

Draft 3 April 1967

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Abdulrahim A. Farah before the Committee
of 24, after the Committee has heard the petitioners
from French Somaliland

Mr. Chairman,

Your Committee has just heard petitioners from French Somaliland. If any additional proof was needed to show that the question of French Somaliland requires close and continued attention of your Committee, the statements by these men -- who are among the most respected political figures of the Territory -- have provided that proof. Before turning to the details of the situation now existing there, I would like to preface my remarks by expressing the concern of my Government that in relation to French Somaliland this Committee should faithfully fulfill the functions entrusted to it by General Assembly Resolution 1514 of 14 Dec. 1960.

of this Committee

The responsibilities/~~which~~ for the implementation of that resolution ~~which~~ are responsibilities not only to the General Assembly but also to the colonial peoples throughout the world who continue to live under foreign rule.

If this Committee should evade its responsibilities for reasons of political convenience or infirmity of purpose, then the Committee will bear a very heavy burden of guilt towards these oppressed peoples.

Mr. Chairman, let me refer first of all to the referendum which the administering authorities conducted in the Territory on 19th March last. Members

of this Committee will recall that the conditions under which the people of the Territory were to exercise their right of self-determination, had been laid down in clearest possible terms by General Assembly resolution 2228 of 20 Dec. 1966.

You will ~~be~~ be aware that in this resolution the General Assembly called upon France, and I quote,

"to ensure that the right of self-determination shall be freely expressed and exercised by the indigenous inhabitants of the Territory on the basis of universal adult suffrage and with full respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms" and "urge(d) the administering Power to create a proper political climate for (the) referendum to be conducted on an entirely free and democratic basis" (end of quote).

As recently as on the 14th of March of this year -- only a matter of days before the referendum -- this Committee expressed its concern at the situation in French Somaliland and urged the French Government ~~and~~ and I quote,

"to ensure that the forthcoming referendum be conducted in a just and democratic manner" (end of quote).

Mr. Chairman, let me remind this Committee of precisely what ^{has} happened. In the first place, as the Committee well knows, the administering Power has shown complete disregard for these ^{and} resolutions of the General Assembly and of your Committee. It refused to have any kind of United Nations presence before or during the referendum. Moreover, far from conducting the referendum in a just and democratic manner, it applied various unjust and undemocratic methods

to assure an outcome which does not reflect the true wishes of the population. Even so, the so-called majority that voted in favor of continued dependent status was extremely slim : a difference of some 4000 or 5000 votes would have turned the outcome into its opposite, namely, in favor of independence. That this referendum did ~~not~~ ^{not} and could not express the true wishes of the ~~population~~ people is shown by ~~the simple fact~~ ^{the simple} fact that out of a population of 125,000 no more than 40,000 were ~~in~~ ^{special} ~~the~~ electoral rolls for the referendum, and no more than some 36,000 actually took part in the vote. This is plainly not "~~universal~~ universal adult suffrage", as the General Assembly demanded . Furthermore, prior to the referendum, political parties opposed to French rule were suppressed, political leaders opposed to French rule were imprisoned, and ~~thousands~~ inhabitants known ^{by the thousands} to favor independence were deported ^{from the Territory}. Of those who remained, and who were opposed to French rule, or suspected of being opposed to French rule, tens of thousands were denied the right of vote. On a previous occasion I have demonstrated before this Committee some of the methods which were used ~~in~~ to this end. These methods ranged from excessive and unrealistic residence requirements to the use of brute force. Indeed, when the day of the referendum arrived, the capital of the Territory, Djibouti, looked more like a city under siege, or a city occupied by military force, with barbed wire barricades, than a city where

the inhabitants could in freedom and confidence ~~express~~^{exercise} their most important right -- the right to determine their own political future.

If I may quote Mr. Hassan Goulaid, perhaps the most distinguished political figure in the Territory, and ^{its} former representative in the French Senate, "this referendum was characterized by trickery and force", -- "trickery and force", gentlemen, are the words which Mr. Goulaid himself used. You will also have noted that the local French Authorities attempted to divide and misguide the people of the Territory. On the one hand, efforts were made to induce the politically less sophisticated people of the rural areas to vote for a continuation of French administration and to sow mistrust for those of their compatriots who favored independence. By the same token, in the towns and in the southern areas of the Territory where the pro-independence sentiment was, and is, ~~strong~~ particularly strong, the local authorities were not satisfied with depriving tens of thousands of the right to be inscribed in the electoral lists but also used the more direct methods of deportation and ~~quarantine~~ arrests.

Mr. Chairman, I cannot believe that ~~under these circumstances~~ this Committee has any alternative but to be cognizant of these circumstances, and to realize that this referendum -- I am tempted to say, this "so-called referendum" -- has not brought about a final peaceful solution to the problem

of French Somaliland . Obviously, it constituted no more than one additional, and unfortunate, episode in the ~~struggle~~ struggle of the people of the Territory for genuine self-determination and independence.

This fact, Mr. Chairman, is brought out by two aspects of the situation.

The first is that absolutely no change has occurred in the non-self-governing status of the Territory. It is common knowledge that the new Statute

for French Somaliland does not yet exist. ~~All that is known is that the proposals summarized in the Secretariat Working Paper show no decision ^{change} from the present status of the Territory. Understandably, these proposals ~~which~~ worked out a few months ago were unacceptable to the representatives of~~

French Somaliland when they were acquainted with them at a visit to Paris.

The second aspect is provided by the very events that have occurred in the Territory since the 19th of March. Where else but in a colonial territory can the authorities of an administering Power apply the methods which have been applied there since the day of the referendum? Where else can foreign legionnaires arrest and deport people, inflict indignities on them, and altogether behave in the manner they have. What has happened and continues to happen there, is not only deeply regrettable: it is anachronistic, it is incompatible with the elementary demands and expectations of our era, and it is in every respect contrary to the

^{idea} ~~spirit~~ of decolonization, and to the letter and spirit of Resolutions 1574 of 1960 which this Committee is pledged to implement.

Mr. Chairman, at this point I only wish to make some brief comments on one particular aspect of the present situation in French Somaliland. As I mentioned in this Committee a few weeks ago, the French statute ^{of 22 Dec. 1966} which laid down the rules for the referendum, also stipulated that from the day of the referendum onward, an emergency rule may be instituted in the Territory. Under this emergency rule, the local authorities have the power to disregard or set aside restrictions established by law. The only limitation of these full powers consists in the need of having the French Parliament eventually approve of them. Within this framework, the local authorities have decided on a continuing policy of ~~mass~~ wholesale arrests and deportations against persons who favor independence or who did, or might, express dissatisfaction with the manner in which the referendum was conducted.

This policy of mass arrests, concentration camps and deportations may jeopardize the peace in the entire area but it will not solve the problems of the French Somaliland, and will not stabilize the regime of the administering Power. Thousand of inhabitants of French Somaliland have been deported into neighbouring Somalia. These people have their homes and their lives in French Somaliland, and will not tolerate the denial of their homeland nor will they accept deportation ~~and~~ assimilation into a friendly neighbouring

country.

My Government saw itself compelled to disallow the forcible deportation of additional thousands of inhabitants of the Territory into my country ^{My Government} and thereby acted not only in full conformity with international law but in an endeavour not to ^{complicate the} ~~increase even more~~ the problem of the return of the previously deported persons to French Somaliland. Is it not clear that all of us must prevent any repetition, be it even on a smaller scale, of the tragedy of the Brestine refugees? Is it not the duty of all us, to make absolutely certain to avoid ~~maintain~~ a source of continuous friction and irritation in this part of Africa, between Somalis and French Somaliland, ~~maintain~~ -- areas which throughout history have been on the most friendly and cooperative terms?

Indian Journal of Internat. Law ?