

# Middle East Times

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## Athletes' Sahara run for water

By UPI  
Middle East Times

Published January 16, 2007

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**Three athletes have run about two-thirds of their way across Africa's Sahara Desert in a UN-backed bid to raise awareness of the global water crisis.**

A UN Development Program spokeswoman said Monday that they have completed some 2,360 miles of their 4,000-mile-long extreme quest that is taking them from Senegal on the Atlantic Ocean to Cairo.

Running the equivalent of two marathons a day in some of the harshest conditions on Earth, Charlie Engle of the United States, Ray Zahab of Canada, and Kevin Lin from Taiwan crossed from Niger into Libya Saturday, Irena Mihova said Monday.

They expect to cross into Egypt February 13, reaching the Red Sea 10 days later before turning north to Cairo, in an awareness-raising odyssey.

It is to be the subject of a feature documentary film, *Running the Sahara*, directed by Oscar winner James Moll and narrated by Matt Damon, another Oscar winner and executive producer, with UNDP as co-producer.

The three left St. Louis in Senegal in early November and passed through Mauritania, Mali, and Niger before reaching Libya.

"For the runners, water is a daily necessity," Mihova said. "For the people of the Sahara, and throughout the developing world, it is a lifelong concern."

This is made clear in the UNDP 2006 Human Development Report - "Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty, and the global water crisis" - which offers fresh new data on how many poor people go without water and sanitation, the inequality of access within and between nations, and how clean water affects child survival rates.

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