

France has a heavy responsibility in the non-decolonization of Western Sahara.

Open letter from international academics and researchers to Emmanuel MACRON, President of the French Republic

Mr. President of the Republic,

On 27 February 2018, the Court of Justice of the European Union, in its judgment on the fisheries agreements between the EU and Morocco, reiterated very clearly the absence of sovereignty of the Moroccan State over the territory of Western Sahara and its adjacent waters. The Court also reaffirmed the right of the Sahrawi people, represented by the POLISARIO Front, to manage their natural resources as they see fit. This ruling, which will now prevent EU Member States from importing products (agricultural, fisheries, mining, etc.) from this Non-Self-Governing Territory of the United Nations, only underlines the urgent need for peaceful decolonization of this territory, in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV). The decolonization should have happened following Spain's withdrawal from the Territory in February 1976.

Unfortunately, in this process, France supports every year in April, in the Security Council, the Moroccan position of refusing to extend the mandate of the United Nations peacekeeping mission (MINURSO) to human rights monitoring. Morocco also refuses to implement a referendum on self-determination, the primary objective of the 1991 ceasefire and, let us not forget, the United Nations requirement since 1966. This French position allows the Moroccan State - which the UN, the OAU-AU and the EU continue to consider as occupying this territory - to pursue its colonization. Morocco does so by promoting the displacement of populations from Morocco into the occupied Territory, by imprisoning and "judging" Sahrawi political prisoners on Moroccan soil, two flagrant grounds (among others) of violation of international law and international humanitarian law.

This unacceptable position of the French state was once again illustrated on February 12. Indeed, when two French lawyers, representing nineteen Sahrawi prisoners, sentenced in 2017, in a sham trial, to very heavy sentences up to life (group called "Gdeim Izik"), who came in the normal course of their duties to inquire about the state of health of their clients, were arrested on arrival in Morocco. The Moroccan authorities expelled them without the French Embassy in Rabat deeming it appropriate to intervene on their behalf. One of the prisoners, Naama Asfari, whose wife is French, and whom the Moroccan authorities banned from visiting her husband for eighteen months, was immediately put in solitary confinement in a dungeon. This has triggered a hunger strike among other prisoners of the group, a strike that is now causing the greatest concern among human rights defenders who, fortunately, are overseeing their situation.

This umpteenth tragedy, endorsed by the French State, can only plead in favor of extending MINURSO's mandate to include human rights monitoring in Western Sahara, as requested by the Sahrawi authorities and international human rights organizations for many years. To this repressive escalation, the Moroccan authorities imposed a very clear blockade over the territory in recent years: Moroccan law enforcement agencies have regularly expelled and intimidated the missions of international observers, lawyers, elected officials, journalists, human rights activists, researchers, of very diverse nationalities.

Only the organization of a referendum on self-determination will put an end to the colonization of this territory by Spain yesterday (still considered by the UN as the de jure "administering power") and by Morocco today. This colonization currently involves a massive presence of Moroccan police and military forces in the main cities of this territory, forces whose mission today is to stifle any Sahrawi peaceful protest movement. It also involves an unabated exploitation of the territory's natural resources, in particular phosphate and fish stocks, the main coveted resources of Western Sahara. This colonization still passes through a voluntarist policy of population transfers, rapidly unbalancing the sociology of the territory. Finally, it passes through a planned acculturation of Saharawi society, based on an ostensible policy of *folklorization* of local culture that shrouds a more cynical enterprise, especially in schools, of marginalization of this same culture.

Mr. President of the Republic, how can the French State endeavor in recent years to claim a major role in maintaining regional political order in the Sahara-Sahel, in particular through its involvement in the Barkhane Operation and in the constitution of the G5 Sahel, while delaying the application of international law in Western Sahara? How can colonization be qualified as a "crime against humanity" (your declaration in Algiers in February 2017), while preventing the decolonization of the last colony in Africa, which the United Nations has been calling for since 1963, as well as the OAU-AU and the EU? How can France plan and implement a referendum on self-determination in New Caledonia on 4 November 2018, while constantly postponing a similar enactment elsewhere?

The signatories of this letter believe that nothing can justify this French position any more than very shortsighted economic and geostrategic interests, the consequences of which are deplorable for the stability of the Maghreb and for irregular emigration to Europe. How can the home of human rights turn away from a population that has placed its future in the hands of international justice in order to express freely its right to self-determination? How can the French State, with its status in the Security Council, indirectly sentence the Sahrawi refugees of Tindouf to a new decade of misery, distress and frustration?

The Sahrawi authorities agreed to trust the United Nations and to a peaceful resolution of the conflict by laying down their arms in 1991 in exchange for the promise of a referendum on self-determination, which has still not taken place, giving rise to a growing feeling of betrayal of the great powers, France, in particular. The young people born in the camps of Tindouf have no other hope than turn to irregular emigration towards Europe to try, legitimately, to invent a future for themselves. Among these would-be migrants, more than 400 Sahrawi asylum seekers have settled in unstructured camps in downtown Bordeaux for nearly four years to obtain an asylum that France cannot refuse to them today, because France is among the first parties responsible for their misfortune.

The Sahrawi youth, who have known only exile or occupation, ultimately wish today to have access to dignity, which their peaceful struggle since the ceasefire of 1991 must legitimately grant them. At a time when, in the Euro-Mediterranean area, a certain number of disillusioned young people are espousing extremism of all kinds, it is time to show political courage by giving a future to this young Sahrawi nation of tomorrow, educated in and aspiring only to the values of freedom, equality and fraternity, which are those of the French Nation.

Mr. President of the Republic, it is perhaps still time for the French State to correct its position in favor of the application of the law in Western Sahara, by playing a leading role in a peaceful resolution of the conflict alongside international institutions. Having a European UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres,

and his personal envoy, Horst Koehler, also a European, for the first time since the ceasefire of 1991, represents an unprecedented opportunity for Europe, with France in the lead, to play its natural role in contributing to the success of the process in an area strategically and historically vital for Europe. We, therefore, ask the French State whose destiny you preside, to put the question of Western Sahara on the agenda of the next meetings of the G5 Sahel. We also ask you to encourage the Moroccan State to respect scrupulously international law and international humanitarian law, to release the Sahrawi political detainees, and to support the rapid resumption of the organization of a referendum on self-determination. Any proposed solution must abide by and respect international law.

If the French State persisted in its unconditional alignment with the Moroccan position, it would inevitably exclude itself from playing any credible role in the political settlement process conducted under the auspices of the UN. The European leadership that you wish to give back to France would run the risk of being adversely affected, for the European Union does not only advocate respect for the law in domestic policy, but also places its foreign policy within the framework of respect for and application of international law.

The signatories:

Name	Institution	Function
Juan-Luis Alegret	Universitat de Girona (Espagne)	Professor titular
Silvia Almenara Niebla	Universidad de La Laguna (Espagne)	Doctorante
Mohammed Amroun	Université Mouloud Mammeri (Algérie)	Enseignant-chercheur en sciences politiques
Marion Aubrée	EHESS (France)	CRBC/CéSor - EHESS
Sandra L. Babcock	International Human Rights Clinic, Cornell University (USA)	Clinical Professor, Faculty Director, Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide
Marco Balboni	Université de Bologne (Italie)	Professeur de droit
Isaías Barreñada B.	Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Espagne)	Professeur Relations Internationales
Elisabeth Bäschlin Roques	Université de Berne (Suisse)	Géographe
Yazid Ben Hounet	CNRS (France)	Chargé de recherche au CNRS, Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociale
Jean-Claude Bonne	EHESS (France)	Directeur d'études
Anna Bosco	University of Trieste (Italie)	Associate professor of comparative politics
Roger Botte	CNRS (France)	Chercheur
Sébastien Boulay	Université Paris Descartes (France)	Anthropologue
Anna Bozzo	Université Roma Tre (Italie)	Professeur Senior, Histoire des pays musulmans. Membre associée au GSRL
Louise Bruit Zaidman	Université Paris VII (France)	Professeure histoire, Anhima UMR 8210
Claude Calame	Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (France)	Directeur d'études, Centre AnHiMA (Anthropologie et Histoire des Mondes)

Alicia Campos Serrano	Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Espagne)	Antiques, UMR 8210) Departamento Antropología Social
Adolfo Campoy	Oakland University (USA)	Associate Professor, Spanish Department of Modern Languages
Laura Carballo Piñeiro	World Maritime University, of the United Nations (Suède)	Professeure de droit
Maria Carreras i Goicoechea	Università di Catania (Italie)	Ricercatrice presso l'Università di Catania Dipartimento di Scienze Umanistiche
Michel Casevitz	Université Paris Ouest Nanterre (France)	Professeur émérite en Etudes grecques
Aurore Catherine Sandro Cattacin	Université de Caen (France) Université de Genève (Suisse)	Maître de conférences en droit public, CRDFED Professeur ordinaire, directeur, Institut de recherches sociologiques
Lucio Compagno	Università di Catania (Italie)	Dipartimento di Ingegneria Elettrica, Elettronica ed Informatica
Carmelo Danisi	Università di Bologna - Forlì campus (Italie) Sussex University (G-B)	Professeur de droit international à l'Université de Bologna (Italy) et chercheur à l'Université de Sussex (UK)
Pierre Dasen	Université de Genève (Suisse)	Professeur émérite
Eric David	Université libre de Bruxelles (Belgique)	Professeur émérite de droit international Président du Centre de droit international
Josquin Debaz Anne-Sophie Denolle	EHESS (France) Université de Nîmes (France)	Ingénieur de recherche Laboratoire CHROME
Valeria Deplano Tara Deubel	Università di Bologna (Italie) University of South Florida (USA)	Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche e Sociali Assistant Professor in anthropology
Pietro Di Serego Alighieri	EHESS (France)	Doctorant, IMAF
Joaquim Dolz	Université de Genève (Suisse)	Faculté de psychologie et des sciences de l'éducation
Mark Drury	City University of New York (USA)	PhD Candidate, The Graduate Center
David M. Duque Espino	Universidad de Extremadura (Espagne)	Grupo de Investigación PRETAGU Área de Prehistoria. Dpto. de Historia. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras
Laura Feliu Martinez	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Espagne)	Professeure de Relations Internationales
Eugénie Duval Sabina Fontana	Université de Caen (France) Università di Catania (Italie)	Doctorante, laboratoire CRDFED
Nada Diane Fridi Kiyoko Furusawa	EHESS (France) Tokyo Woman 's Christian	Master anthropologie, Architecte à l'ENSAPVS Professor

Richard Gillespie	University (Japon) University of Liverpool (G-B)	Emeritus Professor
Ana Giménez Adelantado	Universitat Jaume I (Espagne)	Departament de Filosofia i Sociologia Fac. Ciències Humanes i Socials
Carmen Gómez	Facultas Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales. Sede (Equateur)	Profesora titular
Isabel Gomes	Universidade de Coimbra (Portugal)	Centro de Estudos Sociais
Prof. Dr. Javier A. González Vega	Universidad de Oviedo (Espagne)	Catedrático de Derecho internacional público y Relaciones internacionales ; Antiguo Consejero en la Representación Permanente de España ante la Unión Europea
Philippe Guérin	Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3 (France)	Professeur de langue, littérature et culture du Moyen Âge italien
Larosi Haidar	Universidad de Granada (Espagne)	Professeur de linguistique et littérature
Benoit Hazard	CNRS (France)	Anthropologue, chargé de recherche au CNRS, co-rédacteur en chef des Cahiers d'études africaines
Keltoum Irbah	Geneva Business School (Suisse)	Docteur en sociologie, Professeur Geneva Business School
Ferran Izquierdo Brichs	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Espagne)	Professeur en Relations Internationales
Aurélie Journée	EHESS (France)	Laboratoire d'anthropologie sociale
Souadou Lagdaf	Università degli studi di Catania (Italie)	
Rose-Marie Lagrave	EHESS (France)	directrice d'études en sociologie
Eleonora Landucci	EHESS (France)	étudiante de M2 en anthropologie
Giuliana Laschi	Università di Bologna (Italie)	
Juliette Lecame	Université de Caen (France)	Doctorante et enseignante vacataire, laboratoire CRDFED
Béatrice Lecestre-Rollier	Université Paris Descartes (France)	Maître de conférences en anthropologie
Michèle Leclerc-Olive	EHESS (France)	chercheuse CNRS honoraire, Institut de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur les Enjeux Sociaux
Bernabé López García	Université de Madrid (Espagne)	Professeur émérite
Delphine Lourtau	Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide (USA)	Executive Director
Rémy Madinier	CNRS-EHESS (France)	Co-directeur, Centre Asie du Sud-Est (CASE) UMR 8170 CNRS-EHESS
Corine Maitte	Université de Paris-Est Marne-la-Vallée (France)	professeure d'histoire moderne

Giulia Maltese	Université autonome de Madrid (Espagne) et Université de Bologne (Italie)	Doctorante
Rosario Mangiameli	Università di Catania (Italie)	Prof. Ordianrio
Antonio Martínez Puñal	Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (Espagne)	Profesor Titular de Dereito Internacional Público e Relacións Internacionais
Emmanuel Martinoli	(Suisse)	Docteur en médecine
Luz Marina Mateo	Universidad Nacional de La Plata (Argentine)	Cátedra Libre de Estudios sobre el Sáhara Occidental (única en el mundo), Instituto de Relaciones Internacionales
Takuya Matsumoto	Université de Kyoto (Japon)	Professeur associé, Institut des études humaines et environnementales
Akihisa Matsuno	Osaka University (Japon)	Professor in International Politics Osaka School of International Public Policy (OSIPP)
Daria Motta	Università degli studi di Catania (Italie)	
Jacob Mundy	Colgate University (USA)	Assistant Professor in Peace and conflict Studies
Véronique Nahoum-Grappe	EHESS (France)	chercheure en sciences sociales
Tania Ogay	Université de Fribourg (Suisse)	Professeure associée en anthropologie de l'éducation et de la formation, Département des Sciences de l'Education
Mari OKA	Kyoto University (Japon)	Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies
María Angustias Parejo	Universidad de Granada (Espagne)	
Ignacio Pavón Soldevila	Universidad de Extremadura (Espagne)	Grupo de Investigación PRETAGU Área de Prehistoria. Dpto. de Historia. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras
Christiane Perregaux	Université de Genève (Suisse)	Professeure honoraire, Faculté de psychologie et des Sciences de l'éducation
Vincenzo Pezzino	Università di Catania (Italie)	Faculté de Médecine
Gianni Piazza	University of Catania (Italie)	Associate Professor of Political Sociology
Elisa Piras	Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, Pisa (Italie)	
Moisés Ponce de León	Université Rennes 2 (France)	Géologue
Madina Querre	Centre de recherche REVeSS (France)	Dr en anthropologie sociale et culturelle Enseignante associée Faculté d'anthropologie sociale, ethnologie, Bordeaux Rédactrice en chef de la revue en ligne FaceAFace. Regards sur la santé
Marie-Joëlle Redor-	Université de Caen	Professeure, Faculté de droit

Fichot Alonso Rodríguez Díaz	Universidad de Extremadura	Área de Prehistoria, Dep. Historia, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras
José Antonio Rodríguez-Esteban Marie Rota	Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Espagne) Université de Lorraine	Profesor Titular, Departamento de Geografía Maître de conférences en droit public, Membre de l'IRENEE - Institut de Recherches sur l'Évolution de la Nation Et de l'État
Carlos Ruiz Miguel	Universidad de Santiago de Compostela (Espagne)	Catedrático de Derecho Constitucional Director del Centro de Estudios sobre el Sahara Occidental
Laura Sciacca	Università degli Studi di Catania (Italie)	
Carles Serra Salamé	Université de Girona (Espagne)	Antropologue, professeur à la Faculté d'Éducation et de Psychologie
Vivian Solana	Brandeis University (USA)	Mellon Sawyer Fellow, Lecturer in Anthropology
Joaquim SOLER SUBILS Masaaki Sugimura	Universitat de Girona (Espagne) Université Rykoku, Kyoto (Japon)	Professeur honoraire
Kyungsik Suh	Tokyo Keizai University (Japon)	Professor
Javier Surasky	Universidad Nacional de La Plata (Argentine)	Profesor de Derecho Internacional Público, Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas y Sociales
Toshiyuki Takabayashi Hibiki Takeda	Waseda University (Japon) Kyoto University (Japon)	Lecturer Master student (anthropology), Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies
Junko Takeuchi	l'Université des Etudes étrangères de Kobé (Japon)	Professeur
Ana de Lemos Tomás Satoshi Ukai	EHESS (France) Université de Hitotsubashi (Japon)	doctorante, CEIAS
Pål Wrange	Stockholm Centre for International Law and Justice (Suède)	Professor of International Law, Director
Alfred-Maurice de Zayas	Geneva School of Diplomacy and International Relations (Suisse)	Expert indépendant du Conseil des Droits de l'Homme des Nations unies sur la promotion d'un ordre international démocratique et équitable.
Jean Ziegler	Université de Genève (Suisse)	Vice-président du Comité consultatif du Conseil des Droits de l'Homme de l'ONU
Yahia H. ZOUBIR	KEDGE Business School (France)	Professeur de sciences politiques

Stephen Zunes

University of San Francisco
(USA)

Professor of Politics & Coordinator of Middle
Eastern Studies