



THE EMBEZZLEMENT OF HUMANITARIAN AID BY THE POLISARIO

THE PHENOMENON OF EMBEZZLEMENT AND EVIDENCE FOR IT

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I. THE PHENOMENON OF EMBEZZLEMENT

For several years, the Polisario officials effect huge embezzlements of humanitarian aid (public or private) granted to the populations of the Tindouf camps. Embezzlements ordered by the Secretary General of the Polisario, Mohamed Abdelaziz, and executed in accordance with his directives and guidance, have incited many cadres of the movement to intimate clearly to him that it is unacceptable to continue using humanitarian aid for his personal enrichment. Such practice constitutes a breach of faith vis-à-vis the donating humanitarian organizations.

The appeals of the cadres were made in vain. Indeed, Mohamed Abdelaziz maintained his policy of embezzlement of humanitarian aid and channelled parts of it to the following destinations:

1- Regional markets, since hundreds of tons of commodities and foodstuff from the humanitarian aid are regularly sold, through intermediary channels, in the south of Algeria (Tindouf, Bechar, Laabadla, Oum Laassel, Adrar) and in the north of Mauritania (Bir Moghreïn, Ain Bentili, Lehfira, Zouerat, Nouadhibou, Choum, Atar and even Nouakchott).

2- The Commissariat, since the Army of the Polisario is entirely financed by, and supplied from, humanitarian aid.

Proceeds from these fraudulent sales are used in two areas:

- The refloating of the coffers of the movement for the purpose of financing its diplomatic, political and military action;
- Supplying liquidities for the personal bank accounts of Mohamed

Abdelaziz, the members of his family (who are merchants in Tindouf, Bechar, Oran, Oum Laassel), as well as for those of other Polisario leaders.

Other Embezzlements must be mentioned

Other embezzlements have to do with sums of money (in currency) granted by humanitarian organizations for the purpose of buying fresh meat or school and health equipment. These sums are systematically pocketed by the members of the leadership of the Polisario and false invoices are handed to the donating organizations as expense vouchers.

Important sums earmarked for the building of schools and dispensaries are diverted to the coffers of the "Defence Ministry". In lieu of these public buildings projected for education and health care, the Polisario shows to donating organizations makeshift constructions built by Moroccan prisoners of war.

The embezzlement by the Polisario of humanitarian aid money has, in fact, been pointed out by the Algerian press.

In order to put an end to such embezzlement activities, which have become an essential aspect of the Polisario leadership's "morals", the HCR must act and endeavour to take charge of the direct supervision of humanitarian aid distribution. Indeed, as long as the management of this aid is in the hands of the Polisario, this latter will continue to dispose of it as it pleases. This runs contrary to the objectives and motivations set for such a humanitarian aid.

The involvement of the HCR in the direct supervision of humanitarian aid distribution implies that this organization sets up, in the refugees' camps, an effective administrative unit instead of continuing to manage it from its Bureau in Algiers.

II EVIDENCE

1- The "Refugee Children of the World" organisation:

Mrs. Mireille, General Secretary of the above mentioned organization, had doubts concerning the use made of the money that her organization granted the Polisario for the purpose of buying day-nursery schools' equipment for the children of the Tindouf refugee camps. Indeed, she had

bought in 1992, in Germany, equipment for such schools and charged a German organization to dispatch it to the Tindouf camps.

Mrs Mireille waited until the equipment in question arrived at its destination. She then went to the Polisario camps and asked the "General Directorate of National Education" to draw for her a list of its needs as concerns day-nursery school equipment.

The former Director General of "National Education", within the "Ministry of Education of the RASD (i.e the "Arab Sahraoui Democratic Republic)", Baiba Mohamed Fadel Agay (alias "Felli"), answered her that the Polisario had already bought the needed equipment and that it asks Mrs. Mireille's organization (the "Refugee Children of the World") to give him the money to pay for the purchased equipment.

Mrs Mireille agreed to the request and asked Mr Agay to give her the pro forma invoice and samples of the purchased equipment. Mohamed Agay, naively, brought her the equipment that she, herself, had bought and shipped through a German organization.

Mrs Mireille realized the extent of the dishonesty of the Polisario concerning humanitarian aid. She has since then, stopped her organization's aid to it.

2- The Danish Professor Erik Nielsen Revilla

In an open letter, published in 29 December 1998 by the Spanish daily "ABC", Erik Nielsen Revilla (a Professor at the Department of Sociology, the University of AARHUS, (Den mark), asked for clarifications about the embezzlements committed by the NGO named "The Association of the Friends of Sahraoui children Cordoba", presided by MANUEL CARRASCO and doctors from the Spanish Red Cross hospital located in the same city.

Erik Nielsen Revilla underlined that the daily of Cordoba revealed that a Savings-Bank, called "Caja Sur", has granted a 5.5 million pesetas to the aforementioned association. The funds were destined to cover surgery cost for about a hundred young Sahraouis presumed to suffer from the after-effects of war wounds and of poliomyelitis. Yet as Revilla states precisely, "no case of poliomyelitis or war wound was found with the Sahraoui children, a fact which was confirmed by the Sahraoui authorities (in Tindouf) and in Cordoba where no case was treated."

Erik Revilla has insisted in his letter on the necessity for the concerned parties to respond as concerns the irregularities committed.

3- The Swedish NGO "Rada Barnen".

Having formed some doubts about the real destination of the aid granted the Polisario, the Swedish humanitarian organization "Rada Barnen" has dispatched, in November 1993, a delegation to Tindouf in order to investigate on the faith reserved to humanitarian aid destined to the populations of the Tindouf camps.

The Rada Barnen Swedish NGO supplies the Tindouf camps with powder milk and foodstuff.

4- The returnees: Ghaouta Mohamed Ahmed Baba, Ahmed My M'hamed, Mohamed Salem khatri and Ghoulam Najem Mouichane

Having returned recently to Morocco, the "Polisario" Cadres named Ghaouta Mohamed Ahmed Baba, Ahmed Moulay M'hamed also called Ahmed Cherif, Mohamed Salem Khatri, and Goulam Najem Mouichane have, during press conferences attended by national and foreign media representatives, confirmed the accusations levelled -all along the last years- at the Polisario, whereby it proceeds systematically to embezzle huge parts of humanitarian aid destined to the sequestered populations of Tindouf.

The first-named returnee is a Sheikh (i.e. tribal Chief) who has participated in the Identification Operation; the second was a high Cadre of the Security Service of the Polisario; the third was the Head of a "Daira" (a district) and member of the "Sahraoui National Council" (the "Parliament"); the fourth was the former Polisario representative in Bremen (Germany) and charged with the supervision of the aid provided by German donors for the benefit of the Tindouf camps.

In this regard, Ghoulam Najem has stated: "*throughout my mission in Germany, I was led to ascertain that a sizeable amount of all sorts of humanitarian aid sent by the German donors to the populations of the Tindouf camps was systematically embezzled by the members of the Polisario Nomenklatura, who proceed to sell it in the south of Algeria and the north of Mauritania*".

He has also drawn the attention to the fact that the Polisario exploits, in a shameful manner, the humanitarian and generous feelings of the international donors; all this in order to enable its leadership

members to acquire more wealth. This is done at the detriment of a population which lives in a precarious situation and which is maintained, against its will, in the desert of southern Algeria.

The existence of this situation characterized by extreme precariousness is confirmed by Mohamed Khatri, who declares: "In my capacity of Manager of the internal situation of the Tindouf camps, I can testify that the great majority of the populations of the camps wish to leave, as early as it would be possible, Lahmada (in the south of Algeria) and return to their homes in the Sahara."

5- Bachir Mustapha Sayed, a polisario leader

A possessions' declaration made in 1996 by Bachir Mustapha Sayed, one of the leaders of the Polisario, has "prompted the irritation of the other members of the separatist leadership". They have judged such an initiative ill-timed, reports the daily "Al Alam", quoting "informed sources."

In its Friday 27 December 1996 edition, "Al Alam" indicates that Mustapha Sayed, then polisario coordinator with the MINURSO, has revealed to be the owner of shares in foreign companies, of real estate (buildings and agricultural land) and of Bank deposits. He also revealed the names of his debtors and partners. According to the same sources, Sayed's action was motivated by his inner hope to force the other leaders of the Polisario to do likewise and reveal the state of their personal fortunes.

The same sources add that the figures advanced by Mustapha Sayed indicate that this latter holds "proofs about the unlawful enrichment of his rivals, of whom is Mohamed Abdelaziz.

6- The Algerian press

Mr. Hans R. Wittewer, the Representative of the International Federation of the Red Crosses and Crescents (IFRCC) , has especially drawn the attention of his federation that "funds destined to the Sahraoui program, in the form of advances coming from the World Food Program (WFP, in French: PAM) and the EEC (the European Economic Community), which were normally earmarked to cover the cost of transportation and custom's duties, have been used for other ends because of lack of financial means" of the Algerian Red Crescent.

This Representative of the International Federation, who was on a fact-finding mission in Algiers, has observed that transfers of funds

coming from the IFRCC were resorted to in order to close the gaps on the Algerian Red Crescent (ARC) accounts and that foreign currency amounts released by the Federation served for paying for airplane tickets abroad.

According to an article of the newspaper "El Watan", under the title "Croissant Rouge Algérien (CRA), un rapport accablant", this information comes from Mr. Wittewer's report written on 23 September 1992 at the end of a mission to Algiers at the Algerian Red Crescent.

The IFRCC representative had travelled to Algiers following a request put forward by the Algerian Red Crescent asking for financial assistance for the benefit of foreign refugees in the south of the country. The Federation was asked to release, for the benefit of the Algerian Red Crescent, an amount totalling one billion centimes in foreign currency. The representative was carrying with him an advance of one million and two hundred Swiss francs; however, we do not know whether this sum was released to the Algerian Red Crescent.

There is one important point of divergence [between the two parties]: the International Federation has refused that funds be recorded and paid to ARCs accounts and required the opening of a new account, according to the Algerian newspaper. Therefore, the funds have not been released. Even though the aid was destined to the refugee populations living in the Algerian territory the "El Watan" newspaper actually sees in the non-payment of the aid money a loss for Algeria.

The newspaper states clearly that "*within the framework of expense collection which is achieved via an operation called "monetization" - consisting in the sale of parts of the products in the market until the necessary amount to be raised is reached - , only the sale of 40 tons of spaghetti was authorized by the Regional Inspectorate for Economic Investigations of Oran. Yeti the remainder of the merchandise (6700 tons) was not subjected to control despite the issuance of two notices sent on this subject to the ARCI*".

The same source adds that "these hundreds of tons, which were unloaded in the ENAPAL depot, located on the road of ES-SENIA, vanished into thin air and a police investigation has been opened at the level of OUED ELTLATA district, some 25km away from Oran, in order to try and recover the lost merchandise."

"El Watan" points out that "noodles and spaghettis, sent by the Italian government and people, were disposed of through selling, in the Algiers' markets - and even on the side-walks - for 35 Dinars a pound. On

the wrappings of the products is clearly indicated in Italian and Arabic that these spaghetts are a donation by the Italian government and people".

The newspaper also observes that "the same wrapping carries a label on which are mentioned only the initials of the company presumed to be authorized to market these donations, with the following address: 44 Lanceb Street, ES-SENIA, Oran."

7- "EL PAIS"

The Spanish daily ("EL PAIS") of Sunday 7 March 1999, quoting a veterinary doctor in charge supervising the purchasing program of she-camels for the Polisario by the Spanish Red Cross, writes the following: "*A humanitarian aid of 64 million pesetas, which was handed over by the Spanish Red Cross to the Polisario for the purchase of 430 she-camels, has disappeared without leaving any trace*".

In an attempt to avoid scandal and to make believe that the program was implemented, the Polisario leaders have organized a fake purchase operation, only this time the she-camels were theirs," the Spanish newspaper indicates, stating precisely that the person in charge of the operation for the so-called "Republic" (the "ASDR"), Embark Malainine, "has not denied the accusation."

According to the newspaper, the Spaniards in charge of the follow-up of this program did not want to make public "their suspicions concerning the embezzlement of money", by refraining from informing their financing partners and the media.

A part of the funds has been gathered thanks to the collection of donations through a televised program broadcast live in December 1995 at the Spanish Channel 1, entitled "Victims of Forgotten Conflicts" (19 million pesetas). The rest of the money was provided by the International Agency for Cooperation", an agency under the tutelage of the Spanish External Affairs Ministry (20.6 million pesetas) and Las Palmas (6.33 million pesetas).

The Spanish Red Cross was charged with the implementation of the purchase program of 430 she-camels for the purpose of improving the diet, in terms of milk and meat, of the women, old persons, and the children of the Tindouf camps. It handed 61 million pesetas to the "Sahraoui Red Crescent), flan organization which is not recognized at the international level", recalls "EI Pais."

8. The popular front for the independence of the canaries (In french: frepic- awanac)

The "FREPIC - AWANAC" has published, on the first of October 2000, a press release in which mention is made of "alarming pieces of information on presumed irregularities in the management of the humanitarian aid destined to the Sahraoui community and on the active participation of the Municipal Council of Gran Canaria in the propaganda of the Polisario in Spain. For this reason it (the FREPIC AWANAK) has asked the president of this Council, Maria Eugina Garcia Marquez, also a leader of the "Popular Parti" (the party presently in power), to inform the Canarian society of these facts.

The FREPIC asked for an explanation concerning a piece of information according to which the Lady President of the Municipal Council of Gran Canaria could have bought a villa for Mohamed Abdelaziz or for Polisario in the Island, for 52 million pesetas. This sum of money was drawn on the subsidies granted to the Sahraoui community established in Algeria.

Likewise, the FREPIC raises questions about the measures taken concerning the presumed embezzlement of the humanitarian aid afforded by the Canarian institutions in order to support the warfare activities in the Sahara.

The FREPIC ("Canarian Front for Independence) asked how come the Municipality of Gran Canaria has decided to officially support the participation in New York of political leaders of the pact "Canarian Coalition - Popular Parti" to the proceedings of the Commission on special political questions and de-colonization about the Sahara, represented by CARMELO RAMIREZ (the deputy president of the Council and advisor on solidarity), in order to support the Polisario.

The FREPIC revealed that the travel of this official was financed by public funds and from the humanitarian aid initially destined to the Sahraoui community and to social and cultural organizations to which were denied subsidies such as these, which are needed in order to finance their activities.

These declarations affirm, without any doubt, that the public and private humanitarian aid is embezzled by the polisario.

The polisario, itself, acknowledges that **“since the year 2000, many military manoeuvres have been organized in the desert of Tindouf”**. According to some military experts, **“such manoeuvres are very expensive. The global cost of each military manoeuvre is between 600.000 and 800.000 Dollars”**.

In other words, **annually, the polisario squanders, for its military training, more that the global budget of the HCR in favour of the camps.**

Consequently, **this money allocated to the military manoeuvres could have been used to feed the whole population of Tindouf camps and to save thousands of children.**