

PRISONERS OF FAITH CAMPAIGN PACK



THE MOROCCAN 12

WARNING: Some of the contents of this report deal with torture and may cause distress

*Faiza Haq, Published by Islamic Human Rights Commission
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“For a whole week, we were systematically subjected to different sorts of torture: hanging upside down, suffocation with dirty sponge, back twisting, sexual molestation, electric shocks, indiscriminate beating in all parts of our bodies, death and rape threats, prevention from sleep and food...”¹

Mostapha Housayni, one of the 12 Moroccan students, imprisoned by the Moroccan regime since the past 15 years, recalls the torture of the initial few days of detention.

¹ Birouk, Monir. “Behind the Bars. The JSM’s Political Prisoners: A Mark of Disgrace in the Makhzen’s Record of Abuses.” 22 Nov 2006. < http://www.aljamaa.info/ar/detail_khabar.asp?id=4668&idRub=89>

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Introduction

Assalaam alaikum wa rahmatullah wa barakatuh

Dear Brothers and Sisters

It has been estimated that there are approximately 250,000 Muslim prisoners of faith around the world today, held in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries. They can be politicians, members of human rights organisations, students, writers, actors and indeed come from all spheres of life, but have one thing in common in that they have wished to adhere to the Islamic belief and way of life. The government of the country where the prisoners of faith are held often portrays them as terrorists, inciters of religious hatred or of even trying to change the constitution of the country. Once locked away, it is all too easy to forget about these prisoners of faith, who can be subjected to the most extreme and brutal forms of torture. Despite the various human rights treaties which have been ratified by governments to protect the right of an individual not to be subjected to torture and the countless UN resolutions banning its use, this practice still continues, largely ignored by the international community. The right not to be tortured is non-derogable, meaning in all situations even in a state of emergency this right must be guaranteed.

IHRC's prisoner of faith campaigns have been running since the organisation began and continue and complement the work of many dedicated campaigns world-wide. More packs will be made available. Please check our website and go to the campaigns page at www.ihrc.org.uk or contact us via email at info@ihrc.org.

The Letter Writing Campaign

IHRC's campaign for prisoners of faith is based on a letter writing campaign. We have found this to be an effective method of applying pressure to different governmental organisations, (national and international), bodies such as the United Nations, European Commission of Human Rights and other similar organisations. They are currently failing to exert pressure on member countries which have pledged to uphold human rights values.

Questions that have been asked in the past concerning the campaign have included:

- What difference will one letter make?
- Does it really work?
- Will we get in trouble writing the letters, since *they* will have our contact details?

It is true that one letter may end up being ignored by the recipient. At least the person who sent it will be able to answer on the Day of Judgement that s/he made a stand against injustice to try to help the prisoners. However letters sent in their hundreds cannot be ignored. One MP stated that if his constituency receives even five letters on the same topic, a meeting is convened to answer the question at hand. Of course this may be the policy of one of the "better" MPs, but the fact remains that hundreds of letters demanding to know why a certain prisoner of faith is being detained and tortured for no other reason than wishing to practice his/her religion must generate a response which can then be taken further.

In fact it was due to a sustained letter writing campaign that the Turkish journalist Gul Aslan, held for three years without charge in Bandirma prison was released in August 1999; the judge presiding over her trial stated that her case was an international embarrassment. Thousands of prisoners of faith have also been released in Bahrain, India and Nigeria after similar campaigns.

Huda Kaya, whilst held in Malatya Prison in July 1999, after participating in a rally against the hijab ban, wrote the following to IHRC:

“We are so proud to see that you are interested in the problems of Muslims in Turkey who are living the basic principle of Islam that only the momineen are brothers...Surely Allah loves those who fight in His way in ranks as if they were a strong and compact wall (Surah Saff-4/Holy Qur’an)...And again by using IHRC, I am sending salaam to all those valuable momineen brothers and sisters. WE ARE WAITING FOR YOUR LETTERS.”

Al-Hamdullillah, Huda Kaya and her daughters who faced the death penalty for participating in the rally were released from prison in December 1999.

Many people do feel slightly apprehensive about writing letters to different governmental organisations about prisoners of faith. Letter writing is a tool widely used by human rights organisations and is a fundamental basic right aligned to freedom of speech.

Model letters are provided for each of the prisoners of faith, which can be sent directly or adjusted as necessary to include further details. We ask that if you do receive a reply to send **a copy of the letter sent (even if it is the model letter) and the reply to IHRC**. This is extremely important as it helps IHRC to monitor the situation with regards to the prisoner of faith and to improve upon the current model letters. Please also keep letters polite.

Letter writing campaigns take time to become established, but Insha’Allah further results will be obtained. However, the success of the campaign is dependent upon the number of people committing to it. More campaigners need to get involved, on a regular basis. The campaign can then be extended to include e.g. vigils and protests at different embassies to raise awareness and Insha’Allah obtain the release of the prisoner of faith.

Finally we ask you to remember these and the many thousand other prisoners of faith in your du’as – imprisoned simply for their beliefs.

Why Campaign with the Islamic Human Rights Commission?²

As Muslims, we have an undeniable responsibility to struggle against oppression and injustice, and to work for a world based on principles of equity and compassion. To do so, Muslims must first of all be aware of the current state of affairs in the world at large, an obligation that has been indicated by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as follows: “Whoever wakes up in the morning not thinking about the affairs of the Ummah (community) is not one of us.” (Muslim)

The Qur’an clearly points out that Muslims must fight against oppression in all forms, be it against Muslim or non-Muslim: “*And what reason have you that you should not fight in the way of Allah and of the weak among the men, women and children (of) those who say: Our Lord! Cause us to go forth from this town, whose people are oppressors, and give us from Thee a guardian and give us from Thee a helper.*” (Qur’an 4:75) This verse shows that Muslims have a responsibility to aid the oppressed regardless of the faith or ethnicity of both the oppressed and the oppressor.

Indeed, the Prophet (SAW) has clearly stated that refusing to struggle against oppression and injustice could be tantamount to becoming an oppressor and even exiting the fold of Islam. “Whoever goes along with an oppressor and strengthens his hands, knowing that he is an oppressor, has taken himself out of the fold of Islam.” (from ‘Aws ibn Sharahbil, by al-Bayhaqi in his *Shu’ab al-Iman*; cited in *Mishkat* (1381 AH), Vol. 2, p. 641:5136) “Whoever sees something wrong should use his strength to set it right; if he cannot, he should speak against it; and if he cannot it, he should at least consider it wrong in his heart; and this is the weakest of faith.” (Muslim, from Abu Sa’id al-Khudri, Vol. 1, p. 69:78, *Kitab al-Iman*)

Thus, it is clear that genuine adherence to Islam inherently entails committed activism against all forms of injustice and oppression. This includes standing up against those who perpetrate and promulgate injustice regardless of whether they are Muslim or non-Muslim, and striving to protect the rights of all people from oppression once more regardless of ethnicity or religion.

The question then arises as to the best methodology we should implement to fulfil the obligation outlined above. Once more, the Qur’an and the Prophet (SAW) have made clear the best means of doing so. First of all, the Qur’an states that it is an obligation for Muslims to form groups or organisations through which they may exhort to what is right and denounce wrong: “*Let there be among you a group that invites to the good, enjoins what is right and forbids what is evil, and they are those who are successful.*” (Qur’an 3:104) In other words, Muslims should form structured organisations through which they can call upon all relevant parties to implement justice and avoid injustice - the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) strives to be just such an organisation. This is a universal obligation that Muslims have been commanded to fulfil by Allah (SWT) in relation to all individuals, communities and groups, both Muslim and non-Muslim without exception. This therefore necessarily includes calling on international organisations such as the United Nations and NATO; national organisations such as human rights groups and think-tanks; governments and non-governmental organisations; state and non-state institutions; and so on, to implement justice and avoid injustice. It is the obligation of Muslims to make significant contact with all such national and international bodies to encourage and exhort them to practice justice, and finally to denounce and condemn any of their unjust practices.

Indeed, the Prophet (SAW) has quite specifically highlighted the merits of speaking out directly to the perpetrator or supporter of oppression. This is done by condemning their oppressive behaviour, recommending to them the most just practice in relation to this behaviour, and calling upon them to reform their behaviour according to justice by implementing this recommendation. The Prophet (SAW) stated: “The best Jihad is the word of truth spoken in the presence of a tyrant ruler” (narrated by Ahmad). Indeed, this sort of direct activism against oppression may not necessarily be literal and physical. Research and campaigning through writing in order to fulfil the obligation outlined above

² Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed

has also been highly praised by the Prophet (SAW), and therefore must include contacting relevant groups and organisations to demand that they adhere to justice. This has been directly alluded to in the statement of the Prophet (SAW) quoted above: “Whoever sees something wrong should use his strength to set it right; if he cannot, he should speak against it...”

The next question with regards to methodology is how to call upon these groups, bodies and organisations in an effective and convincing manner. It is well known that when the Prophets (AS) fulfilled their mission to preach the message of Islam to the different communities to which they came, they did so deliberately in a language and terminology which they could best understand. In other words, they gauged the intellectual and rational background of their listeners and tailored their preaching so that listeners were able to comprehend the Prophets’ message.

This has even entailed utilising the ideology of the listeners in such a way as to use the concepts and terminology which they are already familiar with, to prove a correct concept. For example, the Qur’an relates that Prophet Ibrahim (AS), in conversation with his people, utilised the concepts and terminology of the paganist worldview to prove the Islamic worldview. (*Qur’an* 6:75-79, 7:80-83, 41:47)

In a similar fashion, it is possible to highlight the unjust practices of governments, organisations and individuals using concepts and terminology that they understand - such as the prevailing human rights discourse - so as to prove their unjust nature. The objective of doing so would simply be to demonstrate their hypocrisy in failing to adhere to the very humanitarian principles which they themselves claim to uphold, by pointing out the discrepancy between their behaviour and the basic rights of human beings.

Where the Divinely-ordained rights of human beings correlate with rights recognised internationally, it makes sense to call upon national and international bodies to implement such rights. This would serve greatly to help fulfil our Islamic responsibility to struggle against global injustice and oppression, to protect the intrinsic rights of Muslims worldwide, and to promote justice and equity. In this way, we would be pressuring existing international instruments to act in accordance with justice. As the Prophet stated in a famous hadith: “The similitude of the believers is like a single body. If any part of it complains of an injury, the entire body responds.” Campaigning with IHRC can help make this response effective.

There are many examples proving that Muslim pressure can have an impact. For example, the Zionist Lord Michael Levy was temporarily sidelined from his position as Tony Blair’s Middle East envoy. This occurred in the wake of the Foreign Office having received up to over a thousand letters from IHRC campaigners. Lord Levy’s sidelining was widely reported in the press by newspapers such as the *Times* and the *Independent*. Although Lord Levy was later returned to his position, it remains clear that this sort of pressure can work.

Similarly, when a number of Turkish Sisters were jailed for undertaking a peaceful protest against the ban on Hijab in schools and universities, IHRC volunteers were asked to send letters to several organisations and leaders, including Mary Robinson, the then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Turkish sisters, who had the death sentence levelled against them, were soon released when the UN intervened under pressure from IHRC campaigners to prevent them from being killed.

Another recent example is that of Oxfam, when it announced that it will not renew its contract with pro-Zionist Starbucks after immense pressure from various human rights groups led by IHRC.

Yet another example is that of the recent success in the case of Mirza Tahir Hussain whose imminent death sentence was commuted owing to great efforts by many governmental bodies and co-ordinated by IHRC.

There are many other examples. Campaigning can work if enough consistent, determined and widespread pressure can be imposed on political leaders and organisations. IHRC believes that it is our responsibility to call these leaders and organisations to account for their policies and actions, and to exhort them to act in accordance with justice.

The 12 Moroccan Students

Introduction

Twelve students in Morocco have been serving a prison sentence of twenty years in the Bou Rkyaz prison in Fez³ since 1991 because of a false accusation of murder against them. Their names are listed as follows: Yahya AlAbdalaoui, Mohammed Allilaoui, Ahmed Attaj, Belkasim Azikaki, Mostapha Housayni, Mohammed Belhadi, Noreddine Attaj, Mohammed Azzaoui, Mohammed Alghazali, Ali Hidaoui, Almoutawakil Belkhadir and Belkasim Altanouri. In reality they have been imprisoned due to their affiliation with the Moroccan Islamist movement, *Al-Adl wa Al-Ihsan* or the Justice and Spirituality Movement (JSM), and ‘their support for its opposition to the non-Islamic policies of the...Moroccan regime.’⁴

Background

The JSM is the biggest and most popular Islamic organization in Morocco. It emerged as a powerful political movement by the end of the 1980s.⁵ Although it had obtained legal recognition, the association has been, since its founding, a target of oppression and abusive arrests by the Moroccan authorities.⁶ It is accused of being a terrorist organization, but contrary to this accusation, JSM rejects all forms of violence and has always carried out its activities in a peaceful manner.

The success of JSM in the political arena was paralleled by the emergence of its student branch as one of the most organized movements with its activism and leadership in the majority of Moroccan universities. Their active participation in public activities such as the trials of JSM officials, the Labour Day demonstrations etc.⁷ put them in the forefront and further enraged the king. Also, many other leftist parties turned against them as their popularity had gradually waned in the universities due to their emergence. Hence JSM was the common enemy to both the ruling government and other political parties. Therefore, by the beginning of the academic year 1991/1992⁸, there was much violence perpetrated by mainly leftist students against the Islamists, in all universities in Morocco, especially the universities of Oujda, Fes, Meknes and Kenitra.⁹ Further, new students supporting JSM were socially boycotted and were excluded from all university services: the faculties, the university campuses, restaurants and even buses. They were expelled from their rooms and their belongings were confiscated. The banned students launched several appeals to the university authorities and the public against these injustices but these efforts were futile.

Following the death of a student in mysterious circumstances in Oujda, on 1st November 1991, the police began a campaign of crackdowns and arrests against the JSM and captured 62 of their members.¹⁰ Out of these, 37 were convicted on charges of ‘murder, abduction, sequestration and violence.’¹¹

Unfair Trial

³ Report about the 12 students by Mohamed Salmi, human rights activist and head of the commission defending the 12 students in Morocco, 1 Sept 2006.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ http://www.aljamaa.info/ar/detail_khabar.asp?id=4668&idRub=89

⁶ “Report on Abusive Arrests of Members of the Justice and Spirituality Movement – Morocco”, North American Council of Human Rights, 18 July 2006, pg 3.

⁷ http://www.aljamaa.info/ar/detail_khabar.asp?id=4668&idRub=89

⁸ Report about the 12 students by Mohamed Salmi, human rights activist and head of the commission defending the 12 students in Morocco, 1 Sept 2006

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

The convicted students were brought before the Oujda Court of Appeals, and in the course of the proceedings, 12 of them were sentenced to imprisonment on 10th January 1992.¹² However, many aspects of the trial were blatantly unjust towards the students. The prosecution was unable to produce any credible evidence against the defendants in the course of the trial. On the other hand, the defence lawyers provided solid evidence to support them and tried to make public the injustices that the students endured during the course of their trial.

- The students have been accused of complicity in the murder of a student at the University of Oujda, but no one knows the principal murderer or his whereabouts. Further, there is no evidence linking the students to the murder. The students have also been accused of fighting with left wing students, but the left wing students were not brought before the court to explain the offences of which they were victim. The tribunal was satisfied with only the accused students attending the trial, the second party was treated as a witness and therefore, did not appear before the court.¹³
- One of the students was seized because the police found spots of blood on his shirt which they claimed allegedly belonged to the victim, whereas these spots were a result of the struggle with the police during his arrest, which also resulted in his ear being cut off and his skull being fractured. When the defence asked for an investigation of the blood on the shirt as to whether it belonged to the accused student or the murdered victim, the tribunal refused.
- After being seized, the students were questioned about issues not related to the crime they were accused of; rather the focus of the investigation was to find out about the internal workings of JSM.¹⁴ The students were refused access to lawyers during the pre-trial interrogations. They were reportedly tortured and forced to sign on “confession documents” in which the investigators interpolated false statements and confessions of crime. Some of them did not even sign the report, their signatures were forged. The defence argued that these confessions should have never been accepted as the main evidence in this trial.
- During the trial, those who wanted to give evidence in the favour of the students were prohibited from testifying. Even the prosecution witnesses claimed to have never seen any of the defendants attacking the victim.
- The trial was not made fully public; instead the majority of people attending it belonged to the secret and public police and intelligence servicemen. Most of the relatives of the detainees were prevented from attending the trial.¹⁵
- They have suffered torture during the period of their investigation and questioning, but despite the visible traces of torture on their bodies and the ensuing demands made by the students’ attorneys for an enquiry, the court has not carried out any investigation about these violations.

The sentence was pronounced on these students based on the conviction of the judges and the declaration attributed to the accused students in the investigative report prepared by the police. But, as mentioned above, according to the defence lawyers, this report contains false statements and confessions forged by the examiners themselves.

Further, the verdict was pronounced for the entire group without any definition of individual responsibility. This fact had a big impact on the students’ case as the same tribunal had earlier cleared two people who had been prosecuted for the same case and the same accusations. This fact is enough to show that the case does not have any legal basis but relied on weak reasons like the rest of the political trials that Morocco has known this era. Hence most observers do agree that these students have been detained for solely political reasons.¹⁶ Mohamed Salmi, the Head of the Human Rights Commission of JSM states in his report, ‘...their [case] is 100% political and has nothing to do with public transgression and crime. Local human-rights activists and prominent members of the civil

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

society also called for an end of this [case]. Even some figures of the Equity and Reconciliation Institution (IER) established by the palace recognize the innocence of the 12 imprisoned students. However, the decision to release them is not an IER decision.’¹⁷

Suffering in Prison

The suffering of the students began from the moment they were captured. One of the detained students, Mostapha Housayni, while describing the initial moments of detention states, “...we spent the first night in the police station kneeling on pointed small stones for 13 successive hours with no first aid given to us (many were severely hit in their heads).”¹⁸

The students were held incommunicado for 136 hours, whereas the legal period for detention in Morocco is 48 hours and in exceptional cases, 96 hours.¹⁹ Mostapha further recollects this period of torture stating, “for a whole week, we were systematically subjected to different sorts of torture: hanging upside down, suffocation with dirty sponge, back twisting, sexual molestation, electric shocks, indiscriminate beating in all parts of our bodies, death and rape threats, prevention from sleep and food...”²⁰

Thereafter, the students had to endure more suffering in prison. In the initial years of their imprisonment, they had to bear tough prison conditions, they were beaten and tortured and were deprived of almost all their rights, for instance, they were not allowed to meet their family members. But after a lot of struggle, the students were able to achieve slight improvement in prison conditions and were also allowed to pursue their PhDs.

However, after having spent thirteen years in Central Prison in Kenitra, they were moved to Bourkaize Prison in Fez in 2004²¹, and hence were back to square one, as “they were denied most of the things they had struggled for so long to achieve.”²² Hence, “they had to use their only tool, hunger strike, in order to obtain some improvement in their detention conditions.”²³

Conditions have improved slightly since then. They have been allowed to meet a few of their relatives. They are not allowed to use the telephone. Since all of them are still pursuing their studies, they need access to books and other resources but they have always faced harassment and obstacles in this regard as well. They are suffering from various diseases due to infections caught in prison and unhealthy living conditions. They have been on several hunger strikes to protest against the inhumane conditions they endure, which leads to momentary improvement. Despite all this suffering, all of them have finished memorizing the Qur’an in prison and all of them have been able to complete their Masters and PhDs in different subjects as well.

More about JSM

The case of these 12 students is one of the many cases of persecution against followers of the JSM. However, such persecution is uncalled for as JSM is a peaceful organization and rejects all forms of

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Birouk, Monir. “Behind the Bars. The JSM’s Political Prisoners: A Mark of Disgrace in the Makhzen’s Record of Abuses.” 22 Nov 2006. < http://www.aljamaa.info/ar/detail_khabar.asp?id=4668&idRub=89>

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

violence. It greatly emphasises on religious values and believes that Islam holds the key to the progress of the country.²⁴

JSM is led by, Sheikh Abdesalam Yassine, who became widely known after he wrote a letter to the Moroccan King Hasan II, 'in which he dared to question the monarch's knowledge of Islam.'²⁵ He advised him to return to Islamic values and to become a just governor. As a result, Yassine was put behind bars for fifteen years until his release in 2000.²⁶ The JSM emerged under him as 'the strongest movement in terms of the number of its followers and also in terms of its effect in the Moroccan society especially in the rural areas.'²⁷ It particularly is very popular in universities. Since this movement became the main opponent to the 'North African monarchy',²⁸ it faced fierce opposition from the authorities, hence its publications, websites etc. were banned, its members were arrested and its gatherings were raided.

Currently, Nadia Yassine, daughter of Sheikh Abdesalam Yassine and the leading spokesperson for the JSM, faces indictment over a statement she made in an interview against the Moroccan authorities in June 2005.²⁹ 'She adamantly criticized the monarchy and favoured the republic as the proper system of government...closest to the Islamic theory of political power.'³⁰ She is expected to face from 3 to 5 years in prison with a fine of up to \$100,000.³¹

Recent statistics documented in 2006 prove that the Moroccan authorities have been leading a campaign of oppression against the JSM since early May of the same year.³² Houses and premises belonging to JSM members have been besieged, their activities have been banned and hundreds of its members, numbering up to 2266³³, have been arrested.

The JSM tried to organize open house events in many Moroccan cities in order to introduce their aims and activities to the public and to clarify all misconceptions and misunderstanding surrounding their theory and practice. But the Moroccan government has viewed their efforts as a threat to the security and integrity of the nation and hence has organized synchronized raids to abort the open house events forcibly. Many members have been tortured and terrorised and their meeting places have been destroyed.³⁴

Current Situation of the Students

The students were recently moved from Kenitra prison to another prison in Fez which is quite far from where their families live. As a result, their families and friends have to travel for hundreds of miles to

²⁴ Gupta, Sapan. "Justice and Spirituality – A Moroccan View." 20 April 2006: pg 1. The Record, Harvard Law School. <<http://www.hlrecord.org/media/storage/paper609/news/2006/04/20/News/Justice.And.Spirituality.A.Moroccan.View-1863637.shtml?noreferrer=200611010822&sourcedomain=www.hlrecord.org>>.

²⁵ "Growing Popularity of Islamists worries Morocco." Africa. 13 June 2006. Mail & Guardian Online. <http://www.mg.co.za/articlepage.aspx?area=/breaking_news/breaking_news_africa/&articleid=274395>.

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Hassini, Aziz El. "Retraction of Freedom of Expression in Morocco – The case of Al Adl wa Al Ihsan." July 2006: pg 5.

²⁸ Gupta, Sapan. "Justice and Spirituality – A Moroccan View." 20 April 2006: pg 1. The Record, Harvard Law School. <<http://www.hlrecord.org/media/storage/paper609/news/2006/04/20/News/Justice.And.Spirituality.A.Moroccan.View-1863637-page2.shtml?noreferrer=200610200719&sourcedomain=www.hlrecord.org>>.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

³² "Report on Abusive Arrests of Members of the Justice and Spirituality Movement – Morocco", North American Council of Human Rights, 18 July 2006, pg 1.

³³ Ibid

³⁴ "Report on Abusive Arrests of Members of the Justice and Spirituality Movement – Morocco", North American Council of Human Rights, 18 July 2006, pg 5-6.

visit them. Even after such long journeys, family members are not always allowed to meet their loved ones in proper conditions.³⁵

The students have always insisted on their innocence and refuse to ask for a royal pardon, claiming that they are not guilty of anything. JSM has also rejected the accusations made against it and against the arrested students.

³⁵ Report about the 12 students by Mohamed Salmi, human rights activist and head of the commission defending the 12 students in Morocco, 1 Sept 2006.

Address for material to be sent to the 12 Moroccan students

All the correspondence meant for the students is received and conveyed to them by the head of the commission defending them, namely Mohamed Salmi. Therefore, write to Mohamed Salmi, to convey your messages to the detained students.

Mohamed Salmi
52 Comatrav 2
Temara
Morocco

Tel: +212 61 393 660
Email: salmitemara1@yahoo.fr

You can also write to the students by sending letters to the prison where they are held, however, delivery of the letters to the students is not guaranteed.

Sijn Lmadani
Borkaiz
Fes
Morocco

Instructions for sending model letters to organisations, authorities etc.

Please send the model letter with chosen insertions to the addresses below. Use the relevant insertion according to the recipient of the letter. Addresses for the recipients are given on page 15.

Model Letter for the 12 Moroccan Students

Name
Address

Date

Name of Recipient
Address of Recipient

Dear [Name of Recipient],

Re: Appeal for the immediate release of the twelve Moroccan students

I am writing to urge you to work for the immediate release of the twelve Moroccan students who have been imprisoned since 1991. They are currently being held in the Borkaiz prison in Fez. Their names are listed as follows: Yahya AlAbdalaoui, Mohammed Allilaoui, Ahmed Attaj, Belkasim Azikaki, Mostapha Housayni, Mohammed Belhadi, Noredine Attaj, Mohammed Azzaoui, Mohammed Alghazali, Ali Hidaoui, Almoutawakil Belkhadir and Belkasim Altanouri. They have all been accused of complicity in the murder of a student at the University of Oujda.

They all belong to the Justice and Spirituality Movement in Morocco which has faced continuous persecution from the Moroccan authorities, even though it is a legitimate and peaceful organization. It

is quite clear that they are one of the many groups of prisoners in Morocco who have been detained due to their allegiance to the JSM.

No evidence has been found against them. In fact, there are many issues, mentioned below, which lead us to question the Moroccan authorities for holding them:

- The principal murderer has never been found
- All the detainees were arrested at least two days after the murder and not on the spot as must be the case to be found guilty by law. Some of them were arrested in cities outside Oujda
- There is no credible evidence against them. During the trial, those who wanted to give evidence in the favour of the students were prohibited from testifying. Even the prosecution witnesses claimed to have never seen any of the defendants attacking the victim.
- They have been forced to sign “confession documents” in which the investigators have forged confessions of the crime
- They have all denied the accusations made against them

Apart from these unjustifiable issues faced by the detainees, there is a huge concern whether they are being kept and treated in accordance with international human rights standards. According to one of their lawyers, the detainees have stood in court with visible traces of torture on their bodies, yet the court has not followed up with an investigation of these violations in spite of the demands for an enquiry made by the attorneys. They are not allowed to pursue their studies freely in prison and are suffering from various diseases due to the inhumane conditions they face in prison.

INSERT APPROPRIATE PARAGRAPH

Please help end this injustice against these innocent twelve students who have already paid a huge price for something they have not committed. I look forward to hearing from you about their current conditions and measures taken to ensure their immediate and unconditional release.

Yours Sincerely,

[Name]

Insertions

Recipient Name: Ms Louise Arbour, UN High Commissioner on Human Rights

INSERTION

I urge you to pressurise the Moroccan government to uphold the rights of the detainees, in particular those of these 12 students. Please ensure the appropriate working groups in your office act upon this matter.

Recipient Name: Ms. Margaret Beckett MP, FCO

INSERTION

I urge you to make representations on behalf of these 12 Moroccan students. Your department has committed itself to promoting human rights and in the circumstances this has been a clear travesty of justice, where the students' human rights have been abused.

Recipient Name: HE Mohammed Belmahi, Moroccan Embassy

INSERTION

These 12 Moroccan students have many supporters who believe in true justice who will continue campaigning for him.

Recipient Name: Mr. Mohamed Bouzoubaa, Justice Minister of Morocco

INSERTION

I urge you to pay immediate attention to the case of these 12 students and release them from prison without delay.

Addresses for the 12 Moroccan Students Model Letters

- Ms Louise Arbour
UN High Commissioner on Human Rights
Petitions Team
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations Office at Geneva
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Fax: + 41 22 917 9022 (particularly for urgent matters)
Email: tb-petitions.hchr@unog.ch

- Ms. Margaret Beckett MP
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Tel: +44 20 7219 5070
Fax: +44 20 7839 2417
Email private.office@fco.gov.uk

- HE Mr. Mohammed Belmahi
The Moroccan Embassy
49 Queen's Gates Gardens
London SW7 5NE

Tel: +44 20 7581 5001/4
Fax: +44 20 7225 3862
Email: mail@sifamaldn.org

- Mr. Mohamed Bouzoubaa
Ministère de la justice,
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