

SAHARAWI SUPPORT CONFERENCE



People of the Sahara continue their struggle

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Regional Secretary, Region 1

AT THE end of November last year, the 27th European Conference of support was held in Seville.

The conference was attended by almost 400 delegates and, despite its official title – “European” – delegates attended from all over the world; Cuba, Australia, South Africa to name a few.

In open session the conference roundly condemned the inactivity of the United Nations in bringing about a referendum for self determination and their apparent insistence that the Western Sahara becomes an almost self-governing “province” of Morocco.

As well as the open sessions, the conference also broke up into work-groups to discuss several issues such as aid to the camps, education in the camps and legal assistance in countering the UN’s stand against the referendum. Another workshop, of special interest to the FBU representatives there, was discussing assistance that Trades Unions could give to the Saharawi people’s trade union UGTSARIO.

Following discussions between the Unions represented there, the points listed below were eventually agreed and put to the full conference for ratification.

- To reaffirm political and moral support to the Saharawi cause, and to the UGTSARIO in their struggle for self-determination.
- To urge the United Nations to again take up the peace process as an instrument for holding the referendum on self-determination of the Saharawi people.
- To condemn strongly any attempt to supplant the referendum process with any false solution whose objective perpetuates the Moroccan colonial occupation of Western Sahara, whether it is called “framework agreement” or “third way” or any other name.
- To express serious concern and condemn the systematic violation of human rights of the Saharawi citizens in the occupied territory of Western Sahara, as well as expressing solidarity with the disappeared Saharawi’s and with all the victims of terror and of the Moroccan oppression.
- To call on the ETUC to participate actively in the defence of the legitimate right of the Saharawi people to self-determina-



tion and independence.

- The necessity of organising a conference of European trade unions to show solidarity with the Saharawi cause, during 2002.
- To adhere to all the resolutions adopted by the 27th European Conference and to congratulate the European arc*, which has shown solidarity with the SDAR, for the success of this conference.

Signed: CC.OO [Comisiones Obreras, Spain], ELA-UGTA (Algeria), CGTP (Portugal), FBU (UK), UNISON (UK), FSU (Australia), UGTSARIO

Whilst the conference was an undoubted success and all of

the work-groups agreed to increase their efforts of assistance, it was unfortunate that only two unions from the UK could manage to attend. The FBU and UNISON delegates who did attend agreed that more effort must be put into encouraging participation by more Trades Unions and we will work towards that for any future conferences or visitations to the refugee camps.

The FBU recently circulated details of a letter campaign aimed at the King of Morocco and the General Secretary of the United Nations. Through campaigns like this and more support from the Trades Unions we hope that human rights abuses against the Saharawi will cease and that the UN will finally agree to the promised referendum and allow them to return to their homeland.

Tam Tierney, Pete Skinley

* I assume this means all the European organisations taking part in the conference