

Port workers protest against Blood Phosphate ship

Rail and Maritime Transport Union media release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Tuesday 8 March 2022

The Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) is calling attention to the importation of “blood phosphate” into New Zealand ports.

RMTU members will be handing a letter of protest to the captain of the ship *Boucraa* when it arrives into Port of Napier, currently scheduled for Thursday 10 March.

The *Boucraa* will be discharging Blood Phosphate mined in the Western Sahara.

RMTU Organiser Dasha van Silfhout says the port workers are part of an ongoing international campaign to support the people of Western Sahara, which has included similar actions by port workers in Australia.

She says the Council of Trade Unions (CTU) passed a resolution in 2019 condemning Morocco’s illegal occupation of Western Sahara and calling upon the New Zealand government to halt importation of phosphates from the area.

The RMTU believes the New Zealand Government needs to step up and show its support for oppressed people, she says.

Because of COVID protocols the letter will be delivered without direct contact between RMTU members and the crew.

Ms van Silfhout says the ship is chartered by fertiliser company Ravensdown.

She says that there is an ongoing dialogue with Ravensdown, who have been reasonable in facilitating a lawful and safe protest, as have Napier Port management and the shipping agent.

ENDS

For more information contact:

RMTU Bay of Plenty Organiser Dasha van Silfhout on 027 220 3492

Or

RMTU South Island Organiser John Kerr on 027 246 4941

Copy of the CTU Resolution follows.

That the NZCTU

(a) Notes that:

- a. Morocco has occupied Western Sahara since 1975,
- b. The UN efforts to accomplish the decolonisation process in Western Sahara have not been accomplished yet,
- c. Over 173,000 Saharawis have been living in refugee camps in South West of Algeria for the past 43 years in dire conditions, waiting to return to their homeland which is occupied by Morocco,
- d. The only just, legal and lasting solution to the conflict in Western Sahara, is to end the Moroccan illegal occupation and allow the Sahara people to exercise their right to self-determination, in accordance with the UN resolution and decolonisation doctrine,
- e. That The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Parliament, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International have all called on the UN to extend the mandate of its mission in Western Sahara to monitor human rights,
- f. The European Union Court of Justice and the High Court of South Africa have that Morocco has no right to exploit Western Sahara resources;

(b) Strongly supports the right of the Saharawi people to self-determination and independence;

(c) Calls on the UN to proceed without further delay with the organisation of the long overdue referendum of self-determination;

- (d) Condemns the gross violations of human rights in the occupied territories of Western Sahara and calls for the immediate release all Saharawi political detainees;
- (e) Urges the UN to expand the mandate to its mission in Western Sahara to include human rights monitoring;
- (f) Expresses concern about the exploitation of the natural resources of Western Sahara without the consent of the Saharawi people and their representatives;
- (g) Urges Government to:
 - a. Support the right of the Saharawi people to self-determination and the holding of the long-delayed referendum in accordance with UN and AU (African Union) Peace Plan;
 - b. Urge the UN to include human rights monitoring in the mandate of the UN mission in Western Sahara (MINURSO);
 - c. To ensure New Zealand companies halt imports of phosphates from the occupied areas of Western Sahara until the legal status of the Territory is determined and the Saharawi people are allowed to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with relevant UN resolutions and Peace Plan of 1991”

The above Remit was passed by union affiliates at the 2019 CTU Conference on 16 October 2019.