

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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Dear Mr. Minister:

Human Rights Watch is concerned by reports that at least three adult women of Sahrawi origin are being prevented by their families from leaving the area administered by the Polisario: the Sahrawi refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria and the nearby “liberated territory” of Western Sahara.

Human Rights Watch [spoke out](#) in a previous case of this nature in 2014, urging the Polisario to intervene to ensure the woman’s right to exercise her freedom of movement.

According to the information at our disposal, all three of the women are legal residents of Spain who returned to the refugee camps to visit their biological families, but their families are now preventing them from departing despite the women’s having expressed their desire to do so. One has Spanish citizenship; the other two have Spanish residency cards. They have been in the camps now for between two months and two years, according to our information.

The women’s friends and host families in Spain have widely publicized their situation, resulting in substantial media coverage and Facebook pages for each woman. We therefore trust that Polisario authorities in Spain and in the refugee camps are aware of them.

The three women are:

- **Maloma Morales de Matos**, born June 23, 1993, Spanish citizen, ID number: 54437503-E, place of residence in Spain: Seville. <https://www.facebook.com/Un-viaje-sin-regreso-Libertad-YA-Maloma-811773395636166/?fref=nf>
- **Darya Embarek Selma**, born April 27, 1989, Spanish residence permit number: X-8667132-L, place of residence in Spain: Tenerife. <https://www.facebook.com/PlataformaFreeDarya/>
- **Nadjiba Mohamed Belkacem**, born August 6, 1991, Spanish residence permit number: X-4207609-N, place of residence in Spain: Rociana del Condado (Huelva). <https://www.facebook.com/NahjibaLibre/>

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Maloma Morales de Matos. According to persons close to Maloma in Spain, she traveled to the refugee camps, accompanied by her Spanish adoptive father, Mr. Jose Morales Ortega of Seville, on December 5, 2015. They were scheduled to leave together on December 12, but Maloma's biological family prevented her from entering the car that would take her and Morales to their Tindouf-to-Algiers flight. Morales left and notified Polisario officials, including Abidin Bouchayara, the representative of the Polisario Front to the Province of Andalusia, that Maloma's relatives had prevented her from departing as planned. According to persons close to Maloma in Spain, they have lost contact with her since December 25; before that date she told them in their communications that she wished to leave the camps for Spain.

Nadjiba Mohamed Kacem. Jose Maria Contreras Morejón, a foster parent of Nadjiba in Spain, told Human Rights Watch that she has been held against her will since December 2013, when she returned from Spain to the refugee camps in order to collect documents needed to apply for Spanish citizenship. Contreras stated that Polisario authorities were aware of the case and assured him they were trying to resolve it. Contreras said recently, however, that Nadjiba is unreachable. He does not know her present location; he says he believes the family may have taken her away from the refugee camps and into the desert, out of cellphone range.

Darya Embarek Selma. Darya returned to visit the camps in January 2014, according to reports in the Spanish press, which reported that her family had confiscated her documents to prevent her from leaving. Spanish media reported in November 2014 that she had told them that her wish was to return to Tenerife, and she has reaffirmed that wish in more recent communications.

Because the confinement of a person against her will is a serious crime, we wish to receive clarifications from you at your earliest convenience.

We call on the Polisario authorities to investigate the wishes of each woman to ascertain her wishes in a setting that is free of pressure, and to guarantee her freedom of movement if she wishes to depart the area under your administration.

If Polisario authorities have already taken these steps, we ask that you inform us what you determined the preference of each woman to be, and what measures you are taking, as warranted, to ensure her freedom of movement.

If family members or other individuals are preventing their freedom of movement, we call on Polisario authorities to arrest and prosecute them for illegal confinement.

Since there appears to be a pattern of families confining young women relatives who wish to depart the camps to return to lives that they have made abroad, we urge Polisario authorities to implement public announcements and other educational measures to heighten public awareness that illegal confinement is a serious criminal offense.

Human Rights Watch would be grateful to receive your clarifications about these cases by February 25, 2016. We intend to continue to monitor these cases.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Goldstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Eric Goldstein
Deputy Director
Middle East and North Africa Division
Human Rights Watch

Cc: Abba Alhassan, president of the Sahrawi Human Rights Commission