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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ORAL STATEMENT TO THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF ALL MIGRANT WORKERS AND MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILIES ON THE OCCASION OF THE REVIEW OF MOROCCO, 36TH SESSION, MARCH 2023

Honourable Committee members,

Today, Amnesty International will focus on concerns raised in our submission to the Committee about Morocco's failure to comply with its obligations under the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families during the deadly incident at the border crossing between Nador and Melilla on 24 June 2022, which resulted in at least 37 deaths, dozens of injured people, and the disappearances of at least 77 people.

First, regarding the use of torture and other ill-treatment

Amnesty International found that on 24 June 2022, Moroccan police and border guards used unlawful force to violently disperse a group of up to 2,000 Black people, largely from sub-Saharan Africa seeking to cross from Morocco into the Spanish enclave of Melilla at the border crossing known as "Barrio Chino". The testimonies collected by Amnesty International indicate that Moroccan police and border guards used batons, rubber bullets and rubber balls and beat and kicked people who were restrained or unresponsive due to injury, and repeatedly used tear gas against people who had no way of escape and were in a confined space.

The Moroccan police also subsequently failed to provide emergency healthcare to the dozens of injured people, instead leaving them untreated under the full glare of the scorching summer sun for up to eight hours.

Other eyewitnesses, including those injured during the events, told Amnesty International that they were bussed by Moroccan security forces from the border and abandoned in remote locations around Morocco.

Second, regarding the allegations of enforced disappearances

Families and friends of at least 77 people who are believed to be missing since 24 June have not received any information about the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones since they were last seen in the custody of state authorities on that day. The Moroccan authorities have failed to investigate allegations of enforced disappearances and to take all appropriate measures to reveal the fate and whereabouts of the 77 people.

Moreover, they have refused to give access to expert organizations seeking to locate those missing.

Third, lack of accountability

Nine months later and not a single Moroccan official has been brought to justice for the violations that led to the deaths, injuries and disappearances. The Moroccan authorities have yet to make public any findings from inquiries clarifying what happened on 24 June and what steps will be taken to prevent recurrence.

The lack of official information is also causing anguish and distress to those affected including families of those killed or disappeared, and violating their rights to truth, justice and reparation.

Therefore, we call on the Moroccan government to:

Ensure that independent and impartial investigations are carried out into the deaths, torture and other ill-treatment, and enforced disappearances that occurred on 24 June 2022. Any query into those events should also include a mandate to investigate concerns of racism and racial discrimination against Black people.

Cooperate with Spain and relevant EU institutions to build a protection system for refugees at its borders and develop a human rights compliant approach to migration that puts the protection of migrants' and refugees' lives and rights at the centre.

Thank you.