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LETTER DATED 10 NOVEMBER 1977 FROM THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF MAURITANIA ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE
SECURITY COUNCIL

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria, in his letter to you dated 9 November 1977 (S/12442/Rev.1), has once again resorted to verbal contrivance in order to give a law-abiding appearance to the repeated acts of aggression by the Algerian Government against the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the Kingdom of Morocco, against their sovereignty and their territorial integrity.

The arguments advanced by the Algerian Minister in his above-mentioned letter can deceive no one, because they will not bear serious and objective analysis. The resistance of the "Saharan people" to which reference is made is simply the manifestation of that policy of aggression and intimidation which the Algerian Government has constantly practised towards our countries, in defiance of all norms of international law and of international morality. The taking hostage of innocent civilians and the systematic intent to destroy Mauritania's economic potential are proof, if proof were needed, of the kind of morality which the Algerian leaders are trying to impose on the countries of the subregion, and indeed on the international community as a whole.

The Algerian Minister also states in his letter that in this matter his country has acted entirely in accordance with the fundamental principles of the Charters of the United Nations and OAU. Need I recall that the principles in question require all States Members of those two international organizations to refrain in their relations from the threat or use of force?

The colonization of the Sahara did not end until 1976. Thus, Algeria had plenty of time -- 13 years -- to show the former colonial Power that supposed moral integrity and that supposed respect for the principles of the Charter of which it now claims to be the fervent defender. Yet, throughout those 13 years of foreign colonization of Western Sahara, next door to an Algeria which proclaims its militancy and asserts that it is motivated solely by respect for the principles of the United Nations and OAU Charters, the former colonial Power was never given any cause for concern from Algerian national territory; quite the contrary. The Algerian leaders throughout that period were quite accommodating towards the former colonial Power and were obviously in collusion with it. Any attempts by military means to loosen the grip of the colonizer so as to accelerate the process of decolonization met with systematic opposition from the Algerian Government. It is true that it was fully in the interest of the Algerian Government, eager to

exploit the Graret-Jbeilatt and Colomb-Béchar mining complexes, to defer to the former colonial Power in order to make such exploitation possible and profitable. That is why not a shot was fired at the former colonial Power from Algerian national territory, despite the principles now being loudly proclaimed, the great value and importance of which the Algerian leaders apparently grasped only when it came to aggression against and intimidation of two neighbouring Arab and African sister countries.

Furthermore, the proclamation of a self-styled Saharan Republic in Algerian national territory and the recognition of that Republic by the Algerian Government are in themselves an outright negation of the principles of the Charters of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity - principles which, Algeria now discovers, require it to undertake a new mission, and a dubious one, to say the least. In setting up this Republic, the Algerian Government is trying to establish in Western Sahara a State based on tribalism. This is simply an attempt to create another Transkei in the north-western part of Africa.

Again, the claim that the use of a team of French technicians in Mauritania is an obstacle to the establishment of relations of friendship and trust among all the peoples of the region is too simplistic to warrant attention inasmuch as the situation of tension and deliberate aggression, created and maintained by the Algerian Government, is not of recent date. Thus, the employment of these very few technicians, which was decided on hardly more than a few days ago, cannot be an obstacle to the establishment of such relations of trust and friendship. The obstacle does exist, but it has existed for two years, and the Algerian Government is entirely responsible for it.

This fallacious pretext cannot conceal a reality to which we in Mauritania have, over the past two years, repeatedly drawn the attention of the Security Council. That reality is the deliberate aggression, within the meaning of General Assembly resolution 3314 (XXIX) annex, article 3 (g), which the Algerian Government has been practising for the past two years against Mauritania and Morocco, using for that purpose its regular army and mercenaries of various nationalities. To this violation of fundamental rules of international law is now added a practice that is contrary to all principles of humanitarian law: massacres of civilians, destruction of their property and taking of hostages.

The international community cannot remain indifferent to the Algerian Government's attitude of contempt for the Charter and for those principles and objectives which are the essence and the backbone of the United Nations.

Mauritania, for its part, wishes to draw the attention of the Security Council to the gravity of this situation, for which the Algerian Government alone is responsible and the consequences of which are to be borne by it alone.

I would request you to circulate this letter as a Security Council document.

(Signed) Hamdi OULD MOUKNASS
Minister for Foreign Affairs