

Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 1996.

Egyptian scholar and diplomat, secretary-general of the United Nations from Jan. 1, 1992 to Dec. 31, 1996. He was the first Arab and first African to occupy the highest office in the UN system.

A member of one of Egypt's most prominent Coptic Christian families, Boutros-Ghali received a bachelor's degree from Cairo University (1946) and a Ph.D. in international law from the University of Paris (1949). He then held a professorship at Cairo University and lectured in international law and international relations at various universities and conferences in the United States, Europe, India, the Middle East, and Africa. He also wrote several books, mostly in French.

In October 1977 Boutros-Ghali became Egypt's minister of state for international relations, and the following month he accompanied President Anwar el-Sadat on his historic visit to Jerusalem after Egypt's minister of state had been in protest against the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement. Boutros-Ghali became prime minister in 1991.

As UN secretary-general from 1992, Boutros-Ghali oversaw the UN's role in post-Cold War conflicts. His tenure saw lengthy and difficult negotiations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, and Rwanda. The United States, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, became estranged with Boutros-Ghali's independent approach and successfully persuaded him to resign for a second time as secretary-general in 1996.