

Speech Sahrawi Youth Global Strike 25.03.22 #PeopleNotProfit

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Activists, My name is Khadja Bedati, I am speaking on behalf of the Sahrawi Youth. Over the past years, I have participated in protests, Global Climate Strikes and general assemblies to express my concerns about HeidelbergCement's activities in the territories of Western Sahara illegally occupied by Morocco. So far, nothing has changed in the situation of the investments and HeidelbergCement continues to disregard international law and the natural rights of Sahrawi civilians. Before I address the issue of HeidelbergCement, I would like to talk about the history of Western Sahara. Western Sahara is located between Morocco, Mauritania and Algeria. "Sahara" means "desert" in Arabic, but our country offers more than drought and sand: waters off the coast rich in fish, crude oil, iron and gold, and the second-largest phosphate deposit on earth. After the withdrawal of the Spanish colonial rulers in 1975, Western Sahara was occupied by neighboring Morocco. Many Sahrawis had to flee to Algeria to escape the advancing army. During the flight, the Sahrawis were bombarded with white phosphorus and napalm. More than 160,000 people live in the refugee camps and are completely dependent on humanitarian aid. They suffer from the lack of economic opportunities and future prospects. The value of phosphate from three shiploads from occupied Western Sahara is roughly equivalent to the amount of humanitarian aid received by Sahrawi refugees in one year. Yet they are the rightful owners of the raw materials and natural wealth. Morocco has separated from the liberated territories of Western Sahara with a sand wall, the "Wall," which is mined and guarded by army posts. At 2,700 km, this wall is 16 times longer than the Berlin Wall. It is called the "Wall of Shame" by the Sahrawis. As early as 1991, the UN peacekeeping force MINURSO was instructed to hold a referendum to decide on the future status of Western Sahara. The vote is still blocked by Morocco today. From 1991 until 13.11.2020 there was neither war nor peace in Western Sahara. The war in Western Sahara broke out on 13/11/2020 after the Moroccan military violently attacked Sahrawi civilians who had already been peacefully demonstrating for their self-determination and rights in the Guerguerat buffer zone since 20/10/2020. Guerguerat is the trade route for Morocco to Africa, among other things, Sahrawi resources are exported through this buffer zone. All this happens under the eyes of the passive peacekeeping mission (MINURSO) of the United Nations. At the same time, blatant human rights violations continue to be perpetrated in the occupied territories of Western Sahara to this day. The people in the occupied territories of Western Sahara such as the family of Sultana Khaya, political prisoners, human rights activists, etc., are delivered to the Moroccan regime and its inhumane acts, while the international community looks the other way. Where were all these people who are now sided with Ukraine in the outbreak of war in Western Sahara? Where is Spain, which is responsible for our suffering? Why does no state feel responsible for our condition and situation to this day? Why does Spain get away with their responsibility towards us every time, why is Morocco not held accountable for its blatant human rights violations and exploitation? Why do we continue to be exploited by western countries without our consent? Where is the solidarity with the Saharawi population or is it because the Western Sahara is far away from our own front door?! HeidelbergCement is building grinding plants in the occupied Western Sahara

without the consent of the recognized representation of the Sahrawi people, the Frente Polisario. HeidelbergCement has a clear responsibility towards the activities of Ciments du Maroc, after all they are the majority owner. The German government has made it clear that it does not support any economic activities of German companies in Western Sahara, nor does it secure any business through export credit and investment guarantees. Despite this, HeidelbergCement intends to remain the majority shareholder of Ciment du Maroc in the long term. I am aware that our world is strongly influenced by capitalism, therefore companies like HeidelbergCement take the right to disregard international law, human rights and environmental aspects in other countries like Western Sahara, Palestine and Indonesia. HeidelbergCement should not be proud of such actions and must bear the consequences! HeidelbergCement strives for access to Africa and has decided to ignore the situation of the territories of Western Sahara occupied by Morocco, and thus international law. Again and again HeidelbergCement argues that the local Saharawis benefit from the grinding mills and every time the question comes to my mind: How should the Saharawis benefit from something they do not even own, although their country is rich in resources? They are oppressed and have no rights according to the Moroccan occupation. How should the Sahrawis, who are in prison for life for standing up for our right to self-determination or for protesting Morocco's exploitation of our resources - an exploitation made even more profitable by HeidelbergCement's grinding mills. The International Court of Justice and the Court of Justice of the European Union agree: Western Sahara is not part of Morocco. And as such, the European Court of Justice stressed, the people of Western Sahara must be asked for their consent when it comes to the resources of Western Sahara. This kind of engagement violates international law. HeidelbergCement thereby disregards all the nice promises made on its websites in the presentation of its own corporate strategy. HeidelbergCement must stop its activities in the occupied territories of Western Sahara until the status quo has been clarified. Thank you for your attention.