NEW SECRETARY-GENERAL REPORTS TO SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBERS ON MINURSO

The first report of new Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali on the status of UN efforts to organize a free and fair referendum in Western Sahara was distributed February 28. In the report Boutros-Ghali noted that he was reporting pursuant to the Security Council Resolution 725 of December 31, 1991, which invited the new Secretary-General to submit a further report on the situation concerning Western Sahara, as soon as possible, but in any event within two months. His report is a follow-up to the last report of former Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, who in late December proposed some changes in the rules for recognition of those eligible to vote.

In his report, Boutros-Ghali noted that as of mid-February 1992, the military strength of MINURSO was 375, including 200 United Nations Military Observers. Contingents are from 25 nations from several continents. The largest group is from Switzerland which is providing 85 medical unit personnel and one headquarters staff person. They are followed by Australia with 43 signal unit personnel and 2 headquarters staff/military observer personnel. Canada is third with 33 (one half are military observers and headquarters personnel and one half are movement control personnel.

All other nations are providing military observers and headquarters personnel: Argentina (7), Austria (1), Bangladesh (1), China (20), Egypt (9), France (30), Ghana (1), Greece (1), Guinea (1), Ireland (6), Italy (6), Kenya (10), Malaysia (1), Nigeria (1), Pakistan (1), Peru (1), Poland (15), Tunisia (9), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (15), United States of America (30), Russian Federation (29), Venezuela (15).

The Secretary-General noted that force headquarters is located with MINURSO headquarters in El Aïn. UN military observers have been deployed in 10 team sites at Mahbes, Tifariti, Bir Lahlou, and Maharrize in the northern sector; Oum Dreiga and Mijek in the central sector; and Aousserd, Zug, and Aquenit in the southern sector. The team site at Zug was relocated to Dougai in November 1991 to facilitate logistic supply and liaison with the Polisario and to provide better accommodations for the UN military observers. Sector headquarters have been provisionally established at Smara, Oum Dreiga and Aousserd. A liaison officer is also at Tindouf in Algeria to maintain contact with Algerian authorities and Polisario.

The Australian Signals Unit has detachments at force headquarters, at each sector headquarters, and at the Tindouf liaison office. The Swiss Medical Unit is based in El Aïn, but has small medical clinics in Smara and Dakhla and air medical and casualty evacuation elements in El Aïn and Smara.

Boutros-Ghali noted that Perez de Cuellar intended to initially deploy 100 observers and some support personnel to verify the cease-fire and cessation of hostilities. This was endorsed by the Security Council on September 4, 1991. The first group of UN military personnel arrived in El Aïn on September 5, just hours before the cease-fire came into formal effect at 0600 Greenwich mean time on September 6.

The report notes that "the team site is the key element in monitoring the cease-fire and each one is, on average, responsible for an area of more
than 9,000 square kilometers on either side of the sand wall (berm), which extends for 1,960 kilometers. UN military observers operate in mobile patrols of two vehicles each, with two UN military observers per vehicle. Patrols can last from several hours to several days, depending on the mission and the distances involved. Helicopter-borne patrols are also conducted on both sides of the berm and enhance the UN capability to cover the large area and react at short notice to complaints and violations. The primary task of these patrols is to monitor compliance with the cease-fire. They do this by direct observation of military forces and activities carried out by either party and by verifying complaints of alleged cease-fire violations. Each violation or complaint is taken up with the relevant military commanders, both orally and in writing, and is reported up the MINURSO chain of command. Each confirmed violation is the object of a protest to the party concerned. Each complaint is investigated and the results are communicated to the complaining party as quickly as possible. In all instances, the confidentiality of information obtained from either side is protected.

The Secretary-General goes on to note that the main type of cease-fire violations are overflights, improvement of defensive works, and the movement of troops. He states that a total of 77 violations have been reported and that 75 have been attributed to Morocco while 2 have been attributed to the Polisario Front. He notes that overflights have been particularly difficult to identify positively, but notes that it has been possible to affirm, in some cases, that they are by military aircraft. Defensive improvements include the laying of mine fields, digging of anti-tank ditches, construction of rock and/or sand walls, and building of other fortifications such as bunkers or barriers. He reported there has been some unauthorized movement of troops by both parties from the positions originally held on September 6, 1991.

Boutros-Ghali notes that the primary function of MINURSO, to monitor the cease-fire, has been successful in that "the cease-fire has held during the last five and a half months."

The Secretary-General notes that since taking office he has followed the situation in Western Sahara very closely. He met with King Hassan II on January 30, 1992, and with President Mohamed Abdelaziz (SADR) on February 14, 1992, at United Nations Headquarters. This latter was the first time Polisario had been invited to UN Headquarters.

A major sticking point remains the new instructions given by Perez de Cuellar to the Identification Committee on December 19, 1991, enlarging the voting list of the 1974 Spanish census to include complete tribes of individuals scattered throughout several countries in the region. A large number of these individuals are people who have recently been moved to the Western Sahara, but consider themselves "Moroccans from the north." In December the Security Council welcomed, but did not approve the last report of Javier Perez de Cuellar and asked for a report by Boutros-Ghali within two months of his taking office.

Following the resignation of the former Special Representative, Johannes Manz, Boutros Ghali sent the Deputy Special Representative to the area to address "the persistent logistical and technical problems faced by MINURSO....The office of the Special Representative in New York was closed at the beginning of January 1992 and MINURSO staff at Headquarters were either redeployed or released....At the same time, agreement was reached on the release and transport from Moroccan ports of all United Nations goods required by MINURSO and notably by its military component."

Boutros-Ghali also noted that "consultations have been held with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva. UNHCR now has adequate contributions in cash and kind to organize, as provided in the plan, the eventual return of refugees together with their immediate families. Preparatory technical measures have been taken by UNHCR and a senior level UNHCR mission to the territory is foreseen in the near future."

A new Special Representative has not
yet been selected as one acceptable
to both parties has not yet been
found. It has been reported that
Polisario favors a Special Representa-
tive from the U.S., believing that
the US will be impartial.

Boutros-Ghali notes that the referen-
dum in Western Sahara was scheduled
for January 1992. That date has not
been met. In his report he does not
propose a revised timetable for the
referendum, but sets a target date of
three months to resolve the issues
that block setting a new timetable
for the vote.

He also notes that the UN has never
organized a referendum of this kind
and asserts that this may be one
reason for the difficulties in meet-
ing the proposed earlier timeline. He
calls on both parties for
full cooperation with UN efforts to
find mutually acceptable solutions to
unresolved differences. He also
notes that if by the end of May 1992
there is no agreement on implementa-
tion of the existing plan, that it
"will be necessary to consider alter-
native courses of action and possibly
adopt a new approach to the whole
problem."

Article taken from Security Council
Report S/23662, 28 February 1992

CHRONOLOGY OF THE WESTERN SAHARA
CONFLICT FOLLOWING THE CEASE-FIRE

September 15
Moroccan officials refuse the special
correspondent of Le Monde to enter
the Western Sahara.

September 17-18
The Union of the Greater Maghreb
meeting in Casablanca upholds the
peace plan of the UN and refuses to
further discuss the Western Sahara.

September 18
The population of the Western Sahara
is warned by Moroccan authorities
that it has no right to make contact
with foreigners, whether they be
members of MINURSO or journalists,
under pain of disciplinary action by
the authorities. Group assemblies
are forbidden, including celebrations
of a marriage, naming of children,
and other social occasions. Thou-
sands of Moroccan soldiers start
wearing civil police garb and are
spread throughout the Western Sahara.
They replace taxi drivers to better
observe the movements of the popula-
tion and work as telephone operators
in the central offices of El Aou in
order to monitor telephone conversa-
tions and interrupt them if neces-
sary.

September 18
170,000 Moroccans, originating from
the southern provinces of Morocco,
are sent to settle in the Western
Sahara.

September 21
The prison at Tazmamart will be
razed, but its detainees will be
transferred to new prison centers,
recently constructed.

September 25
Fourth violation of the cease-fire by
Moroccan planes flying over the liberated territory.

September 25
Following a visit to Mauritania, Johannes Manz, Special Representative on Western Sahara, arrives in the Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf.

September 26
25,000 Moroccans arrive in the Western Sahara to swell the census lists. Le matin du Sahara reports that hundreds of tents have been set up around El Aiun for these Moroccans coming from Tan-Tan and Goulimine in southern Morocco.

September 26
King Hassan of Morocco undertakes an official visit to the US. During the meeting between the King and President Bush, Mr. Bush declares that the US is in agreement with the UN plan for the referendum.

October 2
Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar asks Mauritania to grant MINURSO broad rights of passage through that nation and requests permission to establish a rear base of operations in Mauritania for greater freedom of action.

October 5
A Dutch boat loaded with 156 prefabricated houses for MINURSO staff is forbidden the right to unload its cargo by Moroccan authorities. It is turned back to Las Palmas.

October 10
At the European Parliament in Strasbourg, two Moroccans, including one who is a member of the Moroccan Embassy, are found stealing documents belonging to Madame B. Simmons, German deputy and President of the group, "Peace for the Sahrawi people," in the European Parliament.

October 11-13
The 17th European Conference of Support for the Sahrawi People is held in Le Mans.

October 12
Selem Zerouali, a young Sahrawi girl, is arrested by the Moroccan police for having protested, along with others, against the presence of the new Moroccan colonizers. She died under torture.

October 19
M. Henri Saby, president of the Commission on Development and Cooperation of the European Parliament, is refused entry to the Western Sahara (El Aiun) following a visit to Mauritania.

November 3
12th violation of the cease-fire by Moroccan aircraft

November 6
On the occasion of the 16th anniversary of the Green March, King Hassan II reaffirms the sovereignty of Morocco over the Western Sahara and notes he does not accept a "joint" administration (UN).

November 8
The Swiss Medical Team (80 members) is in place after three months of delay. The clinic constructed at El Aiun is operational and the others at Smara and Dakhla are soon to be operational.

November 15
Serious accusations in The Independent against a UN bureaucrat. The paper's inquiry showed that confidential information on computer diskettes concerning the identification of voters supplied by the Polisario Front to the UN had been transmitted to Morocco despite the objections of other UN officials. Polisario
claimed that in addition to the con-


defidential census lists, military informa-

tion was also provided Moroc-

can authorities.

November 18
New violation of the cease-fire by
Moroccan combat planes.

November 22
A high UN bureaucrat and member of
MINURSO is named in a confidential UN
report published in The Independent
and in The Washington Post concerning
various irregularities dealing with
several million dollars of aid to
Afghan refugees.

December 20
Resignation of Johannes Manz, Special
Representative of the UN to Western
Sahara.

UPDATE ON PUBLICATIONS ON CONFLICT IN
WESTERN SAHARA SINCE JUNE 1991 REPORT

(Articles listed are those received
by the Editor since the last newslet-
ter.)

1. Human Rights Monitor, interna-
tional service for human rights, No.
15, December 1991, p.5, makes refer-
ence to the meeting of the Human
Rights Committee's 43rd Session in
Geneva from October 21 to November 8,
1991, and notes the concerns of sev-
eral experts concerning Sahrawi pris-
oners who had not yet been freed.
The investigation of Sahrawi pris-
oners was part of the completion of the
inquiry on Moroccan human rights
issues.

2. Friends of Morocco, A Newsletter,
Reference is made to articles in
Jeune Afrique, Middle East Times, and
American Arab Affairs on the status
of the UN peace plan for Western
Sahara.

3. American Arab Affairs, Summer
1991, Number 37. "The Western Sahar-
a: Future Prospects," Robert J.
Bookmiller, pp. 64-76. An examina-
tion of the prospects of the referen-
dum and a recap of issues.

4. YEARBOOK 1990, IWGIA, Copenhagen,
1991, ISSN 0902-6266, pp. 149-150.
Report on North Africa. Sources on
their Western Sahara report include
Africa Events, Information, and West
Africa.

5. The Washington Report on Middle
East Affairs, February 1992, Volume
X, No. 7, p. 47, Maghreb Mirror,
Jamal Amiar (radio journalist based
in Tangier, Morocco), "Is UN Post-
ponement of Sahara Referendum Really
a Cancellation?" Rerun of background
of referendum. Amiar suggests that
the fact that the new secretary-gen-
eral of the UN is an Egyptian may be
a plus for Morocco. He also suggests
that the state of UN finances may
cause a delay or cancellation of the
referendum.

6. Toward Freedom, October 1991,
Volume 40, No.7, Better Tomorrows,
"Beyond the Moroccan Cease-fire:
Will Hassan Stick to His Guns?" Anne
Lippert, pp. 13-14. Discussion of
some of the difficulties of the ref-
erendum and Sahrawi concerns about a
free and fair referendum.

7. The Economist. August 31, 1991,
p.34, "Western Sahara: Desert Stall."
Article suggests Moroccan king oppos-
es UN referendum.

8. Christian Science Monitor, August
Sahara Deal Slips a Notch," Marian
Houk. Article discusses "foot drag-
ging" of King Hassan regarding refer-
endum. He is quoted "I have, from
the beginning, said that we would
accept the results of the referendum,
because the Sahara can only be Moroc-
can and nothing but Moroccan, whether
or not there is a referendum."
DYMALLY SCHEDULES TWO HEARINGS BEFORE AFRICAN AFFAIRS AND HUMAN RIGHTS SUB-COMMITTEES OF HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Melvyn Dymally, chair of the House Sub-Committee on Africa, and Gus Yatron, chair of the House Sub-Committee on Human Rights, held a joint hearing on the UN peace plan for the Western Sahara in 2172 Rayburn, October 8, 1991.

Speaking to the plan, Congressman Dymally noted that "United States diplomacy is essential in ensuring that a true expression of self-determination takes place in the Western Sahara." He noted that "by holding this hearing, we hope to focus attention on the peace plan, the referendum and the plight of the people of Western Sahara. They are entitled to enjoy the right and privilege being realized now by millions of individuals all over the globe, the right of self-determination."

Congressman Yatron noted that "one of the major areas I look forward to reviewing today is Morocco's cooperation on ensuring the success of the UN peace plan."

Speaking at the Hearing were John S. Wolf, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State; Teresa K. Smith de Cherif, Manager and Senior Editor, Africa Bureau Research and Information, The Academy of Educational Development; Stephen Zunes, educator and writer; Anne Lippert, editor of the SPSC Newsletter and professor at Ohio Northern University; Hurst Hannum, of the International Human Rights Law Group; Lawrence T. Farley, professor at Lock Haven University; and representative of Amnesty International.

Along with Congressmen Yatron and Dymally, Congressmen Weiss and others questioned the witnesses.

The Amnesty International report focussed on human rights issues. Of particular note were "disappearances" in the Western Sahara. Amnesty representatives noted that "disappearances" of Sahrawis by Moroccan security forces began in 1975. The report noted that "In some cases, those who "disappeared" were not just individuals, but whole families. Often, "disappearances" followed the arrest of dozens of people after demonstrations or before important visits. After each wave of arrests, some of those seized were released, but others have never been seen again."

The report went on further that "Over 300 "disappeared" Western Saharan civilians, who had been held in secret detention for up to 15 years, were released by the Moroccan authorities in mid-June 1991. Many of them have contracted serious ailments, due to the harsh prison conditions. At least 43 others are reported to have died in detention and several hundred more continue unaccounted for by the Moroccan security forces."

The Amnesty report notes that many of the Sahrawis recently released from prison are reportedly under house arrest and others are restricted to areas in Morocco. "Those set free are reported to have been instructed to keep silent about their experiences and not to celebrate their homecoming in public." It goes on to say that "the Leili family who are from Laayoune (El Aiun) (the capital of Western Sahara) are now, after 15 years of secret detention, said to be kept under guard in Tan Tan, some 300 kilometers from their hometown and in the heartland of Morocco."

The report also mentions others "still disappeared" who include "Mes-tahya ment Ali Salem oud Hainouda, born in 1958 in Saguia, a housewife and mother of one son, who was arrested on 25 January 1981 in Laayoune together with her sister Yahdia; and Fatimatou ment Baad, aged 65 at the time of her arrest on 4 April 1984 by the police judiciaire."

SECOND HEARING HELD FEBRUARY 26, 1992

At the start of the second hearing, Congressman Dymally noted that the purpose of the hearing is to review the current status of the UN peace plan and proposed referendum and to encourage the US administration and the UN to ensure that a free and fair referendum takes place in Western Sahara.

He noted that "together with my colleagues on the subcommittee, I sponsored a resolution endorsing the implementation of the peace plan and calling upon the President to contin-
ue the US policy of strong advocacy of the peace plan within the UN and in our bilateral relations. This legislation passed the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the House of Representatives unanimously.

"This same resolution is now being sponsored in the Senate by Senators Kennedy, Kassenbaum, Simon, and Cranston."

According to Congressman Dymally, "a recent report by Senator Pell, Chairman of Senate Foreign Relations, the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara Peacekeeping Force (MINURSO) is not being supported politically by the UN hierarchy in New York. This accounting also states that the UN is ignoring MINURSO's reports of cease-fire violations and the Government of Morocco's unwillingness to cooperate with MINURSO's operations."

Senator Pell, who also appeared at the hearing, submitted a staff report for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that describes in detail the problems confronted by MINURSO. George Pickart's report details the failure of MINURSO to receive materials, to get support from the UN in New York, to receive cooperation from Moroccan officials in the Western Sahara for movement of supplies and personnel, to receive threats from Moroccan military enclaves, to have MINURSO materials impounded by Moroccan authorities.

One of the panelists listed for the hearing was Colonel Albert C. Zapanta, US Military Assistant to the Force Commander of MINURSO. Zapanta, who had agreed to appear, was absent. There was no explanation of the absence. Zapanta, who had been stationed in the Western Sahara until recently, has immediate knowledge of the many difficulties MINURSO is facing.

Amnesty International reported at the second hearing that "in January 1992 (it had) received reports that over 100 individuals had been arrested in the Western Sahara or by Moroccan security forces. They include Rella Ma' El Ainain, a 26-year-old bank employee from Asse, working in Agadir and arrested there on September 11, 1991, after faxing an article on the Western Sahara to a Swiss journalist. He was detained incommunicado for over four months. During this time his family sought information on his whereabouts from the Moroccan authorities but the judiciary police denied holding him."

Amnesty representatives also discussed Morocco's record of torture, "disappeared," years of detention without charges, and generally poor human rights record. Of particular note were three French nationals raised in Morocco, the Bourequat brothers, who were held in the secret prison of Tazmamert in 4-meter by 4-meter cells with little food, ventilation, light, or covering. They survived 18 years of detention without charges, but are seriously crippled and ill. Only 31 of the 61 prisoners housed there survived their detention.

Also discussed at the hearing were the financial irregularities of the MINURSO officials in New York. One official who is alleged to have stolen several million from Afghan relief, is alleged to have provided Moroccan officials with computer census diskettes provided by Polisario to the UN. MINURSO claims to have spent some $58 million of its $200 million budget, figures that UN personnel in the field find extremely exaggerated. Examples include entertainment in the field (when none has been provided) and charges of $70 per day to each soldier for food and housing, although most of them live in tents and have insufficient food.

Panelists scheduled for the February 26 hearing were John Bolton, Assistant Secretary of State; Colonel Albert C. Zapanta, US Military Assistant to the Force Commander of MINURSO <ABSENT>; Professor John Damis, Associate Director of Middle East Studies, Portland State; Theresa Smith de Cherif, Africa Bureau Research; Stephen M. Schneebaum, International Human Rights Law Group; Susan Waltz, Amnesty International.

DO NOT PERMIT THE RE-STEALING OF THE WESTERN SAHARA. THOMAS FRANCK DESCRIBED THE FIRST THEFT IN 1976. WILL THE FREE AND FAIR REFERENDUM BE STOLEN?
EDITORIAL

Since 1975 the Sahrawi people have been attempting to exercise their right to self-determination. This has been a United Nations issue since the 60's, an OAU issue since the 70's, a combined effort throughout the 80's and 90's, a right recognized by the world community.

This right to self-determination is above all else a human rights issue, a matter of justice and equity. For the US, a nation committed to the exercise of a "new world order," it would be an exercise in unconscionable cynicism to relegate the Sahrawi people to a sham referendum or a "failed attempt by the UN" because Morocco is a long-time ally.

Iraq was a long-term US ally, as records have recently shown, but we did not sit by and let Kuwait remain under the control of the Iraqi authorities following the invasion of that country. There has been much discussion in the US press and by members of the Bush Administration of the abuses of Iraq against Kuwaiti citizens. Should there be any less discussion about the Sahrawi detainees who are kept without charge and trial for decades? Should there be any less effort made to ensure that a new special representative for Western Sahara be an individual untainted by previous record of official connivance in the Moroccan effort to seize the Western Sahara by force?

From reports coming from newspapers and journals from abroad, from following the US House hearings, from reading the reports of the past Secretary-General and current Secretary-General of the UN, it appears that there is a serious attempt to undermine the free and fair referendum for the Sahrawis, that MINURSO is to be a sham.

ONE CAN ONLY SAY: SHAME!

THE SAHRAWI PEOPLE, LIKE THE PEOPLES OF EASTERN EUROPE, LIKE THE PEOPLE OF KUWAIT, LIKE ALL PEOPLES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD HAVE THE RIGHT TO FREELY EXERCISE THEIR RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND TO HAVE THEIR CHOICE SUPPORTED AND HONORED THROUGH FULL UN AND US SUPPORT.

The SPSC Letter is printed about four times a year in Ada, Ohio. A donation of $5 is requested. For information write SPSC Letter, 217 E. Lehr Avenue, Ada, Ohio 45810.

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