

Media Release 9 December 2019

Rail & Maritime Transport Union

Lyttelton Port Workers' Union Protests Against Arrival of Blood Phosphate Ship

The Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU), representing port workers at Lyttelton port, has today handed a letter of protest to the captain of a ship carrying Blood Phosphate mined in the Western Sahara that arrived at the port just before midnight last night.

'The ship chartered by Ravensdown, the Federal Crimson, carrying a cargo of blood phosphate mined in Western Sahara and being imported into New Zealand, berthed in Lyttelton just before midnight last night , ' said RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson.

'Last month the Council of Trade Unions (CTU) passed a resolution condemning Morocco's illegal occupation of Western Sahara and calling upon the New Zealand government to halt importation of phosphates from the area. As an affiliate to the CTU the RMTU registered our protest by meeting the captain of the vessel in the early hours of this morning and handing him a letter that included the CTU resolution, 'he said.

'Our fellow unionists in Australia, the Maritime Union of Australia, have used this method to register protests against Blood Phosphate imports, to us it seems a relatively mild and pragmatic way to exercise a fundamental democratic right without risking undue disruption. In fairness to Ravensdown they have been very constructive in the dialogue we have had with them. Whilst we fundamentally disagree about the importation of Blood Phosphate, they have been reasonable in facilitating a lawful and safe protest, as have Lyttelton Port management, he said.

Copy of the CTU Resolution follows. Copy of letter & photographs of the protest attached.

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.

ENDS