



## Members of Congress Pledge to Address Inhumane Conditions and Theft of Humanitarian Aid in Polisario Refugee Camps

**Washington, DC (May 12, 2008)** – Last week, members and staff of the U.S. Congress met with former Sahrawi refugees who recently returned from the Polisario camps in southern Algeria. These refugees—some held in the camps their entire lives—shared eye-witness accounts of human rights abuses and the diversion of international humanitarian aid by the Polisario Front.

“We can make sure that the dollars we send are used in the way the Congress intended it to be used, making sure that the aid is going to the people and that is not being resold and making sure that the people have the freedom to leave the camps when they want to and make sure that the humanitarian conditions are as we expect in any camp around the world,” said **Rep. Corrine Brown** (D-FL), an active member of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus and the Caucus for Women's Issues.

Rep. Brown pointed out that Congress can adopt resolutions and urge the United Nations to lead investigations into the conditions in the camps to make sure that the humanitarian aid reaches those it is intended to assist. This pledge to encourage oversight by the US Congress was welcomed by **Naba Deddah El Meki**, a former Polisario humanitarian aid coordinator who shared her accounts of systematic corruption and theft with the Congresswoman.

The former Sahrawi refugees also visited the offices of **Rep. Robin Hayes** (R-NC), **Rep. Lynn Woolsey** (D-CA), **Rep. John Boozman** (R-AR), **Rep. Dale Kildee** (D-MI), **Rep. John Lewis** (D-GA), **Rep. Betty McCollum** (D-MN), **Sen. Russ Feingold** (D-WI), **Rep. Robert Aderholt** (R-AL), **Sen. Sam Brownback** (R-KS), **Rep. Keith Ellison** (D-MN), **Rep. Pete Hoekstra** (R-MI), and **Sen. Patrick Leahy** (D-VT).

After speaking with the former Sahrawi refugees about the lack of freedom of movement in the camps Congressman Ellison said that if these conditions exist, he would do what he could.

“International pressure, particularly from the United States Congress, is the most effective tool to bring an end to the suffering of the Sahrawi refugees and their families,” said Robert Holley, Executive Director of the Moroccan American Center for Policy. “Until Algeria and the Polisario realize that the international community will no longer tolerate this shameful humanitarian crisis, the refugees will not have the choice to leave the camps.”

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**The Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP)** is a non-profit organization whose principal mission is to inform opinion makers, government officials and an interested public in the United States about political and social developments in Morocco and the role being played by the Kingdom of Morocco in broader strategic developments in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East.