

MOROCCO

@Continued detention of three brothers who "disappeared" in 1973

Amnesty International is gravely concerned about the fate of three brothers who remain "disappeared" since 1973. Midhat René Bourequat, Bayazid Jacques Bourequat and Ali Auguste Bourequat, three brothers of French nationality born and brought up in Morocco, were arrested in Rabat in July 1973 and have since been held in *garde à vue*. Amnesty International has received confirmation that the three brothers were held for at least part of the time in the secret detention centre at Tazmamert, which was reportedly demolished in September 1991. Two of the brothers are reported to be very seriously ill.

The three Bourequat brothers were arrested on 8 July 1973. At the time of their arrest the family was reportedly told that the brothers were detained by order of the *Cabinet Royal* for an identity check, and the Ministry of the Interior is believed to have custody of them. At 6am on 8 July 1973 several officers from the *Brigade Spéciale* went to the house and took away Ali Auguste Bourequat. At 1pm, officers from the *Brigade Spéciale* returned to the house and took away Midhat René and Bayazid Jacques Bourequat.

The brothers reportedly escaped from prison on 13 July 1975, but were immediately rearrested. It is not known where they were detained between 8 July 1973 and 1975. On 13 July 1975, their mother and sister were also arrested and detained incommunicado in isolation without any charges brought against them for 16 months and 14 days; during this time the two women were held for 10 days in the *Direction de la surveillance du territoire* DST (Office of Territorial Surveillance) in Rabat, for five months in an unknown location of the *Gendarmerie Royale*, for 10 months in the central police station in Rabat, and for three weeks in another location in Casablanca. Their sister was apparently able to see them in the *Gendarmerie Royale* during her detention in 1975, when they told her that they did not know the reason for their detention. Both women were eventually released on 27 November 1976. They were not permitted to leave Morocco; however the sister finally succeeded to leave the country illegally on 7 April 1981.

The three brothers are French nationals, as their father had French nationality, but were born and brought up in Morocco where the family lived. Their father had worked with Mohamed V, father of King Hassan II, and had set up the counter-espionage services. According to the family, the three brothers were never involved in politics. They have never been tried or charged with a recognizable offence and it is believed that they may be held solely on account of their father's earlier connection with the Moroccan counter-espionage service. Therefore Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience.

Information on the whereabouts of the Bourequat brothers has been difficult to obtain due to the silence which has surrounded the issue of secret detention and "disappearance" of hundreds of people in Morocco and the Western Sahara. We have received information that they were moved from an unknown place of detention to Tazmamart sometime between 1977 and 1989. They were reportedly held there until the demolition of the Tazmamert detention centre in September 1991.

Since the reported demolition of Tazmamert, it has remained very difficult to form a clear picture of exactly what happened to those who were detained there. The detainees who have been released from Tazmamert are afraid to talk about their experience there for fear of the consequences they and their families would have to pay. They were warned by the authorities not to speak about their detention in Tazmamert and to forget that it had ever existed. It is known that of the 61 military personnel who were convicted in 1972 for attempted coups against King Hassan II in 1971 and 1972, and who were transferred to Tazmamert on 8 August 1973, at least 30 have died in detention; the last death there was reportedly in March 1991. The conditions of detention in Tazmamert were extremely harsh and were undoubtedly the cause of death of so many of those held there.

It is not known where the Bourequat brothers were moved to after the reported demolition of the detention centre and they remain "disappeared". Amnesty International is

gravely concerned about their state of health, having received reports that two of them are extremely ill and knowing that they are known to have been detained in life-threatening conditions, where so many other detainees have died.

Amnesty International has welcomed the positive steps recently taken by the Moroccan Government, namely the release in June 1991 of over 300 people of Western Sahara origins who had been "disappeared" for up to 15 years, and the release in August and September of 41 political prisoners, including some who had been detained for over 17 years and others who had been on hunger strike and were force-fed since 1985. Amnesty International also welcomed the news that the detention centre of Tazmamert had been demolished and that the surviving detainees formerly held there were being released. However, the organization remains gravely concerned about the fate of the Bourequat brothers who have been detained during the past 18 years completely cut off from the outside world, and who continue to be "disappeared" since 1973. The organization calls on the Moroccan Government to end the silence surrounding the case of the Bourequat brothers and to release them immediately and unconditionally.

KEYWORDS: DISAPPEARANCES / PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE / FAMILIES / FOREIGN NATIONALS / ILL-HEALTH / PRISON CONDITIONS / DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL / INCOMMUNICADO DETENTION / LONG-TERM IMPRISONMENT / WOMEN / RESTRICTION ON MOVEMENT /

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