

Copenhagen, Stockholm, Oslo, Helsinki, Reykjavik, 30 April 2025

**Open letter to the Nordic Parliaments:
Regarding Rud Pedersen Group and international law**

To the Presidency of the Swedish Riksdag, the Danish Folketing, the Norwegian Storting, The Finnish Eduskunta and the Icelandic Alþingi.

Dear Speakers/Presidents,

The undersigned five associations are writing to express our deep concern over the recent engagement of the Danish public affairs firm Rud Pedersen Group by a Moroccan business association with close ties to the Moroccan business association CGEM. According to media reports, the firm has been hired to promote Moroccan business interests in the occupied territory of Western Sahara—a move that raises serious ethical questions.

Thus, it appears that Rud Pedersen Group is being paid to promote a business practice - or position - in Western Sahara that stands in direct contradiction to core principles of international law. At a time when the international legal order is under growing strain, we believe it is essential to alert your presidency to the risks of granting access to our democratic institutions to a corporate actor that could be undermining the very principles that form the foundation of Nordic foreign and security policy.

As you may be aware, the Court of Justice of the European Union has annulled the EU's trade agreements with Morocco on the grounds that they have violated the right to self-determination of the people of the non-self-governing territory of Western Sahara. The most recent rulings, issued on 4 October 2024, reaffirm a consistent legal position: the Court has now ruled ten times that EU trade, fisheries, and aviation agreements cannot lawfully apply to Western Sahara, which it recognizes as a “separate and distinct” territory from Morocco. This year marks the 50th anniversary of Morocco's invasion of Western Sahara—an act in clear violation of international law and the 1975 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice—with lasting humanitarian consequences.

According to the well-informed outlet *Africa Intelligence*, Rud Pedersen Group is being paid by the French-Moroccan conglomerate Azura Group to carry out this lobbying for CGEM. Azura is the largest agricultural operator in the occupied territory of Western Sahara and is directly impacted by the EU Court's rulings, which found that the EU-Morocco agricultural agreements fail to respect the Saharawi people's right to self-determination.

Rud Pedersen Group has declined to comment on the matter to both Danish and international media. Our associations have reached out directly seeking clarification¹, but the firm has failed to respond.

¹ Letter to Rud Pedersen Group, 10 April 2025, https://vest-sahara.s3.amazonaws.com/wsrw/feature-images/File/2329/681075821fec8_WSNGOs-RudPedersen_10.04.2025.pdf

Azura Group has not responded to inquiries regarding how it intends to comply with the rulings of the European Court of Justice.² We are living in exceptional times, marked by instability and the actions of expansionist powers near Europe's borders. In such a context, it is vital to remain vigilant against public relations firms that work to find ways to circumvent the application of EU court rulings within our democratic institutions.

Therefore, we, the undersigned Nordic organisations in solidarity with the people of Western Sahara, strongly urge you to temporarily suspend Rud Pedersen Group's access to our national parliaments for the duration of its contractual engagement to promote Moroccan interests in the occupied territory. Allowing such access risks legitimising advocacy that directly undermines international law and the right to self-determination.

Secondly, we wish to emphasize the urgent need to establish clear regulations that restrict access to our parliaments for lobbying firms working on behalf of foreign powers in ways that undermine international law. Companies seeking to circumvent or weaken these principles should not be allowed to buy influence within the core institutions of our democracies. Safeguarding the integrity of our democratic systems must remain a priority.

Sincerely,

Morten Nielsen, Global Aktion, Denmark

Erik Hagen, the Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara, Norway

Josefin Malm, the Swedish Western Sahara Committee, Sweden

Teemu Matinpuro, Finnish Peace Committee, Finland

Stefán Pálsson, Vínafélag Vestur Sahara á Íslandi, Iceland

² Letter to Azura/Disma, 2 December 2024

https://vest-sahara.s3.amazonaws.com/wsrw/feature-images/File/2046/674eca874980d_WSRW-Azura_02.12.2024.pdf