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**£MOROCCO CAMPAIGN
1991
@ACTION AND IMPACT**

June 1992
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**INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 8DJ, UNITED
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ACTION AND IMPACT

The fact that Amnesty International's work coincides with the people's present struggles for freedom is what gives great political importance to each of Amnesty International's humanitarian actions.

Mohammed Srfi, former Moroccan prisoner of conscience, August 1991

On 27 March 1991, Amnesty International launched a worldwide campaign to draw international attention to longstanding and continuing human rights violations in Morocco. The launch was marked with the publication of a 76-page report *Morocco: a pattern of political imprisonment, "disappearances" and torture*, a *Briefing on Morocco*, and a news release. AI members in countries throughout the world were actively involved in the campaign for some six months.

Amnesty International's concerns: what has changed?

At the time of the campaign launch, Amnesty International's concerns in Morocco related to the following types of human rights violations:

- the continuing imprisonment of long-term prisoners of conscience
- use of prolonged incommunicado detention (*garde-à-vue*) of political prisoners before trial
- torture and ill-treatment of prisoners

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- "disappearances" of people from Morocco and the Western Sahara
- the cases of prisoners held at Tazmamert: incommunicado secret detention after expiry of sentences in very harsh prison conditions, and deaths in custody
- unfair trials of political prisoners
- the death penalty

Since the launch of the campaign, a number of substantial and significant changes have taken place in Morocco:

25 April 1991: the Moroccan Parliament passed a number of amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure, including a reduction of the maximum duration of *garde-à-vue* detention, following various recommendations made by the *Conseil consultatif des droits de l'homme* (CCDH - Human Rights Consultative Council). The period of *garde-à-vue* detention was thereby limited to a maximum of four days which can be prolonged for a further four-day period for crimes involving offences against state security. These amendments were eventually promulgated on 30 December 1991.

June 1991: over 260 people from the Western Sahara who had "disappeared" up to 15 years earlier were released from secret detention without charge or trial.

16 August 1991: 40 political prisoners were released following a royal amnesty. Some 24 of these were prisoners of conscience adopted by Amnesty International, including four who were featured as appeal cases for the campaign; others included prisoners mentioned in Amnesty International publications.

13 September 1991: Abraham Serfaty, one of Morocco's longest-serving prisoners of conscience, was released. However, he was not allowed to remain in Morocco and was expelled to France.

September 1991: the secret detention centre of Tazmamert, known for its very harsh conditions, was demolished. Some 30 prisoners out of 61 transferred there in 1973 had already died. The remaining 28 military prisoners, who had been held there for 18 years, were transferred to other locations. All but two were released in October; Mohammed Raiss and Achour Ghani were transferred to Kenitra Prison where they have ten more years to serve.

December 1991: the three Bourequat brothers who had "disappeared" in 1973 and had also been held in Tazmamert were released.

15 January 1992: the three remaining prisoners of conscience from Abraham Serfaty's group - Ahmed Aitbennacer, Ahmed Rakiz, and Abdallah Harif - were released from Kenitra Prison.

The destruction of Tazmamert and the release of all but two of the surviving prisoners followed a period of intensive campaigning by Amnesty International as well as by other organizations and individuals, including relatives of some of the prisoners. The inhumane conditions there had been widely exposed by the media, inside and outside Morocco, and governments of other countries had raised the issue directly with the Moroccan Government.

Amnesty International is not claiming that the human rights improvements listed above are directly and/or exclusively attributable to its campaign; factors external to Amnesty International's initiatives, such as pressure from other human rights activists inside and outside Morocco, need to be taken into account to form an overall picture of the circumstances which eventually prompted these moves on the part of the Moroccan Government. However, it can be stated with confidence that Amnesty International's campaign and earlier actions fed into a political climate which was favourable to positive change, and that they represented an important contribution towards the releases and reforms described above.

An international campaign

Amnesty International members in all regions of the world participated actively in the campaign, using a wide range of techniques at the local, national and international level to put pressure on the Moroccan Government to halt human rights violations. At least 2,100 local Amnesty International groups are known to have taken part in the campaign, from the following countries:

Algeria	Australia	Austria	Belgium	Brazil
Canada	Denmark	Egypt		
Finland	France	Germany	Ghana	
Greece	Iceland	Italy	Japan	
Jordan	Luxembourg	Mauritius	Mexico	
Netherlands	Nigeria	Norway	Philippines	
Portugal	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	
Tanzania	Tunisia	UK	USA	

Campaign materials were made available in numerous languages, including Arabic, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Portuguese and Spanish.

Membership activities included widespread publicity, thousands of appeals to the Moroccan authorities, distribution of Amnesty International's material to a wide range of addresses in Morocco, visits to Moroccan embassies abroad, contacts with governments in sections' own countries, and outreach to other organizations, including trade unions, women's organizations,

human rights organizations, students and academics, lawyers, doctors, police officials and companies.

Many of these approaches were successful in generating media coverage for Amnesty International's human rights concerns in Morocco, and in mobilizing others, in particular government representatives, to put pressure on the Moroccan Government to implement human rights reforms. Lobbying of institutions and individuals within the European Community led to some tangible results, for example in pressure exerted by delegations of members of the European Parliament visiting Morocco, and in resolutions passed by the European Parliament on various aspects of the human rights situation in Morocco.

During the same period, the Moroccan Government also came under pressure from other bodies. In November 1990 the Human Rights Committee (a body of experts which monitors implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - ICCPR - and whose secretariat is provided by the United Nations) started examining Morocco's second periodic report under the ICCPR. Members of the Committee, drawing on materials made available by Amnesty International and other human rights organizations, made specific requests for information about human rights violations in secret detention centres in Morocco. The Committee's work during its 1990 and 1991 sessions and the prolonged attention of the media and of non-governmental organizations to this work may have also played a part in subsequent human rights improvements.

In addition, Amnesty International submitted information about human rights violations in Morocco and the Western Sahara to various other United Nations bodies such as the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

Despite the positive changes described above, human rights violations are continuing in Morocco:

- people continue to be imprisoned for the non-violent expression of their opinions or beliefs; the release of prominent and internationally known prisoners is to be welcomed but should not detract from the fact that many lesser known prisoners of conscience are still being held in Moroccan prisons.
- legal reforms and heightened awareness have meant that cases of prolonged *garde-à-vue* detention of political detainees now appear to be more rare, but new cases are still being reported, as recently as March 1992.
- torture continues to be used in prisons and detention centres.

- the fate of hundreds of "disappeared" Sahrawis and Moroccans is still unknown. The Moroccan Government has not responded to requests to investigate these cases. The "disappeared" who have been released from secret detention centres are still under physical restrictions and have been denied contact with the outside world.
- the Moroccan Government has so far failed to institute any kind of enquiry into the conditions at the Tazmamert detention centre or into the deaths in custody of 30 of the prisoners held there.

Amnesty International and others will continue campaigning until full respect for human rights is restored in Morocco.

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Amnesty International
International Secretariat
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 8DJ
United Kingdom

To: All Sections
Campaign Coordinators
Morocco Coordinators
MERAN Coordinators
Outreach Coordinators

From: Campaign and Membership Department
Middle East Research Department

Date: June 1992

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S MOROCCO CAMPAIGN 1991 ACTION AND IMPACT

Summary

This circular contains information on the human rights changes which took place in Morocco during and since the Morocco campaign (March to September 1991) and a summary of membership activities carried out.

Keywords

CAMPAIGNS1 / REAPPEARANCE1 / RELEASE1 / LEGISLATION / PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE / INCOMMUNICADO DETENTION / TORTURE/ILL-TREATMENT / DISAPPEARANCES / IMPUNITY / DEATH IN CUSTODY /

Distribution

As above.

Recommended actions

The attached circular is **EXTERNAL**; it is intended for distribution by AI sections and groups to individuals and organizations contacted during the course of the Morocco Campaign, to inform them about the results of the campaign as well as to provide a concrete example of the positive outcome of AI's work.

A separate **INTERNAL** circular (Morocco Campaign Evaluation, MDE 29/04/92) contains more detailed information about the campaign.