

20 June 2017

## WORLD REFUGEE DAY

in the Sahrawi Refugee Camps

**Every day has been a refugee day for the Sahrawis who have known exile for the past 41 years.**

It started in October 1975, when war was raging in Western Sahara. The first Sahrawi families made their way to South-West Algeria in search for safety. The arid and inhospitable desert became a safe haven for them to reside. But with no resolution to the conflict in sight, what was initially meant as temporary shelter became permanent, and over the years their return home has become an ever more distant hope.

The camps today bear lone witness of a forgotten crisis. The old generations have become weary, while the young ones have lost hope. The swift resolution of the conflict which was a concrete goal still has not arrived. The young women and men are left idle, and while many of them are educated and well-informed, their skills are not met with opportunities, which are always out of reach. The young have therefore grown frustrated. Their idleness paired with the silence from the international community and the inertia in the resolution of the conflict all result in a bleak condition.

The humanitarian context in the camps is extremely fragile. Despite the fact that the crisis has been ongoing for 41 years, the international assistance does not even cover the emergency humanitarian standards. Numerous indicators demonstrate that some of the most basic needs in terms of water, nutrition, health or education are not met.

This situation has become even more fragile since 2015, when funding has started to decrease. Today, this diminution bears direct and visible consequences on the ground. The food assistance which has been delivered by the World Food Programme (WFP) since 1986 has recently become compromised. In May 2017, the food rations have had to be reduced by 20%<sup>1</sup>.

The cutback on the humanitarian assistance in the camps is the last straw that the refugees can bear. If estrangement, isolation, and hopelessness were tolerable, this will not be.

Today is the 41<sup>st</sup> World Refugee Day for the Sahrawi refugees living in Algeria. Let it not pass in silence.

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<sup>1</sup> WFP Forced To Reduce Food Rations For Western Sahara Refugees As Ramadan Approaches  
<http://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/wfp-forced-reduce-food-rations-western-sahara-refugees-ramadan-approaches>

