

OPEN LETTER FROM SAHRAWI CHILDREN

Western Sahara Campaign, concerned by the conflict in Western Sahara, is working towards the restoration of peace through its human rights, humanitarian and information activities. When the Campaign's Executive Director visited the Sahrawi refugee camps in February-March 1986, the children gave her an open letter which we would like to share with our readers:

"Peace and freedom salutations. We are the children who were deprived of the affection of fathers and mothers, deprived of the affection of families, brothers and sisters...who vanished ten years ago in the wave of disappearances organized by the occupation forces, only because they had asked for their legitimate rights to survival, existence and to live in peace. We appeal to you to intervene...with...international humanitarian organizations in order to know the fate of our families and to work for their liberty. We ask you to work towards the re-establishment of peace and stability in our country so that we may live with our parents in security, like all the children of the world who hope that 1986, the International Year of Peace, will have a real meaning, one different that what we have known over the last decade."

MOROCCO'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

Amnesty International, USA released on January 17, 1986 a report "Torture in Morocco", the last publication in its series designed to bring world attention to the areas of the globe where torture is most endemic.

Their spokesman stated, "Amnesty International has received persistent reports of systematic torture in Morocco over the past ten years. Morocco is considered to be a strategic ally of the United States and is a recipient of U.S. aid. Under Public Law 98-447, October 4, 1984, U.S. Ambassadors are required to investigate allegations of torture and ill-treatment."

The report holds that torture of political detainees in Morocco is a widespread and official practice. The accounts of torture include electric shocks, falaqa (beating of the soles of the feet), cigarette burns, asphyxiation and sexual abuse.

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UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS: NEW CONSIDERATION OF THE QUESTION OF WESTERN SAHARA

[United Nations, Geneva, Press Release HR/1849, 5 March 1986]

The Commission on Human Rights continued to consider the question of the violation of human rights in any part of the world, with particular reference to colonial and other dependent countries and territories (agenda item 12)...The observer for the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples spoke.

Verena Graf (International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples) said that the world community should know more about the real situation in Western Sahara and render more support to its people, who were being denied the right to self-determination and basic freedoms. The human rights situation in Western Sahara had acquired tragic proportions as a result of the colonialist policy and military occupation by Morocco. The Government of that country had not only occupied Western Sahara but was also suppressing the human rights of its population. It resorted to systematic bombings and killings of innocent people. All those who expressed dissatisfaction with the state of affairs were persecuted by the military and security authorities.

The entire population of Western Sahara and all areas of human rights were affected by the ruthless policy of Morocco. There were a great number of arrests, disappearances and tortures which had recently increased. Many people had been imprisoned. One could not expect a peaceful outcome of the problem while the Government continued to resort to such practices. She demanded a withdrawal of the Moroccan troops from Western Sahara and the implementation of the peace plan for Western Sahara worked out by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

Editor's note: Ms. Graf's statement was made possible through the cooperation between Western Sahara Campaign and the International Lelio Basso Foundation (Rome), the parent organization of the International League. The occasion marked the first time that the topic of Western Sahara was raised under the agenda item referenced above. During that 42nd session of the Commission,

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REFUGEES IN AFRICA — A SYMPOSIUM

On Thursday, February 27, 1986 the African Studies Center of Michigan State University (East Lansing) held a symposium, "Refugees in Africa". Leila McDowell-Head of the Campaign attended on behalf of the Director and presented her paper, "The Sahrawi Refugee Experience: Creating Institutions, 1975-1985".

The paper emphasized the unique, self-reliant character of the Sahrawi refugees and the participatory self-government in their camps. It included treatment of the origins of displacement and the contrast between the difficult early years with the future-oriented programs the Sahrawis have implemented to overcome the hardships of living in exile. The paper outlined such programs which range from a democratic governing structure to public health, education and training, and agricultural pilot projects. While the paper stressed the accomplishments of the Sahrawis, it also pointed to the critical need for international aid and the even greater need for justice for the people of Western Sahara.

Other panelists included: Professor Barry Stein of the Department of Social Science at MSU, Nicholas Van Praag of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and Elias Habteselassie of the University of California at Berkeley.

WSC HOLDS TALKS IN ALGIERS

Returning from a visit to the Sahrawi refugee camps in southwest Algeria, the Campaign's Executive Director held meetings in early March with the President of the Algerian Red Crescent (ARC), Doctor Mouloud Belaouane, with the Assistant Representative of the World Food Program (WFP), Mr. Ljubisa Andrejevic, with the Deputy Representative of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Mr. Staffan

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OXFORD CONFERENCE ON WESTERN SAHARA

The Refugee Studies Program of Oxford University (England) hosted the conference "Western Sahara: War and Refugees" on March 21 and 22, 1986. The meeting was designed to shed light on the legal, political and humanitarian aspects of the Western Sahara conflict, for the benefit of professors and students, aid agencies, politicians and journalists. The agenda included discussions on "Decolonization and International Law", "Morocco, the Maghreb and the World Powers", and "The Refugees and the Future".

Some 80 people from Europe, Africa and the United States attended, including two professors from Morocco, one of whom was a former Mayor of Rabat. American participation included Professor Thomas M. Franck of the Center for International Studies at New York University, John Kunstadter of the Albert Kunstadter Foundation (a co-sponsor of the conference), and Teresa K. Smith, the Executive Director of Western Sahara Campaign, USA.

A collection of the papers presented at the conference will be published. For more information write: The Refugee Studies Program, Queen Elizabeth house, 21 St. Giles, Oxford, England. Information on Sahrawi refugees and their self-help programs is available from Western Sahara Campaign, Box 20745, New York, NY 10025.

Editor's note: A full report on the conference will be published in WSC's next newsletter.

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Amnesty states that since the early 1970s, several detainees died as a result of torture and ill-treatment. The January report cites a number of examples, including that of Mr. Tahini Amine, a 29-year old engineer who died last November 6, allegedly from torture inflicted on him while in official garde a vue detention, during which time prisoners are held incommunicado and without access to their families, lawyers or independent doctors. Mr. Amine had been arrested along with 40 others on October 27, 1985. The forty individuals are thought to have been "disappeared".

Numerous allegations of torture have been made in the Moroccan courts during political trials, but Amnesty says to its knowledge these

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GREENERY WRENCHED FROM THE DESERT: AGRICULTURE IN WESTERN SAHARA

What enables some individuals and people to persevere, in the face of deterrents such as drought, sandstorms and unbearable heat is the subject of this report. The Sahrawi refugees have resisted the elements and are taking measures to be self-supporting, producing food from experimental gardens in the Sahara desert. It is the story of their efforts, their setbacks and their progress. It is interesting to note the agricultural capabilities of a land previously thought to be infertile and unproductive. The Sahrawi people, through their determination, have in a sense produced a miracle, as demonstrated by their harvests from the desert. This report is a contribution to the literature on Western Sahara, made available by Western Sahara Campaign. by Diane Carter

BOOK OFFER

WSC is pleased to offer its readers the opportunity to receive a complimentary copy of the book Western Sahara: Roots of a Desert War, by Tony Hodges, with donations of \$50 or more. Please make checks payable to the Africa Fund--Western Sahara Campaign.

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have never been taken into consideration or investigated.

Editor's note: WSC's report Al-Mukhtufin (1985) holds that the practice of torture is also systematically and officially employed against Sahrawi civilians in the part of the territory of Western Sahara occupied by Morocco.

UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (from page 1)

the Campaign's Executive Director held briefings with the heads of delegations from the Member States of the Commission.

WSC TALKS IN ALGIERS (from page 2)

Bodemar, and with Mrs. Dell Pellazzo of the United States Embassy in Algiers. During the meetings, the director gave an account of the Campaign's work and scheduled projects and made inquiries regarding humanitarian assistance provided by these organizations located in the host country of the Sahrawi refugees. Lively discussions and a helpful exchange of ideas and information ensued.

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RESOLUTION ON WESTERN SAHARA PASSED AT THE UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

At its forty-second session in March 1986, under agenda item 9 on "The Right of Peoples to Self-determination and Its Application to Peoples under Colonial or Alien Domination or Foreign Occupation", the Question of Western Sahara was considered and a twenty-four Power resolution was adopted. The resolution reads:

Question of Western Sahara

The Commission on Human Rights,

Having considered in depth the question of Western Sahara,

Recalling the inalienable right of all peoples to self-determination and independence in accordance with the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960, containing the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples,

Reaffirming General Assembly resolution 40/50 of 2 December 1985,

Recalling resolution AHG/Res. 104 (XIX) on Western Sahara, adopted unanimously by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity at its nineteenth ordinary session, held at Addis Ababa from 6 to 12 June 1983,

Recalling also its resolutions 4 (XXXVI) of 15 February 1980, 12 (XXXVII) of 6 March 1981, 1982/15 of 25 February 1982, 1983/6 of 16 February 1983, 1984/13 of 29 February 1984, and 1985/5 of 26 February 1985,

Conscious of its responsibility to promote and encourage observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all,

1. Reaffirms that the question of Western Sahara is a question of decolonization which remains to be completed on the basis of the exercise by the people of Western Sahara of their inalienable right to self-determination and independence,

2. Reaffirms also that the solution of the question of Western Sahara lies in the implementation of resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX) of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, which establishes ways and means for a just and definitive political solution to the Western Sahara conflict,

3. Again requests, to that end, the parties to the conflict, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro, to undertake direct negotiations in the shortest possible time, with a view to bringing about a cease-fire to create the necessary conditions for a peaceful and fair referendum for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, a referendum without any administrative or military constraints, under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations,

4. Welcomes the efforts of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity and the Secretary-General of the United Nations to achieve a just and definitive solution to the question of Western Sahara,

5. Welcomes also the invitation by the General Assembly to the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity and the Secretary-General of the United Nations to exert every effort to persuade the two parties to the conflict, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro, to negotiate, in the shortest possible time, in conformity with Organization of African Unity resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX) and General Assembly resolution 40/50, the terms of a cease-fire and the modalities for organizing the said referendum,

6. Expresses its satisfaction at the determination of the United Nations to co-operate fully with the Organization of African Unity with a view to implementing the relevant decisions of that organization, in particular resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX),

7. Decides to follow the development of the situation in Western Sahara and to consider this question within the framework of the agenda item entitled "The right of peoples to self-determination and its application to peoples under colonial or alien domination or foreign occupation" at its forty-third session, as a matter of high priority.