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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 30/91

Contained in this weekly update are an external document on Morocco and an internal item on Iran.

1. NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

Mauritania - 21 August

AFR 38/07/91

A targeted news release to accompany a list of more than 300 names of people we know or suspect to have been extrajudicially executed. This follows from a targeted press release in April highlighting the same issue, but this time provides information about some 300 victims.

Morocco - 28 August

MDE 29/22/91

A targeted news release is being sent out, to accompany the external document sent in this Weekly Update about detained Sahrawis. Sending a document out in this way is an unusual step - it was simply the quickest way to get it to you. This document is one of the final stages in the ongoing campaign about Morocco.

Sri Lanka - 11 September ASA 37/14/91

An international release on gross human rights violations in north-eastern Sri Lanka, the first document focusing specifically on this region of the country. The report deals with thousands of extrajudicial executions and "disappearances" in North Eastern Sri Lanka. It also covers abuses by the Tamil Tigers in greater detail than any previous report on the country. The timing of the release ties in with a visit by a UN working group to the country in early October, which we hope will investigate some of the issues raised in the report.

Mexico - 18 September

Mexico - Torture with Impunity AMR 41/04/91

News release and questions and answers sheet on a report on torture in Mexico. The main point in the report is that anyone who is arrested in Mexico is at risk of torture and that the government has done little to bring police or others to justice. The news release will contain the most recent example possible.

China - 26 September

Report on administrative detention - news release and possible questions and answers.

ICM - 29 August to 7 September

Information will be provided shortly about the media strategy for the ICM. In the meantime, if you get any queries please refer them to the IS.

## Weekly Update NWS 11/30/91

2. MDE 29/WU 06/91 EXTERNAL

14 August 1991

INTERNAL:

The following is an external document, with its own AI Index number. Because of its imminent embargo date, the quickest way to get it to the sections was by including it in the Weekly Update - a hard copy of the document will also be added to the Weekly Mailing. A targeted news release is currently underway and will be sent out within the next few days.

EMBARGOED FOR 28 AUGUST 1991

AI INDEX: MDE 29/22/91

Amnesty International calls on Moroccan Government  
to break 15-year-silence on  
secret detention of "disappeared" Western Saharans

Introduction

During the month of June 1991 the Moroccan authorities released over 300 "disappeared" civilians of Western Saharan origin (Sahrawis) who had been held in secret detention for up to 15 years. Freed Sahrawis immediately reported that dozens of their fellow inmates had died in detention, mainly as a result of atrocious prison conditions. Many of the former prisoners are said to be in poor health; some paralysed, others blind and a number insane.

Several hundred more Sahrawis remain unaccounted for. Amnesty International fears that some may have died and that others continue to be detained in secret.

Amnesty International has welcomed the releases and called on the Moroccan Government to free those still detained immediately. The organization is also calling on King Hassan II to lift the veil of secrecy surrounding the detentions by establishing a public inquiry which should seek to clarify the whereabouts of all remaining "disappeared" as well as account for those reported to have died. Any officials found to have been responsible for the "disappearance" of prisoners or related human rights violations should be brought to justice, and victims or their relations should be compensated.

The recent releases have come at the time of advanced peace negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations (UN). A referendum to determine the future of the Western Sahara is to be held early next year, to be preceded by a cease-fire which is due to come into force on 6 September. An International Jurist has been appointed by the UN Secretary-General to assist the Special Representative on the Western Sahara to ensure the release of all Western Saharan political prisoners or detainees after the cease-fire comes into force.

The recent releases and information given by those set free have heightened concern that many more people of Western Saharan origin remain in secret captivity. The Moroccan Government has for years denied that there were any Sahrawis held in secret detention - "disappeared" - and the releases are the first official confirmation that any existed. The releases themselves have been kept low-key in Morocco. A Royal Amnesty for Saharan prisoners was announced on 12 June but did not specify who the beneficiaries would be. Those set free are reported to have been instructed to keep silent about what they have gone through and not to celebrate their homecoming in public. This is in keeping with the virtual cult of secrecy about the "disappeared" which has been fostered in Morocco for a decade and a half. This official attitude and the confirmation of what has been reported for so many years, in addition to the accounts given by some of those released, strengthens Amnesty International's fears that reports of the continued incarceration of hundreds more "disappeared" Sahrawis are well-founded.

Amnesty International has recently sought permission to send a team to Morocco to obtain information about the human rights situation, including that of the Sahrawi "disappeared". The organization has been denied access to Morocco to carry out research since March 1990, when a research team was asked to leave the country.

The "disappeared"

"Disappearances" of Sahrawis into secret detention centres began in November 1975 when Morocco first took control of the former colony of the Spanish Sahara. They have included people from all age and professional groups, among them children and elderly people. The victims were reported to have been detained and to have "disappeared" because they or their relatives were known or suspected supporters of the Polisario Front (Frente Popular para la liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y Rio de Oro, Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro). In February 1976 the Polisario Front proclaimed an independent Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and has since been fighting for independence.

Amnesty International has never been able to establish the true number of "disappeared". Investigations of "disappearances" have been especially difficult because relatives and other sources fear for their own safety. The subject is virtually taboo in Morocco. However, hundreds of Sahrawis were believed to be unaccounted for and Amnesty International has for many years been pressing the Moroccan Government to clarify the fate of those missing.

The "disappeared" Sahrawis have never been charged or tried; it appears that those detained and now released were held unlawfully for up to 15 years.

#### Prison conditions

The Sahrawi "disappeared" are said to have been released from secret detention centres at Qal'at M'gouna and Laayoune.

Over 260 Sahrawi prisoners were being held at Qal'at M'gouna and all have now been released. Forty-three detainees are said to have died in captivity there.

All 60 Sahrawi prisoners, 50 men and 10 women, were reported released from a secret detention centre in the military barracks in Laayoune, which was not part of the official Laayoune prison. The prisoners held there were those remaining from the approximately 200 arrested in 1987, at the time of a UN technical mission to the Western Sahara.

The detention of Sahrawi prisoners at these two centres has been reported for years in the face of the Moroccan Government's continued refusal to acknowledge their existence. (They were mentioned in Amnesty International's report Morocco: "Disappearances" of people of Western Saharan origin - AI Index: MDE 29/17/90, November 1990).

It has now been revealed that detention conditions were very harsh, and those who did not survive are thought to have perished from untreated illnesses brought on by the poor conditions. For years food and clothing was generally insufficient. Until the mid-1980s prisoners in Qal'at M'gouna were kept apart from each other in different groups in the large building that served as a detention centre. Even after conditions improved the prisoners remained completely cut off from the outside world.

The conditions in the secret detention centre in Laayoune were said to be much harsher. During the whole of the first year after arrest prisoners were kept handcuffed and blindfolded and were forbidden to speak. They were forced to sleep on the concrete floor and not given enough

blankets. As a result, many former prisoners of this centre are said to be suffering from rheumatism and tuberculosis. Some are reported to have become insane.

The health of many of those released is said to have been seriously affected by bad conditions during their long detention. Some are said to have become blind, others paralysed; many are mentally disturbed.

It is now strongly suspected that the remaining "disappeared" may be held in other secret detention centres in Morocco or the Western Sahara, or in official prisons within Morocco but isolated from the outside world.

The victims

Among the first to "disappear" were four brothers and a cousin of the Mayara family. They were all retired servicemen of the Moroccan army, the Forces Armées Royales. Towards the end of 1975 Ali-Bouyaould Omarould Mayara, the eldest of the brothers, was asked to join in the Green March, a government-organized march of thousands of Moroccan civilians across the border into the Western Sahara which preceded Morocco's military occupation of the region in November 1975. On the grounds of old age (he was born in 1910) and ill health (he had an ulcer) he declined. On 17 November 1975, a Landrover appeared at his house in Tan Tan and three men in gendarme uniform entered. They were met by Ali-Bouya's small daughter, Mahjouba, who told them that her father was at evening prayer. Ali-Bouya was told that he and his brothers were wanted by the Governor. He was then taken away, together with his brothers Cheikh, Seidah and Heiba.

Within 24 hours a friend visiting her son in prison in Agadir, some 250 kilometres to the north, spotted Heiba despite his very changed appearance - she was told the brothers had been ill-treated by being immersed in dirty, scalding water on arrival at the prison. The remaining family kept asking after them at several different police stations, without ever finding out what happened to them. Another member of the family, Abdiould Labbatould Mayara, "disappeared" less than three months later.

Heiba, the youngest of the four brothers, who was only 39 years old at the time of his "disappearance", is reported to have died in detention on 28 September 1977. He left behind a wife and eight children. The four other men of the family are said to be among those released from Qal'at M'gouna. Ali-Bouya, now 81 years of age, survived 15 years of detention, but his bones apparently are now so brittle that he is said to have become very bent and small.

Among those "disappeared" for 15 years are also the Leili family, relatives of the first Prime Minister of the SADR, Mohamed Lamine. Eleven members of the family were arrested in early 1976. The first was Mohamed

Lamine's sister, Fatma Ghalia ment Moulay ould Leili. Then 24 years old, she worked in the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Tan Tan and was in charge of a local women's group there. She was stopped in the street by four men in civilian clothes at 6.00pm on 8 January 1976 as she was going home from work. They forced her into a black Renault 16 and she was never seen again until her release 15 years later.

On 2 February 1976 police broke down the door of the family's house and took away the parents, Nouna ment Abdellahi ould Mohamed Lamine and Moulay Ahmed ould Mohamed el-Hassan Leili, although the father was confined to bed with asthma. The detention of other members of the family followed, including that of another son, 19 year-old Mohamed Fadel, who was arrested in the middle of the night at an uncle's house at Kenitra, where he was studying modern literature.

On 21 June 1991, the family was freed. One day after their release, the father, Moulay Ahmed ould Leili, died, aged 72. He had spent the last 15 years of his life in detention, without ever being charged or tried for any offence - the only apparent reason for his detention was that he was his son's father. In the secret detention centre of Qal'at M'gouna where the family was held, Moulay Ahmed ould Leili had assumed the role of the Imam, washing and saying the prayers for the dead before burying them.

Sebbaha ment Mohamed ould Lehib was one of five women arrested in a wave of arrests on 3 March 1985 in Laayoune, less than two weeks before a much-publicized visit by King Hassan II. At the time of her arrest she was 31 years old and pregnant. Her child was born in detention. Both have now been released. At the age of six her child is now experiencing the world outside prison walls for the first time.

Cheikh ould Bachir ould Hammadi is one of the 43 who are reported to have died in Qal'at M'gouna. He was seized by Moroccan police agents from the municipal garage at Tan Tan, where he was a driver and mechanic, on 14 January 1976. Born in 1948 in Tiris, in the southwest of the Western Sahara, he left behind a wife, M'barka ment Sidi Mohamed ould Barbouchi, two young sons, and the family of his parents-in-law which he was looking after. His brother-in-law Baidari "disappeared" at the same time. Cheikh ould Hammadi is now said to have died in detention on 23 September 1978. A witness wrote: "Cheikh's wife and children and the family of his parents-in-law lived in extreme poverty from the time of Cheikh's abduction."

Those still reported "disappeared"

Although getting precise details about the "disappeared" in Morocco has always been difficult, Amnesty International has the names of scores of Sahrawis who remain unaccounted for. How many have died and how many are still in captivity is not known.

Among the cases on which Amnesty International has information is that of Fatimatou ment Baad, a grandmother of about 65 when she was arrested on 4 April 1984 in Agadir. Three members of the criminal police (police judiciaire) came to the family home at around 3pm. They searched the house in the presence of her grand-daughter Ghalia ment Abdellahi and a daughter-in-law. The latter asked permission to bring Fatimatou ment Baad some food after evening prayers as she was fasting, but when the two women arrived at the police station they were told no-one by that name was held there. There has been no news of her since.

Reports suggest that she was arrested because two girls had stayed at her house on their way to Algeria. In March these girls had made a broadcast on the Polisario Front radio station. The security forces in Laayoune, where they came from, apparently reconstructed their route and arrested Fatimatou ment Baad.

Ghalia ment Abdellahi was arrested on 20 November 1987; she was one of many arrested at the time of a UN technical mission to Laayoune. She was then 26 years old and an agricultural engineer working on various government and non-government agricultural projects.

Ghalia ment Abdellahi is among the 10 women and 50 men released from the secret detention centre in Laayoune. Nothing is now known of her grandmother - where she is held or whether indeed she is still alive.

Baidari ould Sidi-Mohamed ould Berbouchi, the brother-in-law of Cheikh ould Hammadi, also remains "disappeared". He was born in 1943 in Oued-Sagua and was a student at the time of his arrest on 29 February 1976 in Tan Tan.

Others who are still unaccounted for include two brothers, Hamma ould Bellal ould Hadda and Lahbib ould Bellal ould Hadda, both arrested on 5 June 1976 in Tan Tan; Salma ment Sidi el Mokhtar ould Ismail, a housewife arrested on 20 May 1983 in Laayoune; Bahaha ould Breika ould El-Hussein, born in 1900 in Mijek and "disappeared" since 2 April 1976; Mestahya ment Ali Salem ould Hainouda, a 23-year-old housewife and mother of one son, arrested in Laayoune on 25 January 1981, and her sister Yahdiha ment Ali Salem ould Hainouda, arrested at the same time.



Amnesty International is now calling on the Moroccan Government to take the following steps:

Break their 15 years' silence and account for all "disappeared" prisoners; to set up an independent and impartial public inquiry to investigate and clarify the fate and whereabouts of all those alleged to have "disappeared".

All deaths in custody should be investigated and the findings be made public.

In order to prevent "disappearances" occurring in the future, the commission of inquiry should also recommend safeguards, and its findings should be made public at the earliest opportunity.

Amnesty International is also calling on the authorities to allow the organization to visit Morocco again to obtain more information about the Sahrawi "disappeared".

Weekly Update NWS 11/30/91

3. MDE 13/WU 01/91 INTERNAL

14 August 1991

IRAN: SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO INVITATIONS TO TEHRAN HUMAN RIGHTS CONVENTION

Several sections have received invitations from Iranian embassies to participate in a conference to be held in Tehran in September on human rights.

We are advising those sections to respond to the Iranian Embassy officials concerned in the following manner:

- 1) expressing appreciation for the invitation and, while declining to attend the conference, requesting copies of papers presented and any resolutions adopted after it has taken place.
- 2) expressing the hope that AI's outstanding request for government talks will meet with a positive response in the very near future.

Background: AI has been seeking direct talks with the Iranian Government for ten years. Since August 1990 it has also proposed sending the Vice Chair of the IEC to observe the trial of a group of prisoners of conscience held since June 1990. So far AI has received no response to its repeated requests.

In April 1991 an AI delegation visited Iran for the purpose of interviewing Iraqi Shi'a and Kurds seeking refuge in Iran.

Delegates were also able to meet officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and reiterated our requests for talks and trial observation relating to our human right concerns in Iran.

Since then AI has repeated these requests in letters and in direct talks with diplomatic representatives.

At the present time, therefore, we do not feel it would be helpful for our continuing work on behalf of victims of human rights violations in Iran to attend a conference on human rights in Tehran, when no positive response has been received regarding our outstanding requests for visits to the country, and when there may be a real risk of AI attendance being exploited or misinterpreted.

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4. EUR 30/WU 01/91 INTERNAL: FOR RESPONSE ONLY

14 August 1991

INTERNAL

The Italian Section has issued a public statement in connection with refugees in Italy, setting out AI's concerns regarding the Italian authorities' action in rapidly returning to Albania up to 17,000 Albanians who arrived in Bari during the week ending 9 August. The following summarizes the main elements of the section's statement -- press officers are asked to draw it to the attention of the refugee coordinator in their section. It should not be issued as a statement but is for use in response to media inquiries only.

FOR RESPONSE ONLY

Amnesty International is concerned at the speed with which so many people were returned from Italy to Albania, which leads the organization to believe that there was no effective opportunity for any of them who might have wished to apply for protection in Italy to do so. Amnesty International acknowledges that the human rights situation in Albania has greatly improved in recent months and in particular, that large numbers of former prisoners of conscience have been released. However, it cannot be assumed from this that none of the Albanians who have arrived in Italy in recent days have reason to fear human rights violations if forcibly returned.

According to the internationally-recognized principle of non-refoulement, set out in Article 33 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, to which Italy is a party, no state should forcibly return anyone to a country where he or she risks serious human rights violations. It follows from this that Italy is obliged to provide protection to any person who would be at such risk if returned; such persons can be identified only by undertaking a thorough examination of the case of any person who indicates a fear of human rights violations if returned to the country s/he has fled.

Amnesty International acknowledges that the Italian authorities have undertaken to monitor the situation of those Albanians who have returned in the past, in conjunction with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Albanian authorities. However, the Italian authorities have apparently not returned to Albania some members of the armed forces who are among those who recently came to Bari; it is

possible that these may not be the only ones who might risk human rights violations if returned.

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ADDITION TO WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 30/91

1. EUR 46/WU 02/91 INTERNAL

USSR - NOTE TO PRESS OFFICERS

Because of the situation in the USSR you may be asked for comments. At this stage the IS, like everybody else, is trying to find out what's happened and what the implications for our work will be. Right now we cannot say publicly any more than that we are monitoring the situation.

However, in response to queries you may say what our present concerns are, referring to our most recent public document on the USSR (Concerns in Europe, November 1990 - April 1991, AI-Index: EUR 01/01/01/91). Note that although our concerns remain substantially the same as mentioned in the document, the situation of some of the individual cases may have altered and you should make this clear.

Please make it clear also that the monitoring is being done by our research team in London. If you are asked about our information officer in Moscow, (she's been there since January 1991) make it clear that she is not doing research work but is there to give information on Amnesty International and human rights to people in the Soviet Union. It is absolutely essential that you clarify her position if you're asked about it.

The press office will be preparing a general questions and answers in view

of the present situation and this will be sent out as soon as possible.

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FURTHER ADDITION TO WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 30/91

1. MDE 29/WU 07/91 EXTERNAL - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

19 August 1991

INTERNAL

This is the second piece of press material about Morocco you have been sent today. Please make sure you know which is which - the News Release sent earlier today was a scheduled item embargoed for 28 August and accompanies a document. The enclosed is a Weekly Update addition for immediate release, responding to the recent release of 40 political prisoners.

MOROCCO: FORTY POLITICAL PRISONERS FREED

On Friday 16 August 1991 the Moroccan authorities released 40 political prisoners following a royal amnesty. Amnesty International had adopted 24 of them as prisoners of conscience.

The forty are mainly former students and intellectuals. Many of them had been convicted of charges relating to membership of an illegal organization, the left-wing Ila l-Aman (Forward), and endangering state security.

They include Nouredine Jouhari and Hassan Aharrath, two former

students who had been on hunger-strike for more than six years. They were kept isolated in Averroes hospital in Casablanca and force-fed via gastric tubes.

Also released was Ali Idrissi Kaitouni, a poet and painter sentenced in 1982 to 15 years' imprisonment on charges of, among others, insulting the King.

Mohamed Jaaidi, a psychiatrist arrested in 1985 and sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment in early 1986, was among those released. Two women, Nezha Bernoussi and Saadia Al Qabil, each sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment at the same trial, were also freed. Their release came less than three months before their sentences were due to expire.

Amnesty International welcomes these releases, but remains concerned about hundreds of other political prisoners, many of them prisoners of conscience, who continue to be detained. The 40 detainees released represent only a small fraction of those imprisoned in Morocco for the non-violent expression of their conscientiously held beliefs; of those released who had been adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience, more than the same number again, sentenced at the same trials on the same charges, remain imprisoned.

Amnesty International is now appealing to the Moroccan government to release all other prisoners of conscience.