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**Visit of Amnesty International's Secretary General to Morocco: Time to Act
The Moroccan Government commits itself to resolving conclusively past injustice and
to defending human rights**

(London - Rabat: 8 June 1998) - We hope that the assurances we received in Morocco concerning reparation for years of injustice and grave human rights violations will be followed by action, stated Pierre Sané, Amnesty International's Secretary General, at the end of a seven-day visit to Morocco.

During his visit Pierre Sané paid tribute to the Moroccan human rights movement and to the victims and their families for their many years of struggle.

"It is the combination of internal and international action which has brought about these changes," said Pierre Sané. "Thanks to the commitment and courage of these activists this process can today be irreversible."

"However, a Morocco where human rights are respected cannot be built unless all the 'disappeared' and prisoners of conscience still detained are released, and unless the impunity enjoyed by those responsible for crimes and torture is ended. The time for promises is over and the victims and their families expect concrete action," added the Secretary General.

These concerns were raised with the Moroccan Government at the highest level. "We leave Morocco with an optimism tainted by some concern about the lack of clarity concerning the procedures and timetable for addressing the injustices and also concerning the resistance encountered within the government itself," Pierre Sané said.

The Association of the Moroccan Groups of Amnesty International, whose office was inaugurated on 1 June, has been waiting for four years for official recognition so that it is able to work freely. As is the case for other associations, official recognition has not been forthcoming.

"We do not want favours," stated Pierre Sané. "We do not want to work only with the blessing of the government of the moment. We want to exercise our right to freedom of association and expression."

The Moroccan Amnesty International Groups demonstrated their vitality by organizing several activities to mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Pierre Sané also confirmed that the organization's International Council Meeting will take place in Rabat in August 1999.

During his visit, between 31 May and 7 June, the Secretary General met victims, families of victims and national human rights organizations, before presenting a memorandum detailing the organization's concerns and recommendations to the government, and subsequently met with numerous representatives of civil society.

At a press conference on 5 June in Rabat, Amnesty International gave the floor to Saida Oukail, daughter of a political prisoner; the niece of Houssein El Manouzi, a “disappeared” trade unionist; the sister of Abdelhaq Rouissi, “disappeared” since the 1960s; Ahmed Marzouki, who spent 18 years in the secret detention centre of Tazmamert; the son of a “disappeared” who died in Tazmamert; and Khalid Naridah, a former prisoner of conscience who is today gravely ill following a 60-day hunger strike during his imprisonment. All expressed their hope that something would be done to end their suffering, to compensate those who were released from unimaginable ordeals, to release all prisoners of conscience, and to put an end to torture and ill-treatment in police stations and detention centres.

“We have received assurances and have taken note of the political will expressed by the Prime Minister to build a state where human rights are respected,” stated Pierre Sané. “We hope that the reforms promised will become a concrete reality so as to guarantee that there can be no return to the black years of repression. But we have also encountered resistance to changes.”

The organization expressed concern especially about the lack of clarity concerning the procedures and timetable for addressing the victims’ cases.

“We sincerely hope that the new government will very soon be in a position to clarify to the victims and their families, as well as to Moroccan and international public opinion, the mechanisms and timetable for implementing its commitments,” stated Pierre Sané.

The inauguration of the office of the Association of the Moroccan Groups of Amnesty International, the Casablanca Film Festival, the Salé Forum on women and child labour, the meetings with women’s organizations, political parties and with student and youths organizations were also opportunities for Pierre Sané to comment on Amnesty International’s approach to the authorities and to stress the importance of the role of civil society in promoting civil liberties in Morocco.

The Moroccan Amnesty International Groups are now able to act on behalf of victims in other countries and, together with the Moroccan human rights associations, will be developing and carrying out activities to promote human rights in Morocco, through information and education work.

The visit was an opportunity for promotional activities around the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Government officials and political leaders, including Prime Minister Abderrahmane Youssoufi, and hundreds of others citizens signed the Big Book pledging to *“do everything in their power to ensure that the rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights become a reality throughout the world”*.

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