



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

Mr. Ahmed Omar
President International Centre for Supporting
Rights and Freedoms
Geneva,
Date: 30/03/2019

Sir,

We were informed through several channels that you disseminate on a wide scale through social media and email, a message that contains fully incorrect information regarding our association, ICSFT. You even did not hesitate to call upon the ECOSOC to withdraw the consultative status of ICSFT and on his Highness the of Kuwait to instruct his government to take “the necessary measures” against the President of ICSFT.

It is very clear that your action is abusive and slanderous and intended to cause serious harm to our association and its President.

1) In your message you refer first of all to a side event organised by ICSFT on March 15, 2019. This event raised questions regarding the human rights situation in various parts of the Arab World, including in the Western Sahara. On the latter M. Najla Mohamed, a human rights activist from the Western Sahara, spoke. In your message you pretend that ICSFT “hosted persons from the Polisario's groups, which Calls for the separation of Western Sahara from the Kingdom of Morocco for the establishment what is called “the Sahrawi Republic”.” This allegation is not true. ICSFT does not ask its invitees for their political affiliation, unless of course a speaker represents a particular political movement in a side event in which case the fact that the person speaks on behalf of that movement will be mentioned in the announcement of the event. As said M. Najla Mohamed spoke as a human rights- and women’s activist. We ignore her political affiliation.



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2) You reproach ICSFT to have given the floor to a person criticising the human rights record of the Moroccan authorities while not having examined the situation on the ground. You claim the exclusive right for your own organisation to speak on the subject while you “visited the area”. This claim is preposterous. First of all, ICSFT is very dedicated to free and open debate on questions as these. Your organisation has perfectly the right to defend the Moroccan authorities and their viewpoint on the Western Sahara. However, your claim that any point of view that is different from yours should not be tolerated is totally unacceptable. It is in fact an attempt to silence voices that are critical to the policies conducted by a UN member State. Such approach would make the work of NGO’s completely impossible while the role of NGO’s is precisely to be watchdogs of government action. Secondly you might have noticed that numerous human rights organisations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have also criticised in very strong terms the violations of human rights by Morocco in the Western Sahara (despite the fact that during your visits to the area you didn’t see any of these violations). Will you call also upon the ECOSOC to withdraw the consultative status from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch? Your attempt to organise censorship on views critical of that of the Moroccan authorities illustrates perfectly your strange conception of the role of NGOs which we do not share. ICSFT on the contrary holds in high esteem the independence of the NGO’s from any government and the necessity of a free debate. Thirdly, even though the establishment of a free Sahrawi Republic was not the topic of our side event, you seem to ignore that the African Union recognizes the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic as well as many countries in the world. The United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Union and the European Union (EU) support “the right of self-determination of the Sahrawi people”. In his report on the situation concerning Western Sahara dated 19 April 2006 (S/2006/249) then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan wrote *“The Security Council would not be able to invite parties to negotiate about Western Saharan autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty, for such wording would imply recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara, which was out of the question as long as no States Member of the United Nations had recognized*



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that sovereignty.”. ICSFT will fiercely defend your right to disagree with the UN Secretary General, the African Union, the European Union etc. Because we think debate is important. However, we are surprised by your attempts to silence the voice of an NGO only because it agrees with UN Secretary General, the African Union, the European Union etc. and is therefore in disagreement with the official Moroccan point of view. Finally, we wish to draw your attention to the very strong commitment of ICSFT to open and respectful debate. During the side event on March 15 which you refer to in your slanderous message, a lady from the public, presenting herself as being from the Western Sahara, intervened to defend the Moroccan authorities. The lady was not interrupted, nor by the organisers, nor by other members of the public. The Chairman of the session, Jan Fermon, reminded the audience after this intervention of the framework of international law which does recognize the right to self-determination of the Saharawi people and M. Najla Mohamed responded in essence to the intervention saying that she respected the point of view that was expressed but disagreed.

3) You also pretend that ICSFT has “exceeded the freedom of opinion and expression provided for in Article 19 of the ICCP” in its oral interventions during the sessions of the Human Rights Council. Again, you seem to ignore that the President of the session has the right, and uses it regularly, to stop interventions by NGO’s which do not comply with the rules. We are honoured to inform you that notwithstanding attempts made by some member states to silence ICSFT through motions of order, the President of the session has never stopped any of the interventions of ICSFT. Your allegation that ICSFT has exceeded the limits of the freedom of expression during its oral interventions is therefor in total contradiction with the truth.

4) Finally, you pretend that ICSFT is threatening and intimidating other NGO’s. That is of course completely false and a peculiar allegation coming from an NGO that is calling for censorship to be imposed upon ICSFT because it is “suspected” of disagreeing with the point of view of the Moroccan State.



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Your letter is worded as a call to the ECOSOC and to the Kuwaiti Government to take punitive action against ICSFT. Your false allegations, your call for censorship and for redrawing of ECOSOC status from ICSFT cause great harm to our reputation and cause substantial damage to our activity which we cannot tolerate.

We therefore invite you, and in as far as necessary put you in default, to put an immediate end to your wrongful acts. In case of any new incident our organisation will not hesitate to take legal action to stop your wrongful activities and to demand compensation for the damage that has been caused.

Finally, we want to say that we have been surprised by your sudden volte face. As you know we had very good relations in the past and when the ICSFT President was under persecution in Kuwait you supported him which we appreciated strongly. The fact that we disagree on the question of the Sahara should result in respectful discussion and debate between us, not in slander and calls for punitive action against the other part. We hope that you will understand this in the interest of all so that we can get back to normal as soon as possible.

For ICSFT,

International Council Supporting Fair Trial & Human Rights



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