

The EU, Morocco, and the Western Sahara: A Chance for Justice

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Morocco needs to balance its desire to hold onto an economically and politically important region with the realities of EU human rights regulations and other international norms.

In February, the Kingdom of Morocco suspended diplomatic relations with the European Union. This extreme measure was taken in response to a December 2015 ruling by the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) to suspend an agricultural trade agreement between the EU and Morocco because it included the Western Sahara (WS) within its territorial scope. While relations appear to be in a dire state, the row is almost certainly temporary -- and in fact, it may provide an opportunity to create the collective pressure needed to nudge Morocco towards a more just solution of the WS issue.

The CJEU invalidated the trade agreement on the grounds that the European Commission had not conducted sufficient due diligence to ensure the deal did not violate the rights of Saharawis -- the Western Saharan people -- over the farming and fishing resources in their territory. The European Council began the process of appealing the CJEU ruling in February. Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, has stated that "the agreements between Morocco and the European Union are not a violation of international law and as such an appeal has been filed, the agricultural agreement otherwise remains in force"...

*To read the full report, download the PDF above. This study was originally **published by the European Council on Foreign Relations***

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