

Press Release

Western Sahara: Australian Superphosphate not so super

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As the U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's starts a tour of North Africa and Incitec Pivot holds an extraordinary General Meeting in Melbourne, the Australia Western Sahara Association, would like to draw attention to Western Sahara, the unresolved issue that affects the North African region.

Western Sahara in north west Africa has been illegally occupied by Morocco since 1975. Unless the occupation ends and the Saharawis are given a chance to decide their own future there will be no stability, peace or progress in north west Africa, an important region given its proximity to Europe and its abundance in natural resources, including phosphate .

Australian companies such as Incitec Pivot have been illegally exploiting Western Sahara's phosphate for over 20 years.

Trading with Morocco in the phosphate that rightfully belongs to Western Sahara is harming Saharawis living under Moroccan rule and those in refugee camps in south west Algeria. It is giving comfort to Morocco's brutal regime, which is condemned by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and many other human rights organizations

Three Australian companies (Incitec Pivot, CSBP and Impact Fertilisers) are hampering the resolution of the conflict in Western Sahara, and the trade is providing Morocco with huge amounts of money for its illegal occupation. The Australian companies are turning a blind eye to the suffering of the Saharawis living under Moroccan occupation and the refugees living in exile in a very harsh desert along the border with Algeria.

"We remain convinced that Australian farmers would not be happy to know the truth behind their superphosphate" said Georgia Vlassopoulos, chair of AWSA (Victoria).

AWSA calls on the Australian government to assume its responsibility and make sure that Australian companies behave legally and ethically in their trading activities.

We also urge the Australian government to contribute to the speedy, fair and just resolution of the Western Sahara question in accordance with UN resolutions .

The Saharawi people are entitled to have their say in what happens in their country. Not only over the exploitation of its natural resources, but more crucially, to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination.

P.S.

* From Australia Western Sahara Association (AWSA). For further information :
<http://www.awsa.org.au>