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MOROCCO: Arrests and Trials of pro-Iraq Demonstrators

Since the beginning of the Gulf War over 200 people have been arrested in Morocco for participating in peaceful demonstrations in support of Iraq. Most have been released after a few days, but over 50 have been convicted at trials which may not have conformed to international standards for fair trial. A number are reported to have been tortured.

Demonstrations have taken place in most towns and cities throughout Morocco since 17 January in support of Iraq and in opposition to the air bombardment of Iraq. An authorized demonstration, supported by an estimated 300,000 people, took place in Rabat on 3 February; since then most demonstrations have been banned by the government. Some of the slogans have called for a withdrawal of the 1,200 Moroccan soldiers sent to Saudi Arabia as part of the anti-Iraq coalition.

Many of these demonstrations, including those in Ouarzazate, Oujda, Safi and Beni Mellal, were broken up by police using truncheons, sticks and sometimes tear gas. Most of the demonstrators appear to have been school and higher education students, often joined by members of the public. Demonstrators were arrested in a number of cities, including Beni Mellal, Casablanca, Fes, Meknes, Oujda and Tanger.

There are reports that some of those arrested were tortured, in particular in Fes, Beni Mellal and Casablanca. In Fes eight people, mostly students, including three members of the same family, were brought before a court of first instance on 21 January on charges including assembling on the public highway in a manner likely to disturb public order. They had reportedly raised the Palestinian flag, with a slogan in favour of the Palestinian struggle inscribed on it. Following the demonstrations all but one had been arrested late at night in their homes. They all alleged that they had been tortured while held by the security forces in garde à vue detention before trial; all needed treatment in hospital and one, Abdelmalik Alouard, was detained in hospital, allegedly with bones broken in his hand and foot. During the trial the court apparently refused to allow the accused to be examined by a medical expert, although traces of torture were reportedly visible on their bodies. On 31 January, six were sentenced to one month's imprisonment and two others acquitted.

Many of those arrested appear to have been released uncharged after a few hours or days, but in some places they have been brought to trial on charges of disturbing public order under a 1935 decree. Trials have been marked by serious procedural irregularities. Reports of torture and also of trials are still continuing.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/airmail letters, preferably in French or Arabic to:

- expressing concern at the large-scale arrest of those engaged in reportedly peaceful demonstrations against the war in Iraq;
- expressing concern at reports of torture inflicted on some detainees in garde à vue detention and urging that such reports be investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice;
- calling on the courts to refuse to accept as evidence any statements made under torture and to investigate thoroughly all allegations of torture made in court;
- urging that all those brought to trial be tried according to the standards for fair trial contained in international human rights treaties ratified by Morocco.

APPEALS TO:

Son Excellence Driss Basri
Ministre de l'Intérieur,
Ministère de l'Intérieur,
Quartier Administratif,
Rabat, Morocco

Telegrams: Ministre Intérieur Basri, Rabat, Maroc.
Telexes: 31917 procivile rabat
31065 MINTLEC M
or 32785 MININT M

Son Excellence Moustapha Belarbi Alaoui,
Ministre de la Justice,
Ministère de la Justice,
Palai de la Mamounia
Rabat, Morocco

Telegrams: Ministre Justice Alaoui Rabat Maroc
Telexes: 31888 JUSTICE M
or 31781 JUSPROGE M

COPIES TO:

Comité de Coordination,
Association marocaine des droits de l'homme
5 Zankat Soussa,
Rabat, Morocco.

Organisation marocaine des droits de l'homme,
24 Avenue de France,
Agdal,
Rabat, Morocco

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat or your

section office if sending appeals after
1 April 1991.