



Conference Announcement

International Law and the Question of Western Sahara

Venue: Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, The Netherlands

Date: 27-28 October 2006

Western Sahara is situated in northwest Africa, bordering Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania. The status of the territory is already for a long time in dispute. Despite efforts by various parties, including the United Nations, the African Union/Organization of African Unity and concerned individual state and non-state actors, this dispute has not yet been resolved. Sovereignty over Western Sahara is claimed by Morocco, which also controls most of the territory at present. The majority of the Saharawi people continue to live in five refugee camps in the Tindouf region of western Algeria. In 1976 the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro (Polisario Front) proclaimed the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). The Saharawi Republic is a member of the African Union and has been recognized by over 70 states.

This dispute and the situation in Western Sahara at large brings up highly complex and challenging questions relating among others to the status of the territory under international law, the implications of the right to self-determination, respect for human rights and protection against human rights violations, and the lawfulness and/or legitimacy of natural resource exploitation.

In close collaboration with the International Platform of Jurists for East Timor (IPJET), the Institute of Social Studies organizes an academic conference that seeks to:

- analyze the current state of Western Sahara,
- examine the viewpoints of relevant actors, and
- explore the prospects for bringing the dispute over the status of the territory to an end.

The various sessions will address the historical background of the question of Western Sahara, general international law aspects, human rights aspects (in the first place the right to self-determination), and issues relating to sovereignty over natural resources.

The approximately 30 speakers include **representatives of the parties** in dispute (invited) and the following experts on the question:

Prof. Christine Chinkin (London School of Economics, UK) - Keynote speaker

José Ignacio Alguero Cuervo (Historian, Spain)

Toby Shelley (Journalist and writer, UK)

Prof. Roger Clark (Rutgers School of Law, USA)

Prof. Lauri Hannikainen (University of Turku, Finland)

Prof. Eduardo Trillo (National University for Distance Education, Spain)
Catriona Drew (SOAS, University of London, UK)
Prof. Iain Scobbie (SOAS, University of London, UK)
Lord Eric Avebury (Parliamentary Human Rights Group, UK) (to be confirmed)
Aminetu Haidar (Juan Maria Bandrès Prize 2005, ex-political prisoner, Western Sahara)
Prof. Stephen Zunes (University of San Francisco, USA)
Charles Scheiner (La'o Hamutuk, Timor-Leste)
Viktor Kaisiepo (Presidium of the Papuan Council, West Papua)
Gerry Simpson (London School of Economics, UK) (to be confirmed)
Stephanie Koury (SOAS, University of London, UK)
Prof. Marcel Brus (University of Groningen, the Netherlands)
Vincent Chapaux (Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium)
Sasha Stepanova (Lawyer, Prague, Czech Republic)
Carlos Wilson (Western Sahara Resource Watch, USA)
Erik Hagen (Journalist, Norway)
Prof. Aymeric Chauprade (University of Paris-I Sorbonne, France) (to be confirmed)
Prof. Yahia Zoubir (Euromed Marseille School of Management, France)
Prof. Pål Wrangé (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden) (to be confirmed)
Ambassador Frank Ruddy (Former Dep. Chairman of MINURSO, USA)(to be confirmed)
Prof. Carlos Ruiz Miguel (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)
Karin Finkler (Foreign policy adviser of Congressman Joseph Pitts, USA)
Karin Scheele (MEP, President of the Intergroup on Western Sahara, Austria)
Prof. Jaume Saura-Estapà (University of Barcelona, Spain)

Fee and pre-registration

The conference fee is **€15.00**

Reduced fee for students, ISS staff, IPJET members and participants related with Western Sahara: **€7.50**

Conference fee includes all coffee breaks and the reception on Saturday evening. Lunches on Friday and Saturday are optional and cost **€8.00** each.

Given the many similarities between the questions of Western Sahara and of East Timor, IPJET gives the opportunity to all of those who register to the conference to acquire its book **'The East Timor Problem and the Role of Europe'** for the special price of **€5.00**. The book is a collective work drawing together the papers presented at a 1996 conference in Dublin and covers many of the subjects of the current Western Sahara conference.

The pre-registration to the conference can be done through e-mail to:

registratie.iss.ipjet.conf@gmail.com

You will receive an e-mail confirming your registration and containing information on the methods of payment.

The pre-registration form, the complete conference program and information on the IPJET book are attached.