

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 29/29/91
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To: Medical professionals
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Middle East
Date: 30 October 1991

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

**@Mohamed Raiss
£Morocco**

Keywords

Theme: ill-health/ ill-treatment/ medical care/ prison conditions

Profession/association: military officer

Summary

Mohamed Raiss was sentenced to death, later commuted to life imprisonment, for alleged participation in an attack of the Royal Palace of Skhirat in 1971. In 1973, 61 prisoners convicted in connection with the Skhirat attack and another attack against the King, were transferred to Tazmamert secret detention centre, South-eastern Morocco. Mohamed Raiss is one of only two prisoners held in Tazmamert who have recently been moved to Kenitra Central Prison. Eleven detainees have recently been freed; some 30 are believed to have died in detention due to the harsh conditions at Tazmamert, the most recent in the past week. Others remain detained elsewhere without any information available. (Tazmamert has now been demolished.) Mohamed Raiss, who is now 53, suffers hypertension and heart problems and is reported to be extremely weak. Amnesty International is urging that he be transferred to hospital for full medical investigation and treatment.

Recommended Actions

Letters from medical professionals, preferably written in Arabic or French, otherwise your own language, should be sent to the addresses below:

- asking for information about the situation of Mohamed Raiss who has been imprisoned since 1971; note that you are writing solely on a humanitarian basis out of concern for his well-being
- referring to reports that he is in poor health as a result of his prolonged detention in harsh conditions
- urging that he be transferred to a hospital to allow a full medical evaluation to be carried out and treatment given
- urging that all those transferred from Tazmamert are given access to medical care and permitted family visits

Addresses

Sa Majesté
Le Roi Hassan II
Palais Royal
Rabat
Morocco

Son Excellence Driss Basri
Ministre de l'Intérieur
Ministère de l'Intérieur
Quartier Administratif
Rabat, Morocco

Copies:

Comité de Coordination de l'Association et
la Ligue marocaine des droits de l'homme
5 Zankat Soussa,
Rabat, Morocco.

Organisation marocaine des
droits de l'homme
24 Avenue de France
Agdal
Rabat, Morocco

and to Moroccan diplomatic representatives in your country.

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MEDICAL CONCERN

Mohamed RAISS
Morocco

Amnesty International has learned that Mohamed Raiss, a 55-year-old former prisoner of Tazmamert secret detention centre, now held in Kenitra Central Prison, is in poor health; his complaints include hypertension, heart problems, and other health problems related to chronic deprivation. In September 1991 he was transferred to Kenitra prison from the secret detention centre at Tazmamert where he and other detained military officers were held incommunicado in harsh conditions since 1973. Mohamed Raiss is currently believed to be deprived of adequate medical care. (Kenitra Central Prison has virtually no medical facilities and is certainly unable to provide care for anything but the most trivial medical complaint.)

Background

Mohamed Raiss is a lieutenant in the Moroccan Royal Army who, along with more than a thousand other military officers, was arrested in connection with an attack on the Royal Palace of Skhirat on 10 July 1971. Those arrested were tried in February 1972 and Mohamed Raiss was sentenced to death - later commuted to life imprisonment - and was transferred to Kenitra Central Prison to serve his sentence. However, on the night of 7 August 1973 he and 60 other prisoners sentenced in connection with the Skhirat attack and a second attack against the King in 1972, were secretly transferred hundreds of kilometres to the clandestine detention centre at Tazmamert in South-eastern Morocco.

Over the ensuing two decades little was heard of the prisoners. The small amount of information smuggled out of the prison told of extraordinarily harsh conditions and brutal treatment which led to several deaths. It is believed that 30 of the initial 61 prisoners have died, the most recent death having occurred around a week ago. In September 1991 the secret detention centre is reported to have been demolished; eleven prisoners are believed to have been released and others are thought to have been transferred elsewhere. However, the whereabouts of most are not known. Only one other prisoner is known to have been transferred to Kenitra prison with Mohamed Raiss. No official figures have been released by the Moroccan government which still refuses to release information on those who were held in Tazmamert.

All but seven prisoners had completed their sentences, some as long ago as 1974. Amnesty International has persistently raised the cases of the Tazmamert prisoners with the government but has not been given any substantive information. The organization has welcomed the small number of releases but continues to hold grave concerns for the well-being of those who are still detained.