

# EMOROCCO

## @The "disappeared" in Morocco: case studies

### **Mohamed Boulahia TATI**

Mohamed Ben Ali Boulahia Tati, a political activist, who before independence joined in the resistance movement against the French, was arrested by police in Casablanca early in 1963. He was seen in Dar al-Mokri in Rabat by a fellow detainee in April 1963. For 27 years his wife has continued to seek information about him from the Moroccan authorities but they have denied any knowledge of him and he remains "disappeared".

### **Abdelhaq ROUISSI**

Abdelhaq Rouissi, a former employee of the *Banque du Maroc* in Casablanca was an activist in the *Union marocaine du travail* (UMT), Moroccan Labour Union. He had called for a boycott of the legislative elections of 1962, opposing the call for the formation of a representative government under a strong monarchy, and had opposed the 1963 border conflict with Algeria. He "disappeared" on 4 October 1964. There are no known witnesses to his arrest, but traces of blood were found in his bedroom.

Recent information from former "disappearance" victims has confirmed that Abdelhaq Rouissi was arrested and subsequently held for years in secret detention. He was seen in a former centre of the *gendarmerie* in Rabat by another former "disappeared" detainee in 1975. Later he was reported to be in the military camp at Ahermoumou and was said to be still alive in secret detention in 1983. His family have kept trying, unsuccessfully, to find out where he is.

## Houcine El-MANOUIZ

Houcine El-Manouzi, born in 1943, is a member of a family from Tafraout with a history of opposition to the government and belonged to the Union marocaine du travail, Moroccan Labour Union. In 1963 he was dismissed from Royal Air Maroc, where he was an airline mechanic, reportedly because of his trade union activities. He was also an active member of the socialist opposition party, the Union nationale des forces populaires, National Union of Popular Forces. After his dismissal he emigrated to Belgium, where he worked as an airline mechanic and continued his trade union activities. He was sentenced to death in absentia in 1971 in a major political trial in Marrakech after being convicted on charges of plotting against the internal security of the state. Amnesty International observers concluded that there were serious violations of the defendants' rights both before and during the trial and that the majority of the accused had no connection with the crimes for which they were tried.

In November 1972, while on a trip to Tunis, Houcine El-Manouzi "disappeared". For three years nothing was heard of him. Family and friends believed he had been kidnapped by Moroccan agents and had been returned to Morocco. This belief was confirmed when suddenly, in July 1975, his picture appeared on "wanted" posters displayed in Moroccan police stations and police raided his relatives' houses. It seemed that Houcine El-Manouzi had briefly escaped but had been later recaptured.

Only recently, through testimonies of the Bourequat brother (imprisoned with Houcine El-Manouzi for a year), have the details of El-Manouzi's "disappearance" and brief escape been revealed. According to this information, he was kidnapped from the house of a friend in Tunis, tied up and chloroformed, then bundled into the boot of a Mercedes with diplomatic number plates and taken to Rabat. He was initially held at the Villa Souissi in Rabat where he was interrogated, then later to Dar El-Mokri in Rabat - one of the many unofficial places of detention where prisoners are said to be held incommunicado and often tortured. Among those detained with Houcine El-Manouzi between 1974 and 1975 in Poste Fixe III (P.F.III) were the Bourequat brothers and four officers, including Lieutenant-Colonel Mohamed Ababou, who had been involved in an attempted coup d'etat against King Hassan II during his birthday party at the Skhirat Palace in July 1971. In 1975 the eight "disappeared" detainees escaped. Houcine El-Manouzi apparently separated from the others but was recaptured about five days later 28 kilometres from Rabat. Ever since

1975 Amnesty International has tried to get news of him from Moroccan prisons and government authorities, but the Moroccan Government have never admitted holding him.

### **Soukeina JNEIBILA**

Married, with no children, Soukeina Jneibila was detained in December 1975 in Tantan. Her family who are still in Tantan have never seen her since.

She is one of the numerous Sahrawis arrested after the Moroccan annexation of Western Sahara in November 1975 who have never been seen since.

### **Mohamed ABABOU, Harrouch AKKA, Mohamed CHELLAT and Ahmed MZIREK**

All four were involved in an attempted coup d'état against King Hassan II when over 1,000 cadets from the Ahermoumou Military Academy, under the command of their officers, attacked the Skhirat Palace during the celebrations of King Hassan's birthday on 10 July 1971, holding the King and the members of his government, family and entourage captive for several hours. The planner of the attempted coup, General Medbouh, died in obscure circumstances during the coup attempt. M'Hamed Ababou, the Commandant of Ahermoumou who had led the cadets into Skhirat was executed by firing-squad on 13 July with nine other leading officers. The others, 1,081 members of the armed forces, were brought to trial. Among the 74 sentenced to prison terms, Adjutant Harrouch Akka, M'Hamed Ababou's batman and chief confidant, and Captain Mohamed Chellat were each sentenced to life imprisonment. Lieutenant-Colonel Mohamed Ababou, the brother of M'Hamed Ababou, was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment, and officer cadet Ahmed Mzirek was sentenced to 10 years' in February 1972. They were held first at Kenitra

Military Prison and then at Kenitra Central Prison, with the others sentenced for the Skhirat coup.

The four were removed from Kenitra Central Prison on the night of the 7 August with the 58 other members of the armed forces sentenced to more than three years' imprisonment for involvement in attempted coups. However, they were separated from the rest who were taken by plane and lorry to the secret prison of Tazmamert in the Atlas mountains. Mohamed Ababou and the other three officers were taken to Rabat and confined in one of the secret villas where the "disappeared" are kept hidden: the villa, known as *Poste fixe III*, also held the Bourequat brothers and Houcine El-Manouzi. It was the four army officers who organized the escape attempt of 1975 with the help of a guard, and managed to get out of P.F.III on the night of 12-13 July, 1975. Mohamed Ababou and Ahmed Mzirek stayed with the Bourequat brothers and went into the forest but all five were recaptured and brought back the same day. They found that Mohamed Chellat, who had headed towards the town, had already been recaptured. Harouch Akka managed to hide out for 11 days before he, too, was recaptured.

Back in P.F.III, the four officers were reportedly tortured by being tied up on a bench, with their heads hanging in a metal bucket of water which was regularly struck - a torture which makes the victims feel as though their heads will burst. In the evening, three days after the recapture of Akka, there was the noise of gunfire in the courtyard followed by the sound of digging. The brothers believed that the four officers had been executed together with the guard who had helped them to escape. The doors of their officers' cells remained firmly shut until the time the brothers Bourequat were transferred from P.F.III in September 1975.

Just after the release of the prisoners of Tazmamert, in November 1991, there were reports that Mohamed Ababou had been seen in the Mohammed V Hospital in Rabat; he was said to be in very poor condition, practically blind, and receiving treatment for his eyes. After a few days, the reports ceased and no one now knows where he is now or whether he and the others are alive or dead.

**Mohamed Benamer ALLOUCH**

Mohamed Benamer Allouch was born in 1918 in Tamsamane in northern Morocco. After he finished his schooling in Tetouan he joined the Spanish army, and served in it until the independence of Morocco when he joined the Moroccan army. In 1971 he was a colonel in the *Forces armées royales* (FAR), Royal Armed Forces, and had 15 children (from two wives). His family lived in Tanger, but Colonel Allouch worked in Rabat, visiting his family most weekends.

On 10 July, when the attempted coup took place at Skhirat palace, Colonel Allouch was at the palace, but was said not to have participated in the coup. Two days after the abortive coup, on Monday 12 July 1971, he rang up his family in Tanger to say that he had been called to the army headquarters the following day but would ring them up in the evening. On 13 July 10 officers involved in the coup attempt were summarily executed. Colonel Allouch was not among the 10 and was never brought to trial. His family simply never heard from him again.

His wife went to Rabat and asked after him from army headquarters and from relatives and friends with high positions in the armed forces. She was told to do nothing but to stay calm. She wrote to Hassan II, but received no reply. After about 10 years she pressed the authorities at least to give her a paper saying whether he was alive or dead, so that, if he was dead, she could have access to money he had deposited in Spain. She has continued to ask until now, but has never been given any information.

The Moroccan authorities have a duty to account for Colonel Mohamed Benamer Allouch who, on 15 July 1971, never returned from a visit to the army headquarters in Rabat.

### **Belgacem OUEZZANE**

Belkacem Ouezzane was born in 1924 in Figuig. He had been a *makhazini* (member of the auxiliary forces) since 1956, and was married with 10 children. In 1973 he was arrested together with his cousin Hammou, in the course of the arrests of the members of the Omer Benjelloun group - socialists charged with offences against state security. Belgacem and Hammou Ouezzane were minor defendants at the trial, charged with having sheltered members of an opposition movement. The group were tried before a military court in

Kenitra. Although the others were found guilty, Belkacem and Hammou Ouezzane were acquitted on 30 August 1973.

Normally those on remand who have been acquitted are returned to the prison to collect their belongings before being released. This is what happened to Belkacem and Hammou Ouezzane. Then they "disappeared". Their relatives waiting for them outside the prison must actually have been passed by the lorries driving them off to secret detention. Their families stayed outside the prison for seven days; then they were told that the pair had been taken by the "police services".

The families sent numerous letters to the Minister of the Interior but got no reply. They also wrote to the Prime Minister. Then in 1979 someone who knew Hammou Ouezzane saw him working as a forced labourer on a farm near Sidi Bennour, and thanks to pressure from his friends and relations he was set free. Hammou Ouezzane explained that Belkacem and he had been driven by lorry from Kenitra to al-Toueira where they were detained in secret until 1974 when Hammou Ouezzane was transferred to a farm where he had to do forced labour. He worked for a local *qaïd* (chief) and was told that if he tried to escape or tell outsiders his story he would be returned to jail and "disappear" again, so he remained silent. Belkacem Ouezzane is still missing although his family keeps raising his case constantly in letters to the King and government ministers and in appeals in Moroccan newspapers.

### **Limam ould Brahim ould TAYEB**

Limam ould Brahim Ould Tayeb was born in 1954. He was a driver. In 1976 there were a lot of arrests in Smara and Limam was arrested with his mother and brother. Although his mother and brother were later freed, Limam ould Brahim ould Tayeb remains "disappeared".

### **Mueilimnin ment Bouba ould BREIKA**

Muellimnin ment Bouba ould Breika was arrested by Moroccan security forces in Laayoune in 1976 and has since "disappeared". She was taken away from her two small children who have not seen her since. Her family have not been able to find out where she is.

### **Abdallah CHERROUK**

In June 1981 a general strike was called in Morocco by one of the main trade unions, the *Confédération démocratique du travail* (CDT), Democratic Confederation of Labour. The strike, which was widely supported in a number of cities, led to clashes between demonstrators, the police and the army and to widespread arrests and several deaths.

Abdallah Cherrouk was 21 years old at this time and had just completed his baccalaureate examinations. He was not a member of the CDT and did not participate in the general strike nor in the demonstrations accompanying it. He was unloading corn for his father just outside his home when he was arrested in Ain Sebaa near Casablanca on 21 June 1981. Neighbours say that at approximately 1.05pm he was bundled into a police car and taken to a police station, despite protests from onlookers who informed police that

Abdallah Cherrouk had not participated in the strike. Later on that day eyewitnesses saw him in Ain Sebaa police station; he had taken off his long sleeveless outer garment and was using it to fan himself with in the stifling atmosphere. The family outside saw several ambulances drive away from the police station. Many detained at Ain Sebaa Police Station were said to have died as a result of suffocation and severe overcrowding. Those who survived were sentenced to between a few months and eight years imprisonment. Families of those who died in the police station were apparently informed, long afterwards, of the deaths. Abdallah Cherrouk was not among those who were tried and his family have received no news of their son since that day. They contacted all the relevant authorities in Morocco without result and visited every prison and detention centre in Morocco in their search for information of their son but none has been forthcoming.

### **El-Madani Ben Lahcen SALHI**

El-Madani Salhi was born in 1952 in Tafraout in southern Morocco. He went to school in Taroudant and then took a degree in the Muhammad V University in Rabat. He then worked for the Ministry of the Interior and, after passing his qualifying exam with honours, became an administrator in Taza, in northeast Morocco. But he soon became disenchanted with his work there, and, after moving round various departments, ended up in the passport office, where corruption was rife. He refused to go along with this and was dismissed in 1975.

He then went to university and studied law. Upon finishing his degree in 1983 he went to work in Agadir, where apparently he specialised in defending individuals who faced official harassment.

In 1985 El-Madani Salhi was reported by eyewitnesses to have been arrested by plainclothes police. His family and fellow lawyers inquired about him at police stations and raised his case in the press with no success. He "disappeared" and nothing has been heard of him since.



### **Mohamed Ahmed EL-RABANI**

Mohamed Ahmed El-Rabani was the regional technical officer in the Information Centre of the radio in Laayoune. He was an outspoken man, and was said to have had difficulties with the Head of the regional administration of the radio in Laayoune and to have complained to the police about him. He was arrested in September 1979, at the same time as a radio announcer, Embarca ment Taleb, who was eventually released in June 1991 after spending 12 years in secret detention. But Mohamed El-Rabani has not been released. There are reports that he died in detention though his name is not on the list of the dead made up by those detained at Laayoune.

- ◆ Amnesty International calls on the Moroccan authorities to recognize its accountability for the lives and well-being of all those taken into custody by any branch of its security forces. The Moroccan Government should now fully investigate and clarify the fate of these men and women who have "disappeared" after arrest by the security forces and release all those still held in detention if, as their "disappearance" suggests, the Moroccan authorities have no intention of bringing them to trial promptly and fairly on recognized criminal charges. The victims of "disappearance" and the families of those who have died should be compensated for the years of anguish and suffering they have endured.