

Brahim Gali calls on Spain to complete the decolonization of Western Sahara

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On the same day that Spain celebrates the National Holiday, in the refugee camps of Tindouf (Algeria) there is talk of independence. While the Spanish Armed Forces toured the streets of Madrid on October 12, the refugee Hamed Saleh recalled the time he worked as a conductor for the Spanish Army in the former colony of Western Sahara.

What does it mean for Spain that the EU-Morocco agreements on Western Sahara are illegal?

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Dressed in the typical Saharawi costume, Saleh listened attentively to the speeches of the festival that commemorates the “unity” of the people in the face of a decolonization process that Spain never concluded. “We lived with the Spanish, but the Spanish authorities abandoned us,” the Saharawi told eIDiario.es in the back of a large room full of listeners.

The celebration of October 12 in the Saharawi refugee camps of Tindouf (Algeria) has nothing to do with the Spanish holiday. Your goal is to remember otherwise. This day commemorates the dissolution of the different Sahrawi councils and official leaders agreed in 1975 under the sole representation of the Polisario Front as the only legitimate representative of the people against the Spanish colonization and the then foreseeable Moroccan occupation.

46 years after the signing of a key agreement in Sahrawi history, the party leader and president of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), Brahim Ghali, made his first appearance at a large public event after his humanitarian reception in Spain to being treated for a serious COVID-19 condition.

His speech comes after the support received from part of the recent ruling of the General Court of the European Union, which cancels the European fishing agreement with Morocco for including Western Sahara without carrying out a prior consultation directed to the Saharawi people, through the Front Polisario.

“The resolution is an explicit call for the EU countries and the world to end the Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara,” Gali said in a speech in which he also looked at the role of Spain as the administering power of Western Sahara. .

“And it is a call to the Spanish State to assume its responsibility to complete the decolonization of Western Sahara and respond to the enormous debt resulting from the chaotic evasion, through the shameful Tripartite Agreements of Madrid, which do not absolve Spain as an administering power. of Western Sahara,” added the Saharawi president.

The Polisario leader, who has also inaugurated a school, has taken a tour in which he has shown his recovery after the illness suffered in April and May of this year. Gali has also defended the return to arms as a way to unblock the conflict.

After the controversial humanitarian reception of the Polisario leader, which has cost the former Foreign Minister his job, the Saharawi leader has highlighted in his speech the responsibility of the Spanish authorities in the resolution of the conflict in Western Sahara.

Gali refers to the Tripartite Agreements of Madrid, signed by Spain in 1975, shortly before Franco’s death, with which Spain intended to cede Morocco and Mauritania what was its province 53. Shortly after, Morocco organized the green march that begins the occupation of the Saharawi territory.

The UN, however, believes that this agreement is illegal, which is why it continues to consider Western Sahara as a non-autonomous territory pending decolonization. The Hague Court also ruled out any historical sovereignty of Morocco over Saharawi soil.

In a tent not far from the place where Gali was claiming Spain’s role in the Saharawi conflict, Mohamed Mbarec Mohamed Salem breaks down in tears as he recalls one of the battles in which he participated during the previous war in Western Sahara. Now 77, his grandchildren are the ones who have enlisted in the low-intensity war that pits Moroccan and Sahrawi soldiers at the wall that divides the occupied from the liberated territories.

The man, after 32 years in exile, does not believe that there is another solution for the Spanish-Moroccan conflict that does not go through war. “The situation is unsustainable. The ceasefire is no longer acceptable. There will only be fire, and that for Morocco to know,” says the man. He also lived in his country, Western Sahara.

Mohamed participated in the historic protest of the Saharawi people against the Spanish colonization held in June 1970. He remembers the jaimas camp set up in Aaliun to demand independence and the improvement of the economic situation. The protest, he maintains, was harshly repressed by the Spanish armed forces. Months later, the old man says, Spain promoted the hiring of Sahrawis in Spanish companies.

Mohamed, born in the Saharawi city of Smara, benefited from this measure, working for a Spanish road construction company, after having been a nomad for most of his life. After the start of the Moroccan occupation, the Saharawi fled their hometown. His Spanish ID left him at the house where he could never return.

Minutes before the intervention of the Sahrawi leader in the Dakhla camp, the refugee Hamed Saleh, describes his arrival at this point in the Algerian hamada, where thousands of Sahrawi refugees erected hundreds of tents

and adobe houses 46 years ago in the hope of abandon them as soon as possible. The majority of refugees attacked by Morocco with white phosphorus and napalm also arrived at this point while they were fleeing the war.

When Saleh arrived, he was 17 years old. He was in full adolescence, that age in which the aspirations for the future seem to run over. At 63 he is still waiting.

“When I left I knew that I had to wait for independence to arrive. And here I continue and I will continue,” adds the Sahrawi, who still keeps his old ID and the Spanish driver’s license that allowed him to transport the soldiers of Spain.

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