

Sultana Khaya



Sultana Khaya is a Sahrawi woman human rights defender whose work focuses on women's rights and promoting the right to self-determination for the Sahrawi people.

Sultana Khaya has been under de facto house arrest without a warrant since 19 November 2020, with Moroccan security forces maintaining a heavy presence outside her house, during which time she has been subjected several times to physical, verbal and sexual assaults. On 22 August 2021, the latest in a long line of assaults occurred when Moroccan security agents raided the house of Sultana Khaya and physically assaulted her, her sister Laura Khaya and other members of her family. The security agents destroyed the furniture in Sultana Khaya's house, and Sultana Khaya and her sister were also subjected to sexual harassment. The situation has recently worsened because the Saharawi activist has now fallen ill with covid-19 and her symptoms are worsening without being allowed to be treated in a medical facility. Since 2005, Sultana Khaya has suffered physical attacks, death threats, torture and sexual assaults perpetrated by the Moroccan authorities.

Over the last year, the Moroccan authorities have intensified repression against Saharawi activists and journalists, who are subjected to ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests and harassment in order to silence or punish them for their non-violent actions against the occupation of Western Sahara. On 1 July 2021, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders Mary Lawlor condemned the reprisals against Sultana Khaya and 'expressed particular concern about the apparent use of violence and the threat of violence to prevent and obstruct women human rights defenders in their peaceful human rights activities in Western Sahara'.