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LETTER DATED 22 DECEMBER 1979 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On 4 November 1979, 63 Americans as well as personnel of other nationalities were seized when a disciplined, armed group of demonstrators invaded the United States Embassy in Tehran. While 13 of those captured have been released, at the present moment, seven weeks later, 50 Americans remain captive.

On 25 November 1979, Secretary-General Waldheim, invoking Article 99 of the United Nations Charter to request an urgent meeting of the Security Council, declared the present crisis a serious threat to international peace and security.

On 4 December 1979, the Security Council adopted resolution 457 (1979) urgently calling upon the Government of Iran immediately to release the personnel of the American Embassy being held in Tehran, provide them protection and allow them to leave Iran. This resolution also called on the Secretary-General to use his good offices to seek a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

On 15 December 1979, the International Court of Justice issued an order calling for "the immediate release, without any exception", by Iran of all Americans held in Iran and for their safe departure from Iran.

The efforts of the Secretary-General unfortunately have not met with a positive response, and Iran has rejected the order of the International Court of Justice. In fact, Iran has defied all of the decisions of the international community as well as the strong appeals for the release of the hostages by the Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council, and the President of the General Assembly, and by numerous governments and world leaders of every political persuasion and religious belief. Iran continues to hold the American hostages, in intolerable conditions.

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In the face of Iran's continued detention of the hostages, the United States has sought to act with restraint. The United States made clear in its formal statement before the Security Council on 4 December that, once the hostages are released and have departed from Iran, it is prepared to discuss Iran's claimed grievances and to co-operate with the call contained in Security Council resolution 457 (1979) that Iran and the United States take urgent measures for peaceful resolution of the remaining issues between them.

Iran's continued defiance of the world community jeopardizes the international order vital to all nations. Iran's flouting of international law and the universally accepted rules for the conduct of relations among nations must be dealt with through concrete and effective action by the Security Council in implementation of the United Nations Charter. The Security Council must act to enforce its call upon Iran to release the hostages. The integrity of international law and modern civilized diplomacy is at stake, as is the ability of the United Nations to carry out its obligations for the maintenance of international peace and security.

My Government therefore requests that the Security Council meet at an early date to consider the measures which should be taken to induce Iran to comply with its international obligations.

(Signed) Donald F. MCHENRY