

**INTERNATIONAL COUNSEL FOR SAHRAWI POLITICAL PRISONER SULTANA
KHAYA CONDEMNS HER TORTURE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT**



Sultana Khaya protesting from the rooftop of her home while under de facto house arrest.

Washington, D.C. – International human rights lawyer Jared Genser announced today that he has joined the international legal team for Sahrawi human rights defender Sultana Khaya. Khaya has been effectively held under house arrest by Moroccan authorities in Boujdour, Western Sahara since November 2020. During that time, she and others in her family home have been harassed, assaulted, and tortured.

As a prominent advocate for Western Sahara's right to self-determination and the end to violence against Sahrawi women, Khaya has long been targeted by Moroccan authorities for her work. She has been beaten and tortured many times, including being beaten so badly by police during a peaceful demonstration in 2007 that she lost her right eye.

Moroccan security forces have been stationed outside her home since November 19, 2020, when she was first told that she would be arrested and tortured if she left. Since then, she has been detained under de facto house arrest with no legal justification. Moreover, in the past six months Moroccan forces have raided Khaya's home without a warrant, physically assaulted her, harassed her and other persons present in the home, thrown noxious substances into the house, cut off the electricity, threatened to kill her, and denied her access to medical treatment for the injuries she has suffered. Her detention has been highlighted by [Human Rights Watch](#), [Amnesty International](#), and [Frontline Defenders](#), among others.

The situation escalated abruptly over the past few days, seemingly as part of a broader crackdown on Sahrawi activists across the region. On May 10, police raided the Khaya home and removed three human rights activists who had been staying with the family. The police took

the three activists into custody and tortured them for several hours before dumping them in a remote part of the desert. Then, during the night of May 11, Moroccan police again raided Khaya's home, brutally attacking and sexually assaulting her. Although she attempted to escape and seek help, the police dragged her back into the home and continued to beat her. She remains in severe pain from the wounds inflicted during the raid.

Genser, who serves as pro bono counsel to Khaya along with law student Stephanie Herrmann, issued the following statement: "It is a great privilege for me to join Sultana Khaya's defense team as international counsel. Her detention and mistreatment – which violate numerous provisions of international law – are clearly related to her outspoken criticism of the Moroccan government and peaceful activism in favor of Sahrawi self-determination. Her team and I will work tirelessly to expose this injustice and advocate for her immediate release."

"I am awed by how strong Sultana remains in the face of such horrific treatment, but I also fear for her life," stated Tone Sørffonn Moe, a Norwegian human rights jurist also serving as part of Khaya's international defense team together with the Norwegian law professor and former Chair and member of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Mads Andenæs. "This most recent raid marks an intense and highly concerning escalation in Moroccan authorities' maltreatment of Sultana and her family, and I worry their behavior will continue to worsen. It is vital that the international community pays close attention to her case, as well as that of other Sahrawi activists, and holds Morocco to account for its gross violation of human rights and humanitarian law."

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