4 February 2013

To the attention of Mr Roelf Briese,
CEO of Briese Schiffahrt GmbH & Co. KG

Regarding: the presence of Briese Schiffahrt’s vessels in the occupied territories of Western Sahara

Dear Mr Briese,

Western Sahara Resource Watch (WSRW) is writing you regarding the presence of part of Briese Schiffahrt’s fleet in El Aaiun, Western Sahara, over the course of the past month. The following vessels have been observed in the harbour of El Aaiun; Hollum (IMO: 9454216), Ostermarsch (IMO: 9434759), Amke (IMO: 9374387), Medium (IMO: 9155406), Ameland (IMO: 9434761), BBC Adriatic (IMO: 9378230) and BBC Holland (IMO: 9198616).

As you will know, a large area of Western Sahara has been illegally occupied by Morocco since 1975. The United Nations consider Western Sahara to be a Non-Self Governing Territory pending the process of decolonisation, without a de jure administering power. The International Court of Justice in a 1975 Advisory Opinion concluded that there are no ties between Morocco and Western Sahara, and that the Saharawi people have a right to freely determine the future status of their territory through a referendum. That right to self-determination has been confirmed in over 100 UN Resolutions, but discarded by Morocco, the occupying power. No country in the world, including Germany, recognises Morocco’s untenable claim over Western Sahara.

Meanwhile, Morocco continues to trample the most basic human rights of Saharawi that live under the yoke of the occupation. Approximately 160,000 Saharawi refugees that fled during the war continue to live in inhumane conditions in Algerian refugee camps, located in the most inhospitable part of the Saharan desert.

In 2002, the UN Under-Secretary General for Legal Affairs stated that carrying out economic activities in Western Sahara is considered in violation of international law, unless undertaken in accordance with the wishes and the interests of the Saharawi people. International humanitarian law also applies in the occupied territory; prohibiting as a matter of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court acts which assist the pillage of the territory’s public property, including natural resources.

Given Germany’s neutral stance vis-à-vis the Western Sahara conflict, it is surprising to observe a German company present in the occupied territory of Western Sahara.

WSRW would highly appreciate an answer to the following questions:

a. Which activities are currently being carried out by your vessels in the Western Saharan waters?
b. Do you have a long term contract for these activities?
c. Who are your contracting partners?

www.wsrw.org

Western Sahara Resource Watch works to raise awareness of the illegal occupation of Western Sahara and to support the recognition of the Saharawi people’s right to self-determination.
We fear that your company may be implicated in the transport of illegally extracted resources from the occupied Western Sahara. Such activities do not only undermine the UN peace process but also the rights of the Saharawi people. We are convinced it is not in your company’s best interest to be associated with such practices.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Sara Eyckmans
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