

THE SAHARAN PEOPLES
SUPPORT COMMITTEE, USA



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LETTER

EUROPEAN SUPPORT GROUPS AND OTHER NGOS
JOIN THE SAHRAWI ASSOCIATION OF FAMILIES
OF PRISONERS AND THE DISAPPEARED

It began with the Spanish Support Group. They sent postcards with pictures of Sahrawi prisoners of war and Sahrawi civilians who had "disappeared in southern Morocco or in the occupied territory of the SADR" to support groups in Europe, the US, and on the other continents.

Following Amnesty International's lead, support group members wrote to Spanish authorities, Moroccan authorities, Moroccan Ambassadors to their nations and others requesting information on these Sahrawis.

According to Association (AFAPREDESA) leaders, the group was founded August 20, 1989, with the goal of informing the world of this badly known reality, that over 800 Sahrawi civilians have disappeared into the hands of the Moroccan regime since Hassan II attempted the annexation by force of the Western Sahara in 1975.

Thanks to the testimony of the families who make up the Association, a list of some 802 cases of Sahrawi civilians who have disappeared has been constituted. Many of these civilians are elderly persons, pregnant women (at the time of imprisonment), children born in prison. Some families have waited for over 14 years information concerning the fate of the relative taken prisoner.

The Association has opened an inter-

national office in Madrid in the offices of the Association for Human Rights in Spain.

The main objectives of the Association are to work for the reappearance of these prisoners and disappeared persons and to demand their liberation; to seek by all means information concerning those who have disappeared, those deported, those jailed and those children born in prison, as well as the conditions in which they are held and to provide this information to their families; to denounce the repression, torture, intimidation and arbitrary arrests exercised by the Moroccan military occupation forces against Sahrawi civilians; to support and direct families to humanitarian organizations of the UN, OAU, and governmental and non-governmental groups.

Members of the Association visited Spain, France and Western Germany in late 1989. They have also visited the UN offices in Geneva and have contacted Amnesty International and the Federation of Families of the Disappeared (FEDEFAM).

Support groups in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Switzerland, West Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and England have contacted the Moroccan Ambassadors in those countries and have demonstrated before the Moroccan embassies and Moroccan tourist agencies. A new campaign suggests adopting a "Disappeared Sahrawi civilian, writing that person and Moroccan authorities.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS IN WESTERN SAHARA
IN 1989-90

10.14.89: The 15th Coordination Committee meeting of with representatives from support committees in Austria, Belgium, Spain, Venezuela, Great Britain, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, West Germany, Sweden and Italy takes place in Hambourg.

10.25.89: The UN adopts by consensus in the Fourth Committee (Decolonization) a resolution inviting Morocco and the Polisario Front to direct talks in order to resolve the conflict in Western Sahara.

12.3.89: The SPLA mounted 23 military operations during November 1989.

12.4.89: Salem Ould Salek is named Minister of Education and Si Ahmed Batal, Minister of Health.

12.11.89: The General Assembly of the UN adopts a resolution which emphasizes the importance of direct negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario Front.

1.03.90: 4,000 young Sahrawis are deported from occupied Western Sahara.

1.19.90: Johannes Manz is named special representative of the UN Secretary General for the question of Western Sahara, replacing Ciros Espiell.

1.24.90: The Polisario Front plans a suspension of fighting to facilitate resumption of peace negotiations in response to an appeal of the UN Secretary General.

1.30.90: The Polisario Front protests the decision of Morocco to send Moroccans to the occupied territory of the SADR.

2.03.90: Moroccan authorities exert strong pressure on Sahrawi families to have young Sahrawis join the Moroccan army.

2.18.90: The eve of the visit of J. Manz, UN representative to Western Sahara, a score of arrests take place in the occupied territory of the SADR.

2.24.90: In response to the appeal of the Polisario Front, several hundred people demonstrate in Paris concerning the Sahrawi "disappeared" and Sahrawi prisoners of war.

2.25.90: The Congress of the National Organization of Sahrawi Women meets.

3.1.90: Nelson Mandela accepts an invitation to visit the SADR.

3.16.90: M. Perez de Cuellar, UN Secretary General, formulates the hope of seeing the UN organize a referendum of self-determination in Western Sahara according to the following plan: proclamation of a cease-fire; a substantial, gradual and appropriate reduction of Moroccan forces in Western Sahara (50%); Polisario Front forces would remain in their quarters as would Moroccan military forces remaining in the Western Sahara during the referendum.

Moroccan administration in Western Sahara would be inactivated at the time of the referendum. Simultaneously a Commission of Identification would be put in place which will constitute electoral rolls using as base, the Spanish census of 1974.

This work of establishing the lists will last two to three months. All operations would be under the strict control of the UN.

3.18.90: New dispute between Amnesty International and the Moroccan government after the expulsion of two

Amnesty delegates.

3.21.90: British parliamentarian, Lord Winchelsea, and the former leader of the Liberal Party, M. D. Steel, along with 40 other British personalities, arrive in the Sahrawi refugee camps leading a convoy of ten vehicles providing humanitarian aid. Two days earlier, a Spanish caravan of 30 vehicles had arrived in the refugee camps providing humanitarian aid.

3.22.90: M. Perez de Cuellar declares that "there is a peace plan in Western Sahara and I intend that this plan be put into effect. This is the sense of my visit to the Maghrib."

3.27.90: M. Perez de Cuellar, after his meeting with President Chadli Benjedid (Algeria), King Hassan II (Morocco), and President Mohamed Abdelaziz (SADR), declares that his conversations have been extremely useful and that the work of the Identification Commission for establishing the electoral body will be very intense.

4.06.90: The Moroccan Minister of the Interior declares that the question of the withdrawal of the Moroccan army and administration during the referendum is out of date.

4.19.90: A delegation of F.I.D.H. visits the Sahrawi refugee camps. The delegation meets 200 Moroccan prisoners whose return to Morocco is still denied by Moroccan authorities. The delegation also hears from representatives of the Association of Families of Sahrawi Disappeared, and declares that the situation in the camps is as satisfactory as possible with sanitary procedures being good and education of the children being at 100%.

5.01.90: Two French doctors, members of the Association for the Victims of Repression, are expelled from Morocco.

5.09.90: According to observers,

King Hassan II wishes to lift the onus which weighs against his nation due to criticism by those organizations established for the defense of the Rights of Man.

6.03.90: King Hassan II meets with M. Issa Diallo, Special Counselor to M. Perez de Cuellar.

6.04.90: The Foundation "France-Libertes" whose President is Mme. Danielle Mitterand, wife of French President Francois Mitterand, attempts to sensitize opinion on the conflict in Western Sahara by raising in France "broader and better organized humanitarian assistance to the Sahrawi population living in the refugee camps." M. R. Doueb, Secretary General of this organization, visited the refugee camps during the winter.

6.10.90: The meeting of 38 Sahrawi notables charged with assisting the Identification Commission of the Technical Commission of the UN/OAU, whose goal is to put in place the referendum on self-determination for Western Sahara, ended at the Palace of the Nations in Geneva. Half the Sahrawi notable came from occupied SADR and half were from liberated SADR. Presided over by M. Johannes Manz, "this meeting provided the opportunity for informing the Sahrawi notables of the role of the Identification Commission as well as the steps envisaged to set up the necessary conditions so that the referendum might take place, and for asking their cooperation toward this end."

"In question was the census of the Spanish authorities of 1974, the census accepted as the basis for identification of persons having the right to participate in the referendum."

6.11.90: Namibia becomes the 75th state to recognize the SADR.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION FOR THE
SAHRAWIS IN THE US AND ELSEWHERE

1. Join the Adoption Campaign. This can be done through the French Committee. To join, send your name and address to

CAMPAGNE D'ADOPTION
ASSOCIATION DES AMIS DE LA RASD
B.P. 244
75227 PARIS
FRANCE

Yearly cost in France is 150FF. Because of postal costs to the US, the fee for US members will be higher.

Each person adopting one of the Sahrawis who has disappeared will receive the name of the Sahrawi, the date and place of his/her being taken away by Moroccan authorities.

Each month you will send four cards (one each to the four persons designated to receive them.

You will receive four postcards and the four addresses each month for your mailing.

2. Assist US Support Group Members in underwriting the salary of a US citizen to work towards assisting US movement in the cause.

Donations may be sent to
Stephen Zunes,
222 Fulton Street
Walla Walla, WA 99362
who is coordinating this effort.

3. Continue to urge your Senators and Representatives to work for implementation of the UN/OAU Peace Plan. Urge President Bush to encourage Morocco to bring an end to the illegal invasion of the Western Sahara. Your letters and your assistance to the Sahrawi people can make a difference.

EXCERPTS FROM THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
RESOLUTION ON THE LACK OF RESPECT FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE WESTERN SAHARA

The European Parliament,

Recalling its resolution of December 17, 1987, protesting the arrest and imprisonment by Moroccan police of inhabitants of Western Sahara at the time of the visit of the Technical Mission of the UN/OAU to Western Sahara,

Reiterating its numerous earlier positions on the situation for Human Rights in Morocco,

Recalling its resolution of March 15, 1989 on the situation Western Sahara,

Considering the continuation of arrests of inhabitants of the Western Sahara by the Moroccan police,

Considering the forced displacement to Morocco of several hundred young Sahrawis,

Considering the refusal of the Moroccan government to receive the 200 Moroccan military prisoners liberated unilaterally by the Polisario Front,

Considering the 1989 report of Amnesty International on the situation of human rights in Morocco and in Western Sahara and which notes that

"the Moroccan government has given no new information on the fate of 80 persons from Western Sahara who have "disappeared" since 1976,

"the legal status and fate of several hundred persons arrested in November 1987 at the time of the visit of the UN Enquiry Mission remain unknown,

"some information recounts torture and mistreatment of political prisoners,"

Taking into account the appeal signed

The Resolution was adopted February 15, 1990.

SYMPOSIUM ON THE FIRST SIX YEARS OF
LIFE FOR SAHRAWI CHILDREN HELD IN SADR

A symposium on early childhood was held in the SADR April 21-23, 1990 with the Prime Minister of the SADR and the Minister of Education present. This symposium which had been prepared for several months, brought together Sahrawi teachers, health personnel and those involved in child care.

Taking part in the symposium were the

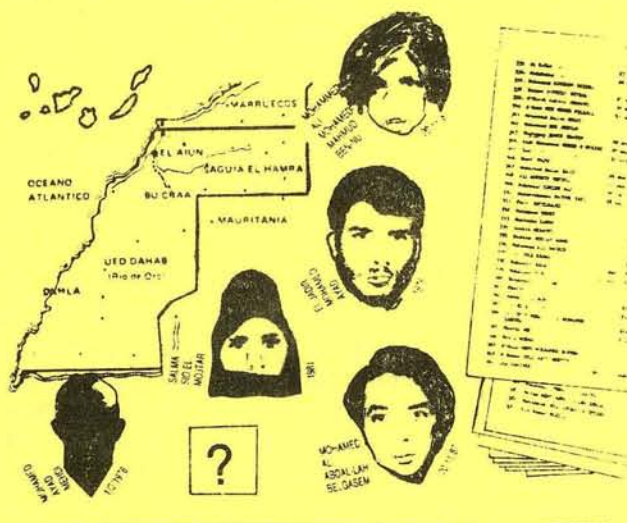
following NGOs: Cospe, Italy;
Enfants Refugies du Monde, France;
Caritas, Algeria; Association des
Amis de la RASD (Le Mans Committee);
a professor from the Ecole Normale,
Le Mans.

Those Sahrawi national institutions concerned with childcare were present, notably personnel from the School of February 27 which trains childcare personnel, day care center and nursery school personnel from national and regional centers, and committee members of health, nutrition and infant care committees.

Problems dealing with nutrition, health, development of the day care center and nursery school personnel, and ways of preventing mental handicaps in children were discussed.

It was noted that the lack of material resources makes some improvement in the care of children difficult. A French psychologist, Chantal Duchastelle, noted that care of their children is a major priority of the Sahrawis.

WHERE ARE THEY?



100 SAHRAWI CHILDREN VISIT FRANCE IN ON-GOING SCHOLAR VISITATION PROGRAM

According to the Association of Friends of the SADR, which is located in France, 100 Sahrawi children will be received by sister city delegations and by support committee members. The youths will stay in France for about two months and will spend time in two or three cities.

Albi is in its fourth year of hosting Sahrawi students. On June 21, 1990, the Sahrawis will arrive. They will be received by CM2 of the Ecole d'Application of the Ecole Normale. The students will stay with French families, as usual, which enables them to progress rapidly in their knowledge of the French language.

In mid-May Sahrawi nursery school teachers accompanied by an interpreter from the School of February 27 had an internship at the Ecole Normale of Le Mans. The internship was a six week program. In August twenty Sahrawi children visited the summer camp at Audierne.

Following the visit of 20 French explorer scouts to the Sahrawi refugee camps in April 1990, 10 Sahrawi children from Bir-Enzaran were the guests of Loon-Plage families.

SISTER CITY ACTIVITIES CONTINUE FOR SAHRAWIS AND THEIR HOMOLOGUES

Mueina, an early heroine of the Sahrawi exodus from the Western Sahara in 1976, was an official representative of the SADR at the Sister City celebration held in Le Mans in April 1990. Le Mans holds Sister City status with Haousa. The Sahrawi representative was one of five representatives from those cities which have these ties.

Argenteuil and Hagunia are now developing sister city ties.

MEETING OF UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION OF IDENTIFICATION OF THE SAHRAWIS MEETS IN GENEVA JUNE 4-7, 1990

With the goal of facilitating the work of the Commission of Identification of Sahrawis called to participate in the referendum, a group of high-level UN administrators, led by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, met in Geneva June 4 through 7. Johannes Manz, the UN Special Representative, presided over the sessions, attended by 38 Sahrawi representatives invited by the UN Secretary-General.

During this meeting, the census organized by Spanish authorities in 1974 was discussed. In line with the UN Secretary General's and the OAU Chairman's proposals to resolve the question of Western Sahara, that census was accepted as a basis for identification of persons having the right to vote in the referendum.

UN authorities were pleased at the encouraging success of the important meeting. They noted their appreciation for the positive and constructive attitude of the Sahrawi notables. They were particularly happy at the exceptional occasion presented to the Sahrawi family, separated for a number of years, to find themselves once again in a fraternal and peaceful atmosphere.

Swiss support group members reported that the preparation for these meetings were disturbed by the presence of hundreds of Moroccan "policemen" who had come to Geneva with the goal of surveilling, intimidating, bribing or otherwise causing the Sahrawis who had come to the meeting to feel threatened.

PUBLICATION UPDATE ON THE LIBERATION
STRUGGLE OF THE SAHRAWI PEOPLE..1990

Les Rgaybat, 1610-1934, Sophie Caratini; two volumes, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1989.

Caratini traces the history of the Rgaybat (Reguibat, for those who have been used to that spelling) for a period a little over 300 years. Also dealt with in the two volumes are the life style of this group of nomads, family ties and unions, work and economy, political ties and group structures.

Caratini, who spent some time with the Rgaybat in Mauritania, provides a good deal of documentation. Of particular interest is the translation of the 1931 manuscript of Muhammad Salim Wuld 'Abd Alhayy, which described the life of the Rgaybat, the organization of the group and wars fought against a variety of groups.

Volume I is entitled, "Des Chameliers a la conquete d'un territoire." Volume II is called, "Territoire et societe."

Caratini is in charge of the Ethnology Section of the Institut du Monde Arabe and is a member of the Laboratoire de Sociologie at the University of Paris VII. She worked three years in the department of Afrique Blanche of the Musee de l'Homme and at C.N.R.S. doing research on Mauritania from 1979-83.

Femmes sahraouies, femmes du desert, Christiane Perregaux, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1990.

Christiane Perregaux, a professor at

the University of Geneva, records the lives of several Sahrawi women in this book. Perregaux is the author of L'ecole sahraouie, de la caravane a la guerre de liberation.

The book is dedicated to Khoueita Hammad Hadda, who as the dedication says, was 30 years old in 1977. "Married, she lived in the city of Smara. She was arrested, one month pregnant. She remained six weeks in the prison of Smara where she underwent torture daily. Transported to the city of occupied El Aiun, she was interned in the central prison. There she gave birth to a boy who lived only a few hours. Khoueita Hammad Hadda died under torture November 30, 1977" in the prison.

Of particular value in the stories recounted in the book are the ties between the participation of Sahrawi women in their society traditionally and current involvement of these women in nation-building.

"Western Sahara Conflict Impedes Maghrib Unity," Middle East Report, March-April 1990, Yahia Zoubir, pp. 28-29.

Zoubir provides a succinct summary of recent action on the Western Saharan conflict. He notes that a fair solution to the conflict is necessary if there is to be a united Maghrib.

"Western Sahara: Back to Battle," Hew African, March 1990, Yahia Zoubir & Daniel Volman, p.19.

Volman and Zoubir outline reasons for Polisario's renewal of fighting in

late 1989. Also discussed in the article are Algeria's position on the conflict and Morocco's establishment of civilian settlements in the Western Sahara.

The United States and North Africa: A Cognitive Approach to Foreign Policy, Azzedine Layachi, New York, Praeger, 1990.

Of particular interest to readers of the SPSC LETTER, is the section that deals with arms sales to Morocco by the U.S., and U.S. policy on the war in Western Sahara.

Also received:

"La patrie est clemente et misericordieuse," a press conference which took place in Rabat in February 1990. Materials were sent by Omar Hadrami, who currently works at the Interior Ministry in Morocco.

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Some past issues of the LETTER are available. Write the above address for information concerning the availability of volumes and numbers.

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EDITORIAL

Once more world attention is diverted from the resolution of the conflict in Western Sahara. UN resources must go to deal with the new crisis in the Middle East, the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, and the resolution of that conflict to prevent the world from being plunged into war.

There was a successful UN supervised transfer of power in Namibia. The UN supervised a free and fair election there. It is thought that the UN might use the experience gained in Namibia to achieve the same goal in Western Sahara.

Now the attention is on Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the West. What the Western world must realize is that the action it is protesting, the invasion of one Arab state by another, took place earlier in 1975 when Morocco invaded the Western Sahara.

Where were the protests from the West in 1975? As I recall, US newspapers and magazines reported a "Green March" of peaceable pilgrims, not the bloody conflict that was the reality. In 1975 and 1976 US authorities were philosophical as they talked about "US strategic interests" and "old friends" as if the conflict had no napalmed and mutilated children and other civilians.

The same voices rising in protest against the Iraqi invasion of a sister state in the name of some sort of "Arab nation" should recall that King Hassan has explained his own actions in the Western Sahara in those terms. What is wrong for Iraq is wrong for Morocco, even if linkages of this sort are uncomfortable to US leaders.

It is time to bring about a resolution to the conflict in Western Sahara. It is time to put Western efforts to resolving a 15 year war.