May 18, 1982

Dear Friend:

We write to ask that you join in signing the enclosed public statement to the President opposing proposed United States arms sales to Morocco. The $100 million in U.S. arms will most likely be used by Morocco in its military occupation of the Western Sahara where the majority population is denied the right of self-determination. Such arms sales would belie U.S. claims to neutrality in the conflict and would involve the United States on the wrong side of an internationally-recognized struggle for independence.

Formerly a colony of Spain, the Western Sahara is now occupied by Morocco. But Morocco's claims to the Western Sahara have been widely rejected internationally. In 1975 the International Court of Justice ruled that the people of the Western Sahara have the right to self-determination and a United Nations mission to the area reported that the overwhelming majority of the people favored independence, rejecting integration into Morocco.

Polisario, the liberation movement of the Western Sahara founded in 1973 to fight for independence from Spanish colonial rule, has resisted Morocco's military attempt at annexation. It has been successful in forcing Morocco to withdraw from much of the Western Sahara. Recently, the Organization of African Unity admitted the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic, formed by Polisario, as its 51st member state.

Citing regional strategic considerations, the Reagan administration has asked Congress to increase U.S. military aid to Morocco from $30 million to $100 million. The administration is planning to sell Morocco 381 air-to-surface missiles, has been training Moroccan officers, recently announced its intention to train Morocco's mobile commandos, and has established a Joint Military Command with that country. Features of this new relationship reported in the press include possible transport and landing rights for U.S. military aircraft and for the evolving U.S. Rapid Deployment Force.

In seeking to strengthen its ties with Morocco the Administration is being drawn into active support of the Moroccan war against the Saharawi people.

Presenting his credentials late last year, the newly appointed U.S. Ambassador, Joseph Vernon Reed assured King Hassan "your country's concerns are my country's concerns." The past year has seen numerous high-level visitors travelling to Morocco, including Secretary of State Haig and a 23-member military delegation led by Francis J. West Jr., assistant secretary of defense for international security. The West delegation visited the battle zones in the Western Sahara to assess Moroccan military needs. King Hassan of Morocco is due to visit the U.S. in the near future, and control of Western Sahara is certain to be high on his agenda.
The Western Sahara

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There has already been significant opposition in Congress to expand military aid for Morocco. We urge you to join in the public statement to the President opposing U.S. arms sales to Morocco. A return card and post-paid envelope are enclosed for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Davis
Executive Director
American Committee on Africa

Randall Robinson
Executive Director
TransAfrica
PUBLIC STATEMENT
ON
U.S. POLICY & THE WESTERN SAHARA

To: The President of the United States

We write to you to express our deep concern about the large increase in proposed U.S. military assistance to Morocco, which will further involve the United States on one side of the conflict in the Western Sahara.

The people of the Western Sahara have too long been denied their right to self-determination, first by Spain's colonial domination, today by Morocco's attempted annexation. A large increase in U.S. arms sales to Morocco will make the U.S. the largest force backing Morocco's continued military occupation of the Western Sahara. It would unmistakably belie the official State Department position that the United States is neutral in the conflict between Polisario guerrillas and Morocco.

Further military aid to Morocco would be a tragic mistake. Morocco's claims to sovereignty over the Western Sahara are not recognized by any major power, the United Nations or the Organization of African Unity.

Arms to Morocco will hinder, rather than help the process leading to a ceasefire and peaceful resolution of the conflict. We therefore call on you to suspend all military aid to Morocco until a just peace has been negotiated in the Western Sahara.