Beat: Politics

Spain rejects Moroccan pressure on the Sahara and remains firm in its position

Favorable to a referendum

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USPA NEWS - The general secretary of the Polisario Front, Brahim Gali, declared this Tuesday by videoconference from the Logroño hospital where he is admitted, before the judge of the Spanish National Court Santiago Pedraz, who is investigating the veracity of the complaints filed against the polisario leader by the Saharawi Association for the Defense of Human Rights and by the activist of Moroccan origin and Spanish nationality Fadel Mihdi Breica. Both accuse him of genocide in concurrence with six other serious crimes, torture and illegal detention.

In an order prior to the statement on Tuesday, Judge Santiago Pedraz rejected the request that Gali be detained, a measure that the magistrate considers "disproportionate" because the accusations are still being investigated. The general secretary of the Polisario Front answered the judge's questions by videoconference, since he remains admitted on the fifth floor of the San Pedro hospital in Logroño, in northern Spain. His presence in Spanish territory gave rise to the largest diplomatic crisis between Spain and Morocco, although the Government of Rabat clarified on Monday that the cause of the conflict is not Gali himself but the position of Spain in relation to Western Sahara. Rabat, said the Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs, expects from Madrid "an unambiguous clarification of its elections, its decisions and its positions" on the Sahara conflict.

This territory was a Spanish colony until 48 years ago. It was then handed over to Morocco, but the Sahrawis consider themselves occupied by the Rabat Government and many of them, members or sympathizers of the Polisario Front, demand the independence of their territory. The Sahrawis also criticize the lack of definition of the White House in relation to the problem. Morocco is an ally of the United States in North Africa and Washington considers them a fundamental element in the fight against Islamic fundamentalism. The Trump administration expressed its support for the Rabat Government and the Biden administration has not yet been defined in this regard and maintains that support, contrary to UN resolutions.

The United Nations determined that a referendum should be organized in Western Sahara to find out what the Sahrawis want. Morocco opposes the consultation, while Spain supports the referendum. Opposing positions that, according to Rabat, are the cause of the conflict unleashed in recent weeks with the illegal entry into Spain of more than 10,000 Moroccans, the withdrawal of the Moroccan ambassador in Madrid and the dispatch of intelligence agents from the Government of Rabat to Spain to guard the hospital where Brahim Gali is located.

The Moroccan government's clarification did not convince Spain. The Spanish Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, warned on Monday that his Government will remain firm in its position on Western Sahara and considered it “unacceptable” for Rabat to open its borders and provoke an invasion of a Spanish city. It is "absolutely unacceptable" that Morocco has decided to "attack the borders" of Ceuta in protest of a foreign policy problem, said Pedro Sánchez after hearing the explanations of the Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs. "It is not admissible for a government to say that borders are being attacked, that they are being opened for 10,000 people to enter a neighboring country, due to disagreements and discrepancies in foreign policy," he explained.

Morocco, the Spanish Prime Minister added, "must not forget that it has neither a better nor a greater ally in the EU than Spain," which is an "essential, necessary and privileged interlocutor" with Europe. "If what is being said is that Morocco has used immigration, the assault on the Spanish borders by more than 10,000 Moroccans in 48 hours, it seems absolutely unacceptable to me and, therefore, I reject that statement," said Pedro Sánchez. "The neighborhood and the necessary bilateral relationship must be founded on respect and trust," which "are not built if what is being said is that due to a disagreement the borders are not respected," he concluded.

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