

WESTERN SAHARA Rubbing salt in the wound

Most salt production is relatively uncontroversial. Not so in Western Sahara. Since 1975 the territory has been occupied by Morocco, which plunders its salt and other resources with the complicity of Western governments and corporations.

Last year, Norwegian company Mesta rejected a salt deal 'because of the violations of human rights in the territory'. But Danish company Dansk Vejsalt continues to buy and sell on Western Saharan salt illegally.

Selling goods from Western Sahara contravenes international law unless it is approved by, and beneficial to, the indigenous population. The Saharawis do not benefit from this deal, however, and staunchly oppose the exploitation of their resources.

Dansk Vejsalt sells salt to several Danish municipalities, and was negotiating a contract with four others until Danish NGO Africa Contact alerted them to the illegality of the deal. This led to Gladsaxe, and three other municipalities, demanding that the deal exclude Western Saharan salt.

Abba Malainin, a representative of Polisario – the movement working to end Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara – says he appreciates 'the courageous stand' of Mesta and the Danish municipalities. 'Such deals make the Moroccan occupation reputable, encourage more human rights violations and complicate the UN's peaceful plan for Western Sahara.' ■

Peter Kenworthy

are watching you', for example, detailed techniques of surveillance. 'The Pentagon calls it Total Information Awareness and it's coming to your neighbourhood soon,' it said. 'Information is being gathered about you and stored in an easily searchable database. There are now over five million people on the US Master Terror Watchlist. You say you haven't done anything wrong. But can you prove it?' Revelations over the past few years about levels of surveillance have proved that this was far from being an exaggeration.

But Richard's analysis also joined the strategic dots. Military occupation produces

Introducing... Beji Caid Essebsi

Tunisia, held to be the one 'success story' of the 2011 Arab spring, elected Essebsi as its President in December 2014. Essebsi is, at 87, an old war horse of the political class, and has always displayed an inclination for moderate democratic reform while at the same time never straying far from the levers of power. Because of his positioning in various ministerial and ambassadorial posts dating back to the 1960s, he is regarded with suspicion by the young activists who launched the Tunisian Jasmine revolution, as well as by the country's Islamic movement. However, his success in Tunisia's second genuinely competitive election (he won 55 per cent of the vote compared to 45 per cent for his opponent, the incumbent Moncef

Marzouki) is testimony to the desire of both Essebsi's proponents and opponents to hold on to the open and relatively democratic political space that is such a rarity in the Arab world.

The trick will be for Essebsi to hold together the consensus in his secular Nidaa Tounes party (an uncomfortable alliance of the old guard and leftist activists) and more broadly among Tunisians, without falling into autocratic political habits and using anti-terrorist measures to suppress and round up his critics *à la* General Sisi in Cairo. The inequality and poverty that plague the country (particularly the south and the interior) will prove difficult to tackle for a business-supported government unlikely to stray far from the 'open market' prescriptions of the IMF and World Bank. ■

Richard Swift



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US Green Muslims grow

A US-based organization is making a statement about the connection between the Islamic faith and environmental stewardship. Green Muslims was formed seven years ago, after a group of 20 Muslims gathered in a suburban Washington DC home for a zero-trash *iftar* meal during Ramadan.

'We have recognized a trend. Muslims around the world are reverting back to the principles of moderate consumption and stewardship that

have been an integral part of Muslim cultural and religious traditions for the past 1,400 years,' explained Colin Christopher, the executive director.

Since their beginnings, Green Muslims have become advisers to the US Department of State, activists at last September's Climate Rally in New York, and partners with the Montgomery Countryside Alliance and the Britain-based Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences.

By creating online resources like the Green Scriptures project (citing Qur'anic verses and traditions that pertain to conservation), leading spiritual reflection hikes, and providing educational talks within the community at mosques, Green Muslims is helping to connect the dots. 'Through programming and resources, we invite members of our community to cultivate a very personal, intimate relationship with the beauty of creation,' continued Colin. 'Our work has inspired others to start Islamic-inspired green activism in their own locales, and contribute to the environmental movement as lawyers, professors, engineers, community organizers and religious leaders.' ■

Leah Davies

the next generation of terrorists – the successors to al-Qaeda that the magazine warned were being created in the cauldron of the Iraqi occupation are the jihadis of today. And the threat of those jihadis and terrorists takes us even deeper into our bunker – the 'temporary emergencies' that justify suspending liberties harden into permanence, and the drones, phone-monitoring and security cameras, which seemed so sci-fi so recently, are deployed to defend a global order built on ever wider, ever more corrosive inequality. ■

Chris Brazier

Five things you need to know about Syriza's win in Greece



How the system is failing asylum-seekers



Paris vs Baga: what makes an atrocity newsworthy?