



Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de Andalucía
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press release

APDHA denounces in a report the mistreatment and suffering of the women goods carriers in Ceuta

The campaign “Women goods carriers: the Injustice on Their Backs” demands the end to the degrading treatment these women receive

Andalusia, 29/11/2016.- The Association for Human Rights of Andalusia (Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de Andalucía; APDHA from now on) has presented today their report “Respect and Dignity for the Moroccan Women Who Transport Goods across the Border between Morocco and Ceuta.” In it they analyze the human rights violations suffered by the Moroccan women paid to transport packs of merchandise from the zone of Tarajal in Ceuta to Moroccan towns near the border.

The organization denounces in its report that more than 7,000 women are subjugated daily to exploitation, abuse, and degrading treatment. The women also report sexual assault against even the youngest, by the police forces on both sides of the border. The report details how the conditions in which they are working are “absolutely degrading:” they assert that the women couriers carry between 60 and 90 kilograms on their backs during the hours long journey, they are insulted, harassed, and ridiculed, they are forced to walk single-file and suffer beatings if they do not comply, all for on average less than 10 Euros a day.

The organization’s report also explains that during the summer these women often wait many hours in the sun on Tarajal beach, without access to drinkable water or public restrooms, and without shade to protect them from the intense heat. They even contend that there have been avalanches which have killed women, as was the case in Busrha and Zhora in 2009. “It is deplorable that this situation continues year after year under the impassive gaze of the governments of Ceuta, Morocco, Spain, and the European Union,” criticized Cristina Fuentes, a member of the investigating team of the APDHA.

They declare that this reality cannot continue any longer, despite its many benefits. “Around half of the exports which leave Ceuta leave on the backs of these women couriers, an illegal trade which amounts to more than 400 million Euros,” according to a study by the University of Granada titled *Estudio sobre el Regimen Económico y Fiscal de Ceuta* (“A Study of the Economic and Fiscal System of Ceuta”). “These benefits are sustained by violations of the human rights of these women, who need a job in order to feed their families,” they report.



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In order to put an end to this situation, the APDHA has published a list of steps to improve it in which they propose a limit on the maximum weight of 20 kilograms for the packs, the immediate closure of the Biutz pass for not following the minimum standards of safety or respect for human dignity, and the opening of the Tarajal II pass, with rest areas for the women couriers with public bathrooms, clean water fountains, and shade.

In addition, the organization proposes the treatment of the women goods carriers as workers, the improvement of the infrastructure of the Tarajal border, which is obsolete, the clarification of the responsibilities of the security forces on both sides of the border, the creation of codes of conduct for the export of goods, and the opening of a custom house between Ceuta and Morocco which would permit legal and dignified commercial activity.