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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL IN PURSUANCE OF SECURITY COUNCIL
RESOLUTIONS 457 (1979) AND 461 (1979)

1. On several occasions since the early stages of the crisis involving the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America, I offered to visit Iran personally with a view to contributing to a solution of this problem. I explicitly repeated this offer on 19 December 1979 in a message addressed to Ayatollah Khomeini. On 30 December, the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Mansour Farhang, conveyed to me a message from his Foreign Minister, Mr. Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, that the Government of Iran had accepted my offer.
2. In view of the tense situation and the urgent need for early direct contacts with the Iranian authorities, I decided to leave New York on 31 December 1979 and arrived in Teheran on 1 January 1980, after an overnight stop in Paris.
3. On arrival at 1600 hours on 1 January, I was met by Foreign Minister Ghotbzadeh, who welcomed me on behalf of the Revolutionary Council. After a first exchange of views at the airport, I drove to the city and spent the rest of the day in contacts with some members of the diplomatic corps accredited in Teheran.
4. The next morning, I started my discussions with Mr. Ghotbzadeh in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs at 9.00 a.m. The meeting lasted three hours. We had an extensive exchange of views on the crisis situation, covering all aspects of the problem.
5. The Foreign Minister explained to me in detail the position of the Iranian Government, stressing repeatedly the grievances of the Iranian people against the previous régime and its grave violations of human rights. The Foreign Minister further stated that they could not understand the silence of the world community over the suffering of the Iranian people ever since 1953, when the legitimate Government of Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh was overthrown. In this connexion, he asserted that the action of the students in taking the United States Embassy in Teheran and detaining its personnel should be looked at in the light of the history of the relationship of the two countries over the past twenty-five years. Mr. Ghotbzadeh also took issue with the United Nations as being an instrument of the big Powers in the furtherance of their interests.
6. The Foreign Minister expressed the hope that my visit would offer me the opportunity to get a better insight into the suffering of the Iranian people.

For this purpose, he suggested a visit to a rehabilitation centre for disabled victims of SAVAK. He also mentioned a visit to the cemetery for those who had died for the cause of the revolution.

7. I explained to the Foreign Minister the position of the United Nations, referring to the relevant resolutions and decisions of the Security Council. I stressed the grave violation of international conventions and international law constituted by the detention of the American diplomatic personnel in the United States Embassy. I stated that the international community did not accept such actions and requested repeatedly the immediate release of the hostages. I mentioned that such a release would be responsive to the will of the international community, would facilitate the hearing of Iranian grievances and would make possible the normalization of relations between Iran and the United States. I further explained to the Foreign Minister how the United Nations had changed since 1945 through the emergence of almost 100 new, independent States and how the smaller and medium-sized countries play a crucial role in the decision-making process of the world Organization. I also stressed that one of the purposes of the United Nations is to achieve international co-operation in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms, and that all substantive complaints of violations of human rights were taken up with the Governments concerned - as had also been the case with those received during the previous régime in Iran.

8. I expressed the opinion that, if it were felt in Iran that the keeping of United States diplomatic personnel as hostages had drawn considerable attention to the grievances of the Iranian people, their continued illegal detention could not further serve even that purpose. It would, on the contrary, cause the situation to deteriorate further and lead to economic measures against Iran if no solution could be found in the near future. I referred in this respect to resolution 461 (1979) recently adopted by the Security Council. Mr. Ghotbzadeh described such measures as useless because Iran would be able to survive even under such an embargo. Any pressure or enforcement action would only provoke more resistance by the Iranian people. He also argued that, while violation of the immunity of diplomatic personnel and premises may be against international law, it was equally inadmissible, under international law, for such personnel to engage in acts of interference in the internal affairs of the receiving State. I responded that, if such interference were detected, then the accepted practice was for the persons concerned to be declared persona non grata and expelled from the country.

9. I stressed repeatedly not only the need for a peaceful settlement but also the uneasiness of the membership of the United Nations in regard to the continuing deadlock and the urgent need for some gesture on the Iranian side to show its interest in a negotiated, peaceful settlement. In this regard, the release of the hostages was of essential importance. Mr. Ghotbzadeh responded that Iran continued to be interested in such a settlement but that it expected from the international community more understanding for the grievances of the Iranian people against the previous régime and the gross violations of human rights committed by it. Therefore, apart from maintaining the demand for the extradition of the ex-Shah, some sort of international investigation must take place in order to take due account of this problem. He also stressed the urgent need for the return of the assets of the former Shah, illegally taken out of the country.

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10. I had another meeting with the Foreign Minister on the morning of 3 January, during which we continued our discussion and touched upon various possibilities which might help to pave the way towards a peaceful solution of the present crisis, including the early release of the hostages. In this context, the idea already explored in earlier contacts for the establishment of an international inquiry committee came up. Such a committee would investigate allegations of grave violations of human rights and of illegal acts under the previous régime in Iran. Its report would be submitted to the relevant organs of the United Nations for appropriate action. I stated that the release of the hostages must take place either before or, at least, simultaneously with the establishment of an inquiry committee. The Foreign Minister, however, said that the release of the hostages would be one of the consequences of this procedure.

11. On the evening of 3 January, I met with the members of the Revolutionary Council for two hours. During this meeting, which was chaired by Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, the same problems were discussed. The members of the Revolutionary Council appreciated my decision to visit Iran but reiterated, in essence, the position of the Iranian authorities as already conveyed to me by the Foreign Minister. The Council further indicated that it would favour the idea of setting up an international inquiry committee in the hope that the relevant organs of the United Nations would take such action as would lead to the mutually satisfactory solution of the crisis. In response, I informed the members of the Revolutionary Council that I would report on my discussions in Teheran to the Security Council and keep the Iranian Foreign Minister informed of further developments.

12. During my stay in Teheran, I repeatedly asked to visit the hostages held in the United States Embassy and to meet with the students holding them. Regrettably, this was not made possible.

CONCLUSIONS

13. Despite the many difficulties I encountered during my visit to Teheran due to the particular power structure in that country, I consider that the trip was useful and helped me to understand better the many facets of the existing crisis. Although I did not see Ayatollah Khomeini, the extensive talks with the Foreign Minister and the other members of the Revolutionary Council have given me a clearer insight into the position of the Iranian leaders. At present, they are not prepared to respond to the call of the international community for the immediate release of the hostages, an issue which they continue to link to the extradition of the former Shah and the return of the assets allegedly taken out illegally by him. At the same time, they have expressed support for the idea of establishing an international inquiry committee as outlined in paragraph 10 above.

14. I am fully aware that the present report in no way contains a solution of this most delicate and complex problem. However, it contains a number of elements and ideas which may provide a basis for the further consideration of the existing crisis by the Security Council.
