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GENERAL

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PETITION FROM THE SOMALI YOUTH LEAGUE, BRANCH OF MERCA
CONCERNING SOMALILAND UNDER ITALIAN ADMINISTRATION

Note by the Secretary-General: In accordance with rule 84 and supplementary rules F and L of the rules of procedure for the Trusteeship Council, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the Trusteeship Council, to the Government of Italy as the Administering Authority of the Trust Territory of Somaliland, and to the Governments of Colombia, Egypt, and the Philippines as members of the Advisory Council for the Trust Territory of Somaliland, an undated communication from the Somali Youth League, Branch of Merca concerning the Trust Territory of Somaliland under Italian administration.

This communication was transmitted to the Secretary-General by the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa.

TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
UNITED NATIONS

THE VISITING MISSION OF THE
TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL MERCA

SOMALI YOUTH LEAGUE
MERCA SECTION
REF: 147/MR/A.

Petition addressed to the representatives of the United Nations Trusteeship Council

The Committee of the Somali Youth League of the Merca District, representing thirty sub-sections of the same district, has the honour to submit to the Visiting Mission the present petition which covers a number of important matters with which the Mission should be acquainted. The Committee thanks the United Nations in general and the Trusteeship Council in particular for their humanitarian achievements in the interests of the peoples. The members of this society have full knowledge of the texts and the fundamental principles by which the United Nations decided that the Somali people should be administered on the basis of the principles of self-government. Though this decision is respected by the Somali people, the Italian Administration in this district does not act in conformity with such principles. The facts related below certainly have nothing in common with the principles of the Charter or the achievement of independence promised by the United Nations.

(1) OBLIGATIONS UNDERTAKEN BY ITALY

The Committee refers to the obligations undertaken by the Italian Administration before the United Nations, the main object of which is to assist this people towards self-government. The policy of the Administration has, however, been quite other. In this connexion the Committee wishes to call attention to its repeated protests to the Administration requesting that the inhabitants of this district should not have to submit to the continual vexations of Chiefs recently created or incited, directly or indirectly, by the Italian Administration. Furthermore, the Italian Administration has bought the services of certain parties having its approval, thus sowing disorder and chaos in certain cases among the inhabitants of the district. It would be a boon to the inhabitants of the district were the Italian Administration to apply with impartiality and discernment the principles of the obligations assumed in connexion with the general progress of the Somali people.

(2) CULTURAL

(2) CULTURAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Although the obligations undertaken by Italy include that of fostering technical and cultural development in the Territory by the establishment of schools best fitted to meet this need, any observer endowed with ordinary commonsense would be astounded to see how contrary is this aim and inappropriate are the methods employed in the schools. For example, the Committee feels obliged to point out that in an inhabited centre like Merca, with a population of over 70,000, only one elementary school has been set up for male pupils and one for female pupils, and that until recently these schools lacked even the benches for the pupils. In addition, the pupils are always required to learn Italian. The Mission is, of course, aware that the entire Somali population has asked for Arabic to be used in school studies and, therefore the use of any other language, being against the wishes of the people, is contrary to democratic principles.

(3) ECONOMY OF THE DISTRICT

In connexion with commerce, the Committee notes that many traders in possession of import and export licences have ceased to trade with abroad owing to the continual financial restrictions imposed by the Administration. On the other hand, facilities are granted to persons wishing to trade with Italy. As a result the local markets suffer from a great shortage of essential goods normally used by the Somali population. The Mission is urged therefore to facilitate matters for the population, which is anxious to resume relations with other countries, as was done under the former British Administration.

(4) ILLEGAL APPROPRIATION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

As things stand at present, the situation of Somalis owning agricultural land is not profitable, for they no longer have at their disposal the facilities or encouragement necessary for the exploitation of their land. Many Somalis are forced to abandon what little land they possess in order to work for a European concessionnaire at a miserable pittance. Still worse is the position of a Somali owning land when right of ownership is claimed by a European concessionnaire on the basis of a concession granted under fascist legislation, the more so as the Administration recognizes claims brought forward even after the lapse of eleven years. The poor Somali thus
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has no choice but to obey or to go to prison for refusing to comply with the order given him. To quote a few examples: eight Somalis were arrested and imprisoned for demanding the return of their land at Haduman of which the concessionnaire Adaglio had illegally taken possession; the arbitrary arrest of twelve Somalis whose land had been inherited from their ancestors and whose village the concessionnaire Dal Bufalo seized from its inhabitants and ploughed up with his tractor. Then there was the absurd claim to destroy a Somali's kitchen garden in order to make way for the cultivation of lemons, oranges and tangerines by a concessionnaire named Franco Franchi. Another case was the concessionnaire Garcina's request to the inhabitants of the village of Sigale to move the village and all its inhabitants for his personal benefit, though he already owns more than 700 hectares of land. Many cases could be quoted in which the Somali farmer feels that he has been robbed of his private property. In this connexion we call attention to the Mission's basic duty to help indigent peoples and promote progress and respect for the rights of man.

(5) COUNCILS SET UP ON THE ARRIVAL OF THE ADMINISTRATION

When residency and municipal councils were set up, nothing surprised the Somali people and in particular the inhabitants of the District of Merca so much as to see that those called upon to sit on the councils were nothing but a band of illiterates from the bushlands who were totally ignorant and incapable of understanding anything about municipal affairs. The members of the residency and municipal councils of Merca did not include any Chiefs of the more representative Kabyles of Merca, but only persons who were good for nothing. Yet it should be the policy of the Administration to encourage the local population to acquire knowledge about municipal affairs and their significance and to include in the above-mentioned councils persons suited for that purpose. However, the vast majority of the population continues to hope that the principles of the United Nations Charter will be duly applied.

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(6) It is sincerely hoped that the Visiting Mission of the Trusteeship Council will require the petitioning Chiefs and Notables of the inhabited centre of Merca to make a personal statement on their present position and on the treatment meted out to them and the groups they represent. It is certainly felt that justice should be done in this district following the arrival of the Visiting Mission which aims at promoting the moral and material welfare of the population and the development of progressive independence, so dear to the Somali people. We conclude by expressing our gratitude to all the Democratic Nations; may God help them to kindle the torch of brotherhood and of comprehension among the peoples of the world.

THE DIRECTING COMMITTEE

(Signed)

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| 1. MOHAMED NOOR HARACCO, Secretary | 6. AHMED SCEIK NOOR, Counsellor |
| 2. HASSAN OMAR MOHAMED, Assistant Secretary | 7. ALI BARRE MOHAMED " |
| 3. ABDIRAHIM MOHAMED NOOR, Counsellor | 8. FARAH AIANLE MOH " |
| 4. ABDI MOHAMED AHGI " | 9. HAGI AHMED ALI ABOW " |
| 5. MOHAMED ISSA HAGI " | |

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