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QUESTION CONSIDERED BY THE FIRST EMERGENCY SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FROM 1 TO 10 NOVEMBER 1956

Aide memoire dated 21 November 1956 transmitted to the Secretary-General
from the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations 1/

New York, 21 November 1956

In consequence of Egypt's action of severing diplomatic relations with France, the French Government asked the Swiss Legation at Cairo to assume the protection of its interests and those of its nationals in Egypt.

The reports received by the French Government from the Swiss Government indicate that the representatives of the latter are having the greatest difficulty in protecting French nationals and French property, owing to the attitude of the Egyptian authorities.

With the exception of about fifty who were expelled, the French nationals resident in Egypt have been unable to obtain permission to leave the country, despite repeated representations by the Swiss Legation. Most have been placed under house arrest; some have been interned in camps and out of the 900 French and British nationals so interned the Swiss Legation has succeeded in obtaining the release of only 450. Swiss representatives were able to visit one of these camps, the Citadel camp situated in the outskirts of Cairo, and noted that ten French nationals and eleven Tunisians were being held there. Up to 17 or 18 November these persons had been confined two or three together in rooms which

1/ See also the letter dated 27 November 1956, already circulated as document A/3400.

had no windows but only an opening to admit air. They were allowed to move about in a cramped courtyard for two hours, but books and visitors were prohibited. According to the latest reports, the Tunisians have been released but the French are said to have been transferred to a school at Heliopolis.

In addition, a number of French nationals have been arrested. Among these are Mr. Petit, secretary to the director of the Crédit Lyonnais at Alexandria, and some twenty other French nationals of the same city, whose names the Egyptian authorities have so far refused to disclose. These prisoners are crowded together in prisons or requisitioned public buildings; when first detained they were subjected to extremely harsh treatment, with regard to both food and accommodation. While the efforts of the Swiss have helped to alleviate their position slightly, they are still confined under deplorable conditions.

This treatment to which the Egyptian Government has subjected French nationals is a serious violation of the Charter, the Declaration of Human Rights, and the Geneva Convention of 1949. If this state of affairs is not speedily remedied, the French Government will be obliged to bring the matter before the United Nations.
