and a two year old toddler were sleeping. Agents punched both the mother and Lawyara in the face, close to their mouth. Police also told the mother that if the family doesn't stop protesting, they would kill both her daughters when they next return.

The police also sexually harassed the women of the house while destroying their belongings. The police also stole several belongings including cell phones,

laptops, TV's, documents and money. The house has been rampaged, as the video above, shot right afterwards shows. Sultana also reported the incident on on [Facebook](#).

The attack and raid of the house lasted 30 minutes. According to Sultana, police knew where everyone was sleeping and the family was overwhelmed by the enormous presence of agents.

Currently the house is still surrounded by police and Saharawi women trying to visit and help the family are being prevented from visiting. Only one of Sultana's sisters has been allowed to approach the house. The location of the three arrested activists is unknown.



From left: Sultana Khaya's sister, Khaled Boufraya, Salek Baber and Babuizid Muhammed Saaed Labhi. The photo was taken on top of Sultana Khaya's home in April 2021.

Sultana's house has been besieged and under attack since November of 2020. The Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara, NomadsHRC and Equipe Media previously published an [appeal](#) documenting the first two months of Sultana's house arrest. [Amnesty International](#), [Front Line Defenders](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#) have all issued appeals and releases expressing alarm at Sultana's situation.

These assaults are part of a wider crackdown by Morocco against Sahrawi human rights defenders following the end of the 19-year ceasefire between Morocco and the Polisario Front and the return to war in Western Sahara on the 13th of November, 2020. For more information please see our [first](#) and [second](#) urgent appeals.