SAHARAWI REFUGEES NEED ASSISTANCE. WILL U. S. CITIZENS HELP WITH FOOD AND MEDICINE?

Since 1978 the SPSC has been involved in providing information about the conflict in Western Sahara to interested persons in the U.S. There has been talk from time to time about providing some assistance to the Saharawi refugees in the Tindouf area refugee camps, but although support groups in France, Belgium, Japan, Austria, Spain, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, West Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and elsewhere have provided food, clothing, medicines, materials for shelter and schooling, the U.S. SPSC has not done so to date. (Some medicine has been provided through the U.S. Committee on Africa. Support groups in other Western nations have hosted summer visits of Saharawi children.)

Requests for assistance for the Saharawis have been made in these pages on occasion and addresses have been supplied for the aid along with the suggestion that funds sent be earmarked by the donor for the Saharawis.

In the middle of a warm summer it is difficult to think about the winter that will soon come for us and the the Saharawis who are now living in the blistering heat of the refugee camps, but that winter is coming. The desert will be cold (below freezing) this winter and the Saharawi children living there will need warm clothing to protect them from the winds and the cold. Food and medical needs of the Saharawis will continue this winter as well.

We are asking that each reader consider now a donation to the Saharawi refugees. Funds donated will be sent to Rencontre et Développement/Caritas which can use the funds to buy on location (avoiding shipping costs) the food, medicine and clothing that is most needed for the refugees in the camps.

At the present time the Saharawis have only one picture of the U.S., the Superpower that is helping Morocco continue the war against them, that has sent fragmentation bombs to Morocco for use against the Saharawis, that has provided powerful radar surveillance on the "walls" constructed by Morocco inside the Western Sahara, that provides strategic and tacti-cal assistance to Morocco in its war effort.

It is time that the Saharawis learn that there are Americans who understand their desire for self-determination and who want to assist the efforts of the refugees to survive.

Those persons who send from $7 - $14 in donations for the Saharawi refugees will receive a copy of a new poster (20" x 30", full-color) printed by the European Coordinating Conference. Persons sending donations over $20 will receive two posters. Make your checks payable to the SPSC Letter and mark the check, donation for Saharawi refugees.

Send your donation today to SPSC Letter, 217 E. Lehr, Ada, Ohio 45810. Your donation will be acknowledged and the funds sent to buy the foods and medicine necessary. Please be generous. Please let the refugees see the other side of the U.S. Don't let this request end with you. Contact your friends and associates as well.

Dear SPSC Letter:

Enclosed is my check for _______ dollars (moneyorder) to assist the Saharawi refugees in the refugee camps in Tindouf. Please forward my contribution to those refugees.

Name: ____________________________
Address: __________________________


POSTERS AVAILABLE. POSTERS PRINTED BY THE EUROPEAN COORDINATING CONFERENCE OF SAHARAWI SUPPORT COMMITTEES ARE NOW AVAILABLE. FOR THOSE PERSONS MAKING A DONATION OF $5 - $10 FOR ALIMENTARY AND MEDICAL NEEDS OF SAHARAWIS IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS, ONE POSTER WILL BE SENT FREE OF CHARGE. PERSONS MAKING A DONATION OF OVER $15 WILL RECEIVE BOTH POSTERS. THE POSTERS ARE IN FULL-COLOR AND 20" BY 30". DETAILS OF THE POSTERS CAN BE SEEN THROUGHOUT THIS LETTER.
ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES CONTINUE TO PLAGUE MOROCCO AS IT COMES TO THE DOWNSIDE OF EIGHT YEARS OF WAR IN WESTERN SAHARA AGAINST SADR

Bloody riots broke out in Morocco last January over the price increases of certain food staples. Among cities where the riots were particularly fierce were Marakech, Nador, Tetouan, Meknes, Agadir. In 1981 Casablanca was the site of major riots.

According to the World Bank, of the twenty-five million Moroccans, half have income that provides for the minimum necessities of life. Twelve and a half million Moroccans know absolute poverty and the greatest majority of these live in shantytowns without water, without electricity, without plumbing and sewage disposal and without medical care.

More than half of the active population is unemployed and receives no unemployment benefit. (The majority of these unemployed persons are between 20 and 24 years of age.)

Some children who are between seven and twelve years of age work up to ten hours per day; the salary they receive from the mines or factories where they work is food and shelter.

The cost of living in Morocco has doubled in three years. Salaries are frozen. Inflation is growing about 20% per year.

Internal indebtedness of Morocco is eleven billion dollars, or 55% of gross national product. More than a third of the income from exports is reserved for debt service.

The principle sources for currency, phosphate and agricultural exports, have been reduced.

The price of phosphate has continued to fall. Agricultural exports are threatened by the Common Market which has raised more and more barriers to agricultural exports from Morocco.

Import needs of the country continue to grow. These include grains, oil, technology. Morocco imports 80% of its cereal needs for which it pays in dollars. Its oil bill for 1983 rose to seven billion francs. (FF)

The war in Western Sahara is bleeding the country. The war absorbs forty-five percent of the total State Budget, or two billion U.S. dollars per year. It keeps the nation from developing and threatens to lead it to total political instability.

MAURITANIA RECOGNIZES SADR ON ANNIVERSARY OF PROCLAMATION OF THE REPUBLIC IN 1976

The text of the message of the Mauritanian Head of State on the occasion of the recognition on February 27, 1984 follows:

Mister President and dear brother,

The celebration of the anniversary of the proclamation of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic gives me the pleasant opportunity to address you in the name of the Mauritanian people, the military Committee of National Salvation and of the government, as well as in my own name, and to offer you our warmest congratulations as well as our most sincere wishes for your personal happiness and for the progress and prosperity of our brother Saharawi people and for the triumph of its just cause.

I seize this occasion as well to bring to your attention the decision of the government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, to recognize de jure from this day forward, the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic.

I am convinced that our two countries will maintain reliable and friendly relations based on the principles of mutual respect of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs, good neighborliness, guarantees of mutual advantages to states of the region, and to the establishment of a great united and prosperous Arab Maghreb.

It is from this perspective that we count, henceforth, on your wisdom, your intelligence, and especially on your spirit of sacrifice, to discover with your brother the Kingdom of Morocco, a just and lasting solution to the conflict which opposes you and which hinders efforts tending toward inauguration of an era of peace and of concord in our Maghreb. For our part, we believe that a rapid solution of this conflict calls for mutual concessions and we are persuaded that you will not disappoint the hopes of the Arab, African and Maghrebin peoples and that you will assume your responsibilities at an opportune time.

Be assured, Mister President and dear brother, of my highest and most fraternal regards.

Note: Since the treaty of Mauritania with the Polisario Fron, de facto relations existed between the two countries. This letter changes the kind of recognition.
UPDATE ON PUBLICATIONS

Three papers prepared for the panel on "The Growing Dimensions of the War in the Western Sahara Perspectives and Prospects" that have not yet been reviewed in these columns are papers by Robert A. Mortimer, Haverford College, Ellen Laipson, Analyst in Middle Eastern and North African Affairs, Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, and Philip Chiviges Naylor, Merrimack College. (The papers were given during the A.S.A. Annual Meeting in Boston, December 7 -10, 1983. Dr. Naylor organized the panel.)

The three papers are available from the A.S.A. Titles are: "The Effect of the War on French-Algerian Relations" (Naylor), "Spain and the Western Sahara"(Laipson), and "American Policy Toward Saharawi Independence or How 1776 Has Fared Since 1976" (Mortimer).

Each of the writers brings a good deal of experience and research to the topic. Mortimer has spent considerable time in North Africa as well as in other African nations and has published a number of articles on the subject. He has been invited as an expert witness on the Western Sahara to House Sub-Committee Hearings on the subject. Naylor has spent considerable time in North Africa as well and particularly in Algeria, the subject of much of his research. Laipson's title indicates her familiarity with the subject.

The papers are well-done and provide analysis of the current situation. Individual readers may not agree with every conclusion of every writer, but the discussions are thoughtful and well documented. Write to the African Studies Association for your copy. The address is A.S.A., 255 Kinsey Hall, Los Angeles, CA 90024. The price per paper is $4.00 for A.S.A. members and $5 for others.


Of particular interest to readers of this newsletter are the sections on Algeria and Morocco, which deal in particular with the question of the Western Sahara. The titles of the sections of the report give some idea of the content: "Purpose and Nature of Visit," "The War and Its Consequences: The Current Situation," "Efforts to Achieve a Negotiated Political Settlement," "U.S. Bilateral Relations and the Saharan Conflict," "Conclusions and Recommendations." (The Conclusions are quoted elsewhere in this newsletter.)

Persons who made up the Congressional party were Representatives Howard Wolpe (Chairman, Subcommittee on Africa), Gerald Solomon, Ted Weiss, Robert Garcia, Mickey Leland, Parren Mitchell, Katie Hall and Jim Moody.

In addition to the Mission report there is a section containing dissenting comments by Representative Gerald Solomon.

The report is available from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives.
"Conclusions and Recommendations

"U.S. interests in the Maghreb are broad and variegated. The Saharan conflict poses certain dangers to our bilateral relations, both short and long term, with Morocco, Algeria and the Polisario Front. It contains a potential for escalation and internationalization that would make (sic) both local and international peace. With the OAU's very existence jeopardized by the controversy, as in the failure to obtain a quorum for the July 1982 summit, we have a compelling interest in supporting the OAU's effort to settle the question so that it can continue to perform its role of enabling Africa to address African problems. Finally, the continuation of the war and the unresolved political status of the Western Sahara poses a challenge to our commitment to self-determination, itself an important asset to our international diplomacy.

"With the appearance of new momentum toward a negotiated settlement as well as an upcoming May 1984 OAU summit, we believe the United States should be proceeding more energetically and creatively to support international efforts to achieve a political solution based on self-determination and to minimize any possible adverse consequences for our Moroccan friends. We also endorse the thrust of the House Foreign Affairs Committee's efforts to decrease military aid and increase economic assistance to Morocco, to encourage the administration to use its leverage in Morocco to promote a more forthcoming Moroccan position on the Western Sahara, and to help establish direct diplomatic contact with the Polisario Front as a means of heightening the momentum toward peace."

p.44, Report

REPORT OF RENCONTRE ET DEVELOPPEMENT ON THE NEW WALL IN WESTERN SAHARA

The construction of the new defense wall was begun about December 20, 1983. It necessitated the mobilization of almost the entire Moroccan forces, which are estimated by Sahrawi military officials among whom, Brahim Chali, Minister of Defense, at about 120,000 men including auxiliaries and auxiliary forces. A large number of materials were also assembled in the southern region of Morocco for the construction of the new wall, which follows more or less the path of the previous wall protecting the "useful" triangle, i.e., Boucrâa, Smara, Ras-El-Khanfra.

The new defense wall, 650 kilometers long, is situated between the line, Boucrâa-Amgala-Kheribichet-Ras El-Khanfra. It goes more precisely to the North-East of Amgala, where it reinforces defense dispositions and is very much West of Haouza, the Sahrawi capitol, which is still under the control of the A.L.P.S (the Polisario fighting forces), contrary to allegations of some Western press. The height of this new line, which joins the first "wall" in southern Morocco at a spot called Kheribichet on the SADR-Moroccan frontier, is extremely variable; in the region of Amgala it is sometimes 4 to 6 meters high and is often joined to the relief and configuration of the terrain there. This new line is constructed essentially of sand and of material which Sahrawi combatants have not yet identified. More than ten days ago (February, 1984) considerable Moroccan forces were sent to the Moroccan south while another major contingent was in the Amgala region behind the double defense line, closing off the Mauritanian frontier. The line that goes from Amgala to the 35th boundary encroaches on Mauritanian territory according to a high Saharawi military official."

From: RASD 1984, 8 Ans D'Existence

Upper Volta President Visits SADR In April: Thomas Sankara Brings State Greetings

Following the recognition of the SADR by Upper Volta in March 1984, President Thomas Sankara visited that nation the following month. He arrived in the SADR on April 3, bringing with him a fairly large delegation. The Upper Volta delegation met with the President of the SADR, Mohamed Abdelaziz, members of the Political Direction of the Polisario, of the Government and of the National Saharawi Council.
As the question of the Western Sahara was discussed before the 38th U.N. General Assembly, King Hassan II of Morocco asserted in New York on November 27, 1983 that Morocco accepted a referendum in Western Sahara, in fact had asked for it:

"We went ourselves in 1981 to Nairobi and we twice officially proposed that there be a referendum in the Western Sahara and that it be done for the reconciliation of Africa, to teach those who didn't know, demystify those who wished not to know and to put a bit of wisdom in those who had not yet understood.

"On the occasion of the first Nairobi Summit, the decision was made unanimously by consensus of the Heads of State to accept that there be a referendum of self-determination in Western Sahara.....

"Meeting in Nairobi, in the same year, the Committee of Heads of State designated as the Implementation Committee, took certain measures for the referendum; it fixed the territorial area from North to South and East to West in which the referendum was to take place at a date approved by the O.A.U., it noted how the Saharawis were to vote and what the voting place would be. It was established by the Implementation Committee that all Saharawis would come to vote where they were born.....

"Today for the first time before the U.N., but the the nth time before public opinion, Morocco states and solemnly declares to you through the voice of he whom God has designated to preside over the destiny of my nation, that it wants the referendum. Morocco tells you that it is ready for the referendum to take place tomorrow if you wish.....Morocco solemnly engages itself to be, to consider itself as obligated and bound by the results of the referendum."

Despite these words of the King before the General Assembly, 1983 ended with no referendum being held and Morocco continuing to refuse to negotiate with Polisario under the auspices of the O.A.U. Could it be that Morocco officials deliberately misled the U.N. in an attempt to forestall the U.N. vote that supported the O.A.U. resolution calling for direct negotiations between Polisario and Morocco under the auspices of the O.A.U. assisted by the U.N.

What Morocco is doing through the voice of the King and the Foreign Minister Boucetta is to agree in principle with a referendum which can never be held because they refuse to meet with and negotiate with the Polisario Front.

In May 1983 there were meetings between Moroccan officials and Polisario officials. Learning that Polisario would not agree to "internal autonomy" or a "federation with Morocco," Morocco now states that they will not negotiate with Polisario because (words of Foreign Minister Boucetta before the 4th Commission of the U.N. on November 17, 1983):

"the latter (the Polisario Front) represents nothing having the character of a state, of an existing juridical entity. It is not even a recognized liberation movement for it represents no character of representation. The authentic representatives of the population of the Western Sahara have been heard at the time of their statements before this 4th Commission. (Saharawis brought to the U.N. by Morocco from occupied territory.) The 19th Summit of the O.A.U. "exhorting" direct negotiations between Morocco and the so-called Polisario Front constitutes neither an obligation nor a prerequisite."

As more and more nations continue to recognize the S.A.D.R., the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic, that entity refuses to go away. To date 58 nations of the world recognize the S.A.D.R. Many more recognize the legitimacy of the Polisario Front. A referendum is required, but that must be brought about under the conditions set by the Implementation Committee of the O.A.U. and approved by the U.N. General Assembly. Morocco in accepting the mediating role of these two world bodies cannot now state that it is superior to these bodies, selecting what it likes of their resolutions to end the controversy and rejecting what it dislikes.

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S.P.S.C. LETTER
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$5 donation requested.