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Press release | 10.12.2013

# EU-Morocco Fisheries Agreement

## Press Release from the EFA Group in the EP

MEPs from the European Parliament's European Free Alliance Group have condemned as 'shameful' an agreement on fishing rights reached between the EU and Morocco. MEPs approved the EU – Morocco Fisheries agreement at a vote in Strasbourg today.

The controversy stems from the inclusion in the agreement of Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara. The agreement gives EU boats the right to fish in Western Saharawi territorial waters. This is illegal under international law, as Morocco has no right to hand away the natural resources of a country it occupies.

Western Sahara has been under Moroccan occupation since the mid-1970s when Spain decolonised the territory. Two years ago, MEPs rejected the same fisheries agreement following concerns about its legality, and the rights of the Saharawi people.

EFA MEP **Mark Demesmaeker** (N-VA, Flanders) said:

*"The EU has enough to say about human rights and the rights of minorities all around the world, but when push comes to shove, it seems that strategic trade considerations are always paramount. By turning its back on the right of the Saharawi people to self-determination and control of its natural resources, the EU is increasingly a cause of conflict between Morocco and Western Sahara. This is a shameful episode in EU trade and fisheries policy."*

EFA MEP **Inaki Irazabalbeitia** (Aralar, Basque Country) said:

*"This disgraceful agreement totally ignores the rights of the Saharawi people to determine their own future, and have control over their natural resources. The EU has put profit before people and abandoned its supposed principle of respect for human rights. I voted against this agreement. It will be interesting to see which MEPs turned their backs on the people of Western Sahara in favour of a neo-colonial fisheries agreement."*

EFA President **Jill Evans** MEP (Plaid Cymru, Wales) said:

*"EFA has always supported the right of the people of Western Sahara to determine their own futures and*

*have control over their own resources. Today's shameful vote ignores both of these principles. It is not for the EU or the Moroccan government to sign away control over the natural resources of an occupied territory. When the EU acts in this disgraceful way, it only undermines any credibility that Europe has to negotiate and promote respect for human rights on a world stage."*

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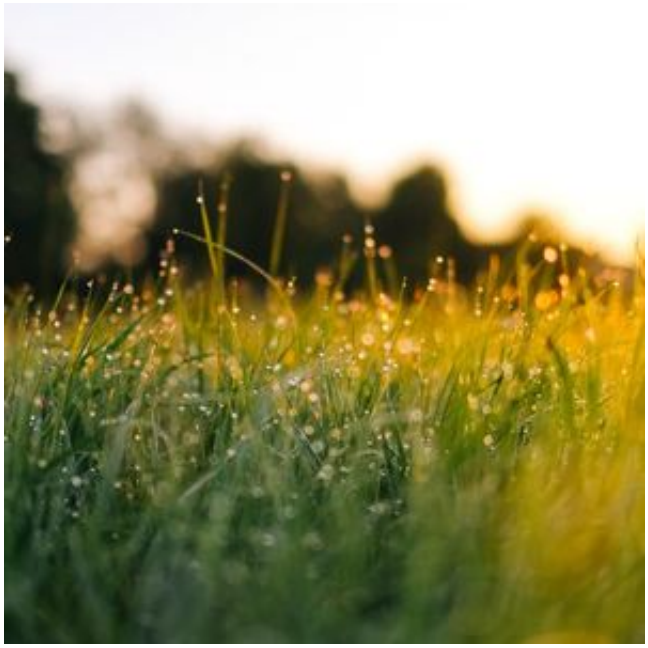
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**Responsible MEPs**



Jill Evans

Member

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