

Ambassador John V. Hanford
DRL/IRF Room 4829
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520
Fax: 202.647.3209

Cc: [Insert your Congressmen here]

Dear Ambassador Hanford,

I am writing to you of my concern for the sufferings of the Sahrawi people of the Western Sahara who are being held hostage as a result of a humanitarian crisis that has lasted for over 30 years. Unfortunately, the captive Sahrawis in the Tindouf camps in Algeria lack the voice and the forum to speak against the abuses inflicted upon them. Therefore, many members of our Evangelical community are embracing the mandate to speak on behalf of these Sahrawis as our responsibility to the defenseless, powerless and the "least of these" in our world.

We are also very aware that our Christian responsibility to the helpless extends beyond the pulpit and the pews into the larger world. Hopefully, we can be the influential voice which speaks on behalf of the Sahrawi hostages before US leaders at all levels. We are very concerned that leaders such as you will share our responsibility and help bring an end to a conflict that has resulted in over 30 years of unacceptable human experience.

More specifically, we have three goals to ensure justice and freedom for the Sahrawi people:

1) Stop the inhumane practice of separating families

Fidel Castro's oppressive regime in Cuba aided in the creation of and continues to fund and ideologically support the POLISARIO Front. The POLISARIO Front's family separation strategy results in breaking down the family unit by severing cultural, linguistic and religious bonds through the Socialist indoctrination of a generation of abducted Sahrawi children with atheist, anti-Western, Marxist, Leninist ideologies. The POLISARIO Front uses these Sahrawi children abducted to Cuba as blackmail to keep their families in the refugee camps of Southern Algeria, and to ensure complicity with the POLISARIO Front's questionable political objectives.

2) **Stop the theft of humanitarian aid**

It has been widely reported that the POLISARIO Front diverts the donations of humanitarian organizations (including Evangelical groups and the US Government via the United Nations) and sells the aid on the black market. The POLISARIO consistently inflates the numbers of the refugees in the camps to attract more aid (by resorting to threats of scarcity) which is then funneled away from those who need it.

There is neither sufficient international oversight of the humanitarian aid nor any transparency mechanism in place to ensure that the stolen proceeds are not funding terrorist and illicit activities.

3) **Stop the suffering that has lasted over 30 years**

The Sahrawi refugee camps should be opened and the now confined Sahrawis should be allowed to choose where they want to freely raise families, practice their faith and live their lives. These Sahrawi people have been denied this right for more than three decades. Families and communities in Morocco should no longer suffer from not knowing the fate of loved ones who are held *incommunicado* in heavily guarded refugee camps.

The search for a fair and just political solution in the Western Sahara should not be allowed to block efforts to solve the ongoing humanitarian crisis of the Sahrawi people being held hostage by the POLISARIO Front. We want our leaders to share our concerns and move forcefully to remove the barriers to freeing the Sahrawi people who have been deprived of their liberty and their dignity.

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; for the rights of those who are destitute."

-Proverbs, 31:8

Thank you for your attention to this matter of grave concern.

Respectfully,