

# Australians detained in Algeria

The Polisario Front briefly detained two Australian filmmakers at a refugee camp in Algeria.

Rabouni – Australian documentary filmmakers Violeta Ayala and Daniel Fallshaw were detained briefly on 2 May 2007 near the Rabouni refugee camp, 25km from Tindouf in southwestern Algeria.

Refugee camps in Algeria in the border areas are very hard for journalists to visit and work in, and the Sahrawi population on both sides of the border is the first to suffer from this information blackout.

Ayala and Fallshaw often visit the camps in Algeria to film Sahrawi families whose members are separated by the wall Morocco built a few kilometres from the Algerian border in the early 1980s.

The two journalists were detained by Polisario Front security officials and their mobile phone was confiscated. They were then taken to an office used by the security services, where they were held for about five hours. After UN officials intervened, the journalists were able to leave the Rabouni camp and go to Tindouf, from where they caught a plane to France a few days later.

The Polisario Front officials criticised the interest the two journalists took in black members of the Sahrawi population, Reporters Without Borders has learned. Ayala told the press freedom organisation that she saw cases of enslavement.

"The fact that they are fighting for their independence does not mean that Polisario's leaders can allow themselves to commit such human rights violations," she said. "It is our duty as journalists to denounce such practices. We originally went there to work on the problem of separated families. But during our stay, we witnessed scenes of slavery."

The Polisario Front has denied detaining the two journalists.

The situation is equally difficult for journalists in Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara. Reporters Without Borders has registered many cases of journalists being detained, expelled or even physically attacked by the authorities.

Norwegian journalists Anne Torhild Nilsen and Radmund Steinsvag are still waiting for permission to travel to the Western Sahara capital of El Aaiún although they have made repeated requests at the Moroccan embassy in Oslo and the communication ministry in Rabat.

Swedish freelance photographer Lars Björk was arrested in El Aaiún in February for taking photos of a demonstration by young Sahrawis waving the Polisario Front flag. He was expelled the next day.

Article courtesy of [RSE](#).

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>