

# Moroccan authorities 'have obligation to protect' Sahrawi activist Sultana Khaya

SPS 25/12/2021 - 18:26



**New York** (United Nations), 25 November 2021 (SPS) - The UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, Mary Lawlor, has stressed that the Moroccan authorities "have an obligation to protect" Sahrawi activist Sultana Khaya, who has been under house arrest since November 2020 and who continues to be subjected to intimidation, torture, rape, threats and inhumane practices.

"Sahrawi human rights defender Sultana Khaya told me that she has been held under house arrest for over a year, unable to go out, receive anyone or go to anyone else's house, including a doctor, even when she is ill," indicated Mary Lawlor.

"Sultana Khaya appears to be in grave danger, her health is deteriorating and she is vulnerable to further attacks. The Moroccan authorities have an obligation to protect her," she stressed.

"She (Khaya) told me how, after her arrest in November 2020, she was detained in her family's house with her sister and elderly mother, with dozens of security guards, and that only her mother is allowed to go out to get food," indicated the UN rapporteur.

Yet, she added, Sultana said she had not been charged with any crime and would be prepared to answer any allegations made against her.

The UN rapporteur said she joined other UN independent experts in June 2021 to challenge the Moroccan authorities on the case of Sultana Khaya, who has been a prominent human rights defender for many years.

"An attack on her in 2007 resulted in her losing an eye and she has been the victim of various attacks because of her human rights work. Now she is being held indefinitely in difficult conditions," lamented Ms Lawlor.

"Her house has been stripped of almost all furniture and appliances, and she, her mother and her sister all sleep in the same small room. She (Khaya) told me that in recent months, masked security guards had raided the house several times during the night, tying her hands, blindfolding her and gagging her," she further lamented.

"The Sahrawi activist also declared that during these raids she and her sister were attacked and raped. She said she was in constant fear of further attacks.

She also described how, during two of these raids, the attackers injected her with unknown substances and also threw toxic liquids into the house, stripping the walls of paint and affecting her health," according to the UN rapporteur.