

EXTERNAL

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"Disappearance" / Fear for safety

17 February 1997

ALGERIA Amine AMROUCHE, aged 22

Amnesty International has learned that Amine Amrouche "disappeared" from his home in Baraki, on the outskirts of Algiers, on 30 January 1997.

Amine Amrouche walked out of his home at about 3pm and never returned. He was seen in his neighbourhood by some friends at about 4pm. After that, he went missing. There were no eye-witnesses to his "disappearance", but he is believed to have been abducted. Several other youths are reported to have "disappeared" in Baraki during the same week.

His family inquired with the local police, the gendarmerie, courts, hospitals and the morgue but could not obtain any information. His grandmother went to the gendarmerie to inquire about Amine Amrouche's whereabouts, but she was reportedly verbally abused and thrown out. She was only allowed to file a complaint at the police station after several attempts.

Amine Amrouche was unemployed at the time he "disappeared", and was living with his grandmother. He has never been arrested before. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the past five years in Algeria, tens of thousands of people have been killed by security forces and by armed opposition groups which define themselves as "Islamic groups"; tens of thousands have been arrested and hundreds have "disappeared" after arrest. At times members of the security forces carrying out arrests do not wear uniforms or identify themselves as security forces, and the relatives of those detained have no way of obtaining information on their detained relatives until these are brought before the courts, often weeks or even months after the arrest. In the cases where those arrested have "disappeared", most of them remain unaccounted for, but some have since been found dead or are reported to have been killed in circumstances which have not been clarified.

Individuals who were abducted by armed opposition groups such as the *Groupe islamique armé* (Armed Islamic Group), GIA, have in most cases been found dead, but some remain unaccounted for. These groups, at times, wear uniforms and pose as security forces when carrying out these attacks.

Youths from poor districts of Algiers (such as Baraki) are particularly at risk of being targeted by both security forces and armed opposition groups as each side sees them as potential collaborators with the other.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in French, Arabic, English or your own language:

- expressing concern at the "disappearance" of Amine Amrouche and urging the authorities to ensure that a thorough investigation is carried out to establish his whereabouts;
- urging that, if in custody of the security forces, he be treated humanely and granted access to his family and a lawyer of his choice.

APPEALS TO:

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M. Mustafa BENMANSOUR
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Ministère de l'Intérieur
18 rue Docteur Saâdane
Alger, Algérie
Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Alger, Algeria
Faxes: +213 2 736106
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Your Excellency

M. Mohamed ADAMI
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
8 Place Bir Hakem
El-Biar, Alger, Algérie
Fax: +213 2 922560, 925557, 796557, 722560
Telegrams: Minstre Justice, Alger, Algeria
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

M. Kamel REZZAG-BARA
President
Observatoire National des Droits de l'Homme (ONDH)
Palais du Peuple
1 Av. Franklin Roosevelt
Alger, Algérie
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and to diplomatic representatives of ALGERIA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 April 1997.