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PETITION FROM MESSRS. TAHIR SCIAKUR HUSSEN AND HERZI GULED FARAH
CONCERNING SOMALILAND UNDER ITALIAN ADMINISTRATION

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the rules of procedure for the Trusteeship Council)

Mogadiscio, 16 November 1953

To: H. E. Dag Hammarskjöld
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York

We have the honour to express our devotion and tender our respectful greetings.

We feel it an urgent duty to submit to your enlightened attention certain data and particulars concerning the present genuinely distressing and disturbing state of affairs prevailing in our country. Somaliland, placed under Italian Trusteeship in compliance with a United Nations mandate, is again being subjected to the former colonial and fascist system, the brutal methods of which can never be forgotten by any of our people, either of this or any future generation, since they are indelibly imprinted in our memory.

1. The economic problem constitutes the principal, important and vital factor in the existence and progress of every people, especially in this new historic era under the banner of the United Nations, when civilized peoples have reached an advanced stage in financial and economic development. The Somali people are completely downtrodden in this respect and run the risk of extermination. The entire Somali population lives in the most abominable and incredible misery, poverty and hunger which expose it to infection and a general spread of disease. Tuberculosis is rampant throughout Somaliland, since as explained above there are no services for the prevention and cure of this fatal disease.

2. Wholesale trade is totally monopolized by a group of prosperous Italians, and we shall quote the names of a few of them, as supporting evidence: Boero, Carlo Vecco, Briata, Montonari, Monti, Massimini, Cosmo de Vincenzi, all of them old

colonial settlers connected with the firms S.A.I.S., S.A.G.A., S.A.C., S.C.I.S.S.I. They control the Somaliland Chamber of Commerce and act as counsellors on the Economic Committee of the Italian Administration. Under the present Administration, which is controlled and filled by Italian colonial officials and employees, those persons do what they like to destroy all the economic vitality of the Somalis, for the leopard does not change its spots. The Administering Authority has not issued a licence to a single Somali for the export or import of goods, even from adjacent and bordering countries. The only country excepted is Italy, where the price demanded for goods is so exorbitant that its payment would impose an unbearable burden on our people. To quote a simple example, sugar is imported from abroad solely by Italian firms. Its c.i.f. price warehouse Mogadiscio is exactly So.90 per quintal. The authorities, for their exclusive benefit, have fixed its sale price for purchase by the indigenous population at So.210 per quintal. Even the sugar locally produced and sold under the monopoly of the well-known Italian firm S.A.I.S. is sold at So.210, whereas its real cost is So.70. The latter figure applies in nearby Kenya and Aden, where native labour is paid on a basis of equality while the S.A.I.S. pays Somali labour So.0.80 for a whole day's work.

3. Those of our traders who had some capital or savings are now reduced to a state of bankruptcy, and all their immovable property and buildings are mortgaged to Italian banking houses and prosperous Italian residents.

4. The Mogadiscio industrial electricity company belongs to the old colonial settler Cosmo de Vincenzi, and charges, with the full consent of the Administering Authority, the phenomenal rate of So.1.45 per Kw., while in the neighbouring British colonies of Kenya and Aden the price never exceeds So.0.25 per Kw. Even in the other localities of the Territory, such as Merca, Afgoi, Chisimaio and Brava, the people suffer from the exorbitant rates for electric light, charged by the Italian owners of the electricity companies.

There is no industry under Somali ownership. A few attempts have been made to establish Somali-owned industries, but they were immediately thwarted, the premises closed and the goods confiscated on grounds which the authorities diabolically describe as "failure to comply with provisions". Even the three bread bakeries belonging to Somalis in Mogadiscio have been closed, and their

owners forced to leave the field clear to the five Italian bakeries. Our present Administration wishes every advantage and benefit and the entire economy of the Territory to remain under private Italian control.

5. Since the end of the British Administration and the transfer of power to the Italians, Somali motor transport contractors have been idle, and their machines have remained in the garage, because even the smallest transport operation is carried out either by the vehicles of the A.F.I.S. itself or by those of private Italians.

6. Indigenous agriculture is almost non-existent. Since the return of the present Italian Administration, the whole of the wide fertile belt along the river banks has been occupied, as in the days of the former Italian Government in Somaliland, although during the British occupation and under British Administration the authorities protected and defended our land rights and interests. These Italian farmers of the former or present Italian colonial regime are grouped in three companies named S.A.G.A., S.A.C., and S.A.I.S., which are the only concerns authorized to export their agricultural produce, such as bananas and cotton, while not a single Somali enjoys that privilege. The Somalis can only wait for the rains, and the little tobacco, cotton and maize which they succeed in cultivating has to be handed over to the A.F.I.S. Monopoly. Nor are they absolutely free to deal with third parties, particularly in tobacco and cotton. Mr. Carlo Vecco, a well-known prosperous Italian and our Municipal Commissioner for Mogadiscio, is always ready and waiting to purchase the balance of the maize and sesame supplied to the A.F.I.S. at a petty and unrealistic price, only to store it for resale to the population, when he considers it expedient and convenient, at ten times that price. This always happens with the assistance, sometimes even the financial assistance of the local Administration, and, when necessary, even of the banking houses. The Italian farmers are given every assistance, comfort and encouragement by the Administering Authority, while the Somali farmers are given none, despite the false propaganda in the press and radio of the Administering Authority about plans for assistance and incentives for the indigenous inhabitants.

7. Since the return of the Italian Administration, two new bodies have been created to supplement the police, which should be adequate to maintain public order and safeguard the interest of the authorities. These are the Finance Inspectors (Guardie di Finanza) and the City Militia (Vigili Urbani). The former check a Somali trader's business every morning and evening, in order to ascertain how much he has sold during the day and the amount of his takings and subsequently to impose, through the new Direct Tax Office, an astronomical income tax, or else to increase, unlawfully and by force, fines and taxes and duties on contracts of tenancy, and so forth. The latter body issue summonses daily for fabricated offences, contrary to all civil and human law. Yet the Municipality still demands an annual licence fee varying between So.52 and 350 or even 500 and more, besides a fee for occupation of the public domain, amounting to So.0.20 per square metre. Every petition addressed to any department or office of the Italian Administration must be written on stamped paper, to the value of So.0.80, 1.20, 1.60 and above. Every possible means is employed to impoverish the Somali and to damage his morale and aspirations, though this tragic and unfortunate people is already reduced to its present miserable state.

8. The unemployment crisis among the indigenous population, to whom every means of livelihood is barred, has now reached a most serious stage, and the people are on the brink of final catastrophe which can only be averted by the immediate and effective intervention of United Nations Organs and dependent bodies.

So far, the Italian Administration A.F.I.S. has bureaucratically maintained five or six Italian officials or employees in every civil service or labourer's post where only one person is necessary, and it has no intention of providing any work or employment for any competent and suitable Somalis. Even the private Italian firms and concerns are expected to follow the directives of the authorities in hiring Somali staff or labour. Work and bread is to be provided only for their fellow Italians, and the Somali is to receive nothing. A Somali workman is paid less than the cost of feeding an Italian's dog.

9. Hardly had the Italian Administration assumed power, when it openly embarked, on a large scale and with every means at its disposal, on a policy of persecution and restriction. Many thousands of Somalis were forced, by the torture and

suffering inflicted on them by the police, to flee abroad, at night, to an unknown destination. A vast number of them are still dispersed and no news of them has filtered back to this day. We do not know whether they are alive or dead. Several thousand have spent years in prison without trial and without sentence. Yet none have been released and many have been deported to unknown places.

10. The freedom of religion and worship, and the dissemination of Moslem teachings are denied us. Anyone who openly and piously preaches in the mosques or other holy places is arrested and deported.

11. There is no assistance, nursing care or medical treatment in the hospitals, nursing homes, infirmaries and mobile medical units. The inmates receive almost no nourishment. It is only when some international mission or committee is expected that the premises are arranged and put in order. Immediately after the mission's departure from the Territory everything reverts to its original state. The Somalis are perishing from starvation, lack of care, disease and unemployment.

12. Instead of establishing or strengthening the services for ensuring public security and maintaining order within the Territory, the Administration encourages every act of violence, aggression and strife among the inhabitants. It sends pre-selected emissaries to places where it wishes to provoke bloodshed, only so that it may subsequently apply its famous collective punishments of fines and imprisonment, accompanied by the seizure of the entire population's cattle. In fact, hundreds of innocent persons have to suffer materially and morally for the wrongs of one or two individuals. We do not comprehend what civil law in the world can be used as a basis for measures of such severity.

13. To this very day the Acts and Orders promulgated by the former Italian Colonial Government for Somaliland, the Proclamations and Ordinances issued in the midst of war by the British occupation authorities are in force, all of which are naturally detrimental to the development and advancement of the indigenous population.

14. The food provided for persons detained in prison is completely inadequate in quantity and not fit for human consumption. The premises do not comply with the minimum standards of hygiene and sanitation.

15. Every recommendation or suggestion made by the Trusteeship Council to the Administering Authority is shelved, and we have never seen any effective result. Even the local United Nations Advisory Council in Somaliland has always answered our demands for intervention and evidence of interest by stating that it has no power and that it is merely a body for advising the Administering Authority.

16. Under the existing taxation system, which is rigorously imposed on the inhabitants in every field of activity and which includes hut and garden tax as well as the taxes referred to above, and disproportionate customs and postal dues and so forth, no benefit is derived by the indigenous inhabitants or by our country; the advantages devolve solely on Italians of every rank and position both here and in Italy where their families live.

We have taken the liberty of providing you with this summary account in order to draw attention to the fact that, since the return of the Italians to Somaliland, ruin and misfortune have befallen us on all sides, while it would be impossible to speak of progress in any sense. Even if it is the intention to eliminate all Moslem teaching and culture among the Somali people, it is noteworthy that nothing of any real or concrete value is being taught in the Government schools. If the present situation in Somaliland continues for another year, it is quite certain that the country will be destroyed and its people driven off the face of the earth. It is equally certain that our country will then be owned and inhabited by another people, who will have usurped it from its legitimate sons and ethnical inhabitants.

The United Nations Charter provides that every people is to enjoy its own national wealth, that there should be mutual help among nations and that all oppression and iniquity should be eliminated. The United Nations General Assembly, which has placed us under the Trusteeship of the Italian Administration in order that we may be led towards progress, welfare and independence, must save us from the pitfall of destruction and ruin in which we now are enmeshed, and extend to us a helping hand immediately so that our country may advance towards the noble objectives set by the United Nations: sovereignty and independence. Moreover,

any assistance from United Nations organs and agencies must reach us directly, and not through Italy which will certainly use it exclusively for the benefit of its own sons.

We should be grateful if you would kindly distribute this petition to all the States Members of the United Nations, and in human sympathy intervene personally on our behalf, in the interest of justice, humanity and understanding.

Please send all communications to our address:

Tahir Schiakur Hussen and Herzi Guled Farah,
Via Cardinale Massaia,
Mogadiscio

(Signed) The following petitioners:
(28 Signatures)

We attach copy of a telegram sent to the Italian Government in Rome.^{1/}

^{1/} Note by the Secretariat: The above-mentioned enclosure has already been circulated as T/PET.11/382.