

Polisario : Brahim Ghali's right-hand man stirs controversy with remarks to Spanish media

The recent statements of Brahim Ghali's right-hand man to Spanish media, where he affirmed that the secretary general of the Front «plans to leave Spain (...) without appearing before the .National Audience» stirred controversy in the Tindouf camps

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Salem Lebsir, Brahim Ghali right-hand arm. / DR

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Members of the Polisario Front leadership are annoyed by the right-hand man of the separatist movement's secretary general Brahim Ghali and his «Minister of the Population of the Liberated Territories». Salem Lebsir, who is in Spain with Ghali, is criticized following his recent statement to Spanish media. His words sparked controversy in Spain and in the camps.

A few days ago, Lebsir affirmed, from the Logroño hospital, where Brahim Ghali has been admitted since April, that the secretary general of the Polisario Front would leave Spain in the coming days, without appearing before the National Hearing, which summoned him for allegations related to torture, kidnapping, forcible confinement and crimes against humanity. «As soon as he recovers, which is expected in less than 10 days, he will leave the country. He will not appear before the judge», Ghali's right-hand man told Spanish media.

Lebsir under attack

His words were a source of worries for the plaintiffs in Spain, to the point that they required withdrawing Ghali's passport to prevent him from leaving the country. Their request was ultimately rejected by the

National Hearing, which later confirmed that Ghali agreed to appear in court via video conference on June 1.

Salem Lebsir's reckless statement was also not appreciated in the Tindouf camps. According to the «Tindouf Autonomist Support Forum», known under the name of Forastin, the Polisario's «Minister of the Population of the Liberated Territories» is accused of being «in the service of the Spanish and Moroccan secret services». Indeed, the Facebook page of Forastin published a letter attributed to Bachir Mustapha Sayed, member of the national secretariat of the Polisario, in which he accuses his comrade of «dealing with the Moroccan and Spanish intelligence services», referring to his recent interview with Ok Diario.

The controversy was also fueled by online posts of Polisario supporters, claiming that Salem Lebsir «spoiled the victory» of the Front on this issue. «Without perhaps intending to it, the minister harmed the Saharawi cause, during these peculiar circumstances», a post reads.

Lebsir defends himself by questioning the credibility of the Spanish press

Faced with this wave of criticism, Brahim Ghali's right-hand man was forced to explain himself. In an interview with pro-Polisario media Futuro-Sahara, the Polisario leader admitted to having been «questioned» by Sahrawis on this Spanish media. «I do not know this newspaper», he said, affirming that the journalist from OK Diario did not present himself as such.

«He presented himself as an active member in an association of solidarity with the Saharawi people and that he wanted to inquire about the state of health of the president», he added, specifying that he had met the Spanish journalist, near the wing where Brahim Ghali is hospitalized. «He started talking about Ceuta and Melilla and I thought we were just talking. I didn't know he was a journalist, especially since he didn't have a camera or a microphone», he said.

Salem Lebsir assured to have «dealt» with the Spanish journalist as a «person of solidarity». «After publishing my words, we asked questions about him and we discovered that he was known for such actions», he added, accusing the journalist of having «previously conducted numerous interviews with the media in the same way».