

Torture, Recovery, and Truth in Morocco

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To describe the years since 1956, when they gained their independence, Moroccans use the Arabic words *zaman al-rasas* and *al-sanawat al-sawda* and the French phrases *les années de plomb*, *les années noires*, and *les années sombres*, "the years of lead," "the black years," "the dark years," phrases evoking an era of grayness and lead bullets. These were times of fear and repression, of forcible disappearances, farcical mass trials, and long prison sentences for many from a variety of political positions who, voicing opposition to the regime, became prisoners of conscience. In the urban areas, thousands from the student and intellectual communities of all political persuasions — Marxists, Islamists, nationalists, feminists, Amazigh/Berber nationalists — were arrested, held incommunicado at various sites (including Casablanca's infamous Derb Moulay Cherif detention center), tortured, and tried en masse in waves of political trials for the crime of "plotting against the state." Literature — their articles, books, magazines, broadsides, and cartoons — was the evidence of crime. Sentences ranged from a few months to the death penalty.¹

During research trips in 1996, 1997, and 1999-2000,² I was introduced to the Moroccan community of human-rights activists, many of them students, poets, novelists, and artists who were or had been imprisoned together. From interviews with these men and women, an unusual discursive formation has emerged that links authors, writing, political detention, and torture: accusations of the guilt of political prisoners were based exclusively on their imaginative and political writings, and torture was applied to elicit written confessions. Nevertheless, a large body of writing was produced during decades of incarceration. Literary critic Elaine Scarry argues that one motive for inflicting physical pain is to destroy the voice that would express torture in language, thereby eliminating any representations by the victim.³ By explicitly engaging questions of language and the difficulties of telling a story, Moroccan literature written in prison takes as its subject the overtly political insistence of witnessing.

Such works belong to an engaged literature of testament and commitment that has shaped literary themes throughout the Arabic-speaking world, in particular drawing explicitly on Palestinian *iltizam* or "commitment" literature.⁴ More recent terms to characterize poetry emerging from political and social extremity occur in Carolyn Forché's anthology on the poetry of witness, where she proposes a third space for poems that do not belong purely to the realm of the political or the personal; instead, they are part of what she calls a "social" arena, which she defines as "a place of resistance and struggle, where books are published, poems read, and protest disseminated. It is the sphere in which claims against the political order are made in the name of justice."⁵

The political and Forché's sense of the "social" space are inseparable from precise questions of geographical location and historical time — where do you live, for whom do you write, when and under what circumstances did you write, which prison "published" your writing, and, even, what was the manner of your torture or death? The scope of the human-rights violations during the postindependence history of Morocco commands focus upon those events where history and memory, objective narration and witness testimony, overlap, intersect, and collide. A community of human-rights activists, many of them survivors of forcible disappearance, torture, political trials, and decades of incarceration, has long labored to reconstruct their country's history and to explain what actually happened, despite perpetrators' attempts to efface both material evidence and human witnesses. As with

other projects in which a state appears to declare war on its own citizens, the attempt to present and analyze such a historical past of prison experience tests the limits of our ability to represent such topics.

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin?" questions Eleanor Roosevelt during her last speech to the United Nations. She answers by pointing to "the small place," to local communities and everyday interactions: "In small places, close to home — so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works."⁶ In the Moroccan context a formative experience that served to forge a growing national will to consciousness of human rights was incarceration. Indeed Abderrahman Benameur, a lawyer and activist with al-Jam'iyya almaghribiyya li-huquq al-insan (Moroccan Association of Human Rights), emphasizes that the Moroccan state has in effect criminalized all manifestations of political activity and thought — all political acts such as meetings, demonstrations, and writing tracts that promote "nonofficial opinions."⁷ Political imprisonment in Morocco is linked with nonauthorized views emerging from *any* political act. In what follows, the history and work of the Moroccan poet Salah El Ouadie, a prisoner of conscience from 1974 to 1984, is presented to exemplify the themes of writing during political incarceration at the time of Morocco's "years of lead," and the ways in which prison writing, as a critical and analytical weapon developed by dissidents against a regime, underpins current human-rights political activism.⁸

Prison Literature as Witness Literature: Salah El Ouadie

Al-Aris ("The Groom") is the misnomer nickname that El Ouadie's torturers assigned to him when they kidnapped him as he was leaving a wedding party. Dressed in tuxedo and bow tie, El Ouadie was forcibly "disappeared" into Derb Moulay Cherif. During the celebrated trial of leftists in Casablanca in 1977, he was condemned to twenty years imprisonment for undermining the security of the Moroccan state. He was subsequently amnestied and released from the Kenitra prison in 1984. Because El Ouadie had no pen or paper in Derb Moulay Cherif, his novel *Al-Aris* is written as a sequence of clandestine letters to his mother from memory. *Al-Aris* was published to great acclaim in 1998.

Dear Mother:

When they lifted the pole into the emptiness, as it happened, it, me, and all my weight carried by my handcuffs and my feet tied with a rope, and it was there, dear Mother, to speak truthfully, I understood I was being tortured. I said to myself, "Be a man," and I started to howl. You know how silent I am, how I hate noise, but the torture was intense. They interrogated me between one slap and another and strokes of the whip about names, concepts, and big words, So-and-so, Such-and-such, democracy, socialism, classes, citizens, countries, revolution. Then they brought an engine that hummed and maneuvered it near my skull and I in the situation could see nothing. I believed at first that this affair concerned an enormous fly. But the story of a fly took wing when they placed the apparatus on my skull, my neck, my limbs, and I felt a shock and jolt travel through my entire body. ... Here was electricity being installed in my body long before reaching the countryside and the villages, even though I made no request to anyone. How can the government plead a lack of means — here they distribute electricity so generously without payment?⁹

As El Ouadie recounts his travails to his mother, his voice is one of Candide-like innocence. Caught in the terrible machinery of torture, the perplexed citizen comes to remonstrate with his torturers with gentle and humorous dignity, as if it were possible to converse with them as reasonable human beings:

They asked me, while I was in the air, to tell the truth and I replied as soon as they stopped hitting me: "It is not required to beat me for me to tell the truth. Lower me and I'll tell you." So they became quiet and I understood they believed me because they lowered me. The strangest thing, Mother, is that when they released me I could no longer feel my body. For the first time in my life I felt that I was a mere thought, that is all, without a body, and all this was as a result of an excess of pain.

El Ouadie is momentarily tossed into a corner to be replaced by another political prisoner whose screams under torture pierce the dark cells and his consciousness. The author is forced to relive a torture session, this time, however, concentrating on what he has heard the police say as opposed to the pain he experienced, thereby permitting him to draw a series of parallels: the first one, equating the treatment of man to that of beasts, he rejects, while the second, between his individual plight and the degradation of the Moroccan population, he embraces:

Here I understood what one of them said during my torture session: "Hit him in the head so as not to injure the skin." I thought they were speaking about sheep. I understood instantly that I was the sheep in question and I understood suddenly why they suspended me. Consider the confusion in their brains between a sheep and a human being. Perhaps they do not see why we should enjoy human rights because they take us for sheep. Ah, I get it. We must convince them that we are human beings, surely then they will stop beating and whipping us. ... Silence served me well because I passed the night hearing groans from all sides around me. I understood I was not alone in this ordeal and other Moroccans were undergoing the same ignominy. This discovery encouraged me to patience and I found consolation in the age-old adage: collective punishment is less painful. My imagination roved, I said to myself, "If this situation extended to all Moroccan citizens, the ordeal is minimized because there would be more people whipped than whippers, then the whip would become impossible, citizens could speak freely about politics and wages." The problem for me would be if the formerly whipped decide to become the whippers, whence their multiplication. As for me, I am, as you know, against the whip wherever its source.

At the novel's end, the reader is told that a fellow political prisoner mailed the twenty-six letters from *Derb Moulay Cherif* only after the author's death. The truth is that El Ouadie is very much alive. He continues to publish poems and articles. He is currently vice-president of Morocco's *al-Muntada al-maghribiya min ajli al-haqiqa wa al-insaf* (Moroccan Forum for Truth and Justice), a nongovernmental association established in 1999 by former victims of torture and repression seeking to establish a Moroccan commission for truth and reconciliation.

Islamist Political Prisoners and Human-Rights Campaigns

"The Power of the Powerless," the legendary 1978 essay by Vaclav Havel that was written and widely disseminated while Havel, currently the president of the Czech Republic, was still a political prisoner, raised an important question about dissident movements within the Soviet bloc that holds true for Moroccan political prisoners: "Why, in conditions where a widespread and arbitrary abuse of power is the rule, is there such a general and spontaneous acceptance of the principle of legality?" Although this "principle of legality," enshrined in various international covenants and instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is enunciated publicly and frequently, Havel notes, it remains an implicit, never discussed, universally agreed upon given.¹⁰ The next section of this essay will discuss the principle of legality as it is found within the institutional structures of human-rights associations and from the perspective of a particular group, the Islamist political prisoners in Morocco.

In doing so it will treat the universality of their prison experience while contributing to a study of the unities and dissimilarities that ground a religious movement's adherence to human-rights activism.

The first Moroccan Islamists arrested as nonviolent prisoners of conscience were called "Group 71," based on the number of those arrested and ultimately tried, on July 31, 1984. They were charged with plotting against the regime, the public display of illegal banners showing antimonarchy calligraphy, clandestine meetings to constitute groups deemed illegal, graffiti hostile to the state, the distribution of treasonous tracts, and the transmission overseas (notably to France) of tracts denouncing the monarchy. On June 20-21 of 1983, during the month of Ramadan, groups in Casablanca had put up posters and painted slogans on the beach, around the town center, and even on highway overpasses, so that the words could be read by passing motorists. These actions, timed to commemorate the second anniversary of the Casablanca "bread riots" of 1981, were defined by Islamists as part of the politics of *tahaddi* (defiance).

Many of the groups' slogans resembled earlier, Marxist graffiti of the 1970s, decrying the lack of democracy and justice, condemning the high cost of living, and calling for freedom of speech. Only when the banners were exhibited in court as part of their trial would specific Islamist slogans, incorporated into trial transcripts, see the light of day — for example, "If religion were installed in the country, there would be justice and human rights." Other banners called King Hassan II *al-taghut*, a Koranic term meaning "tyrant." The government also accused the Islamists, among others, of fomenting the second bread riots, in January 1984, although group members were already held incommunicado in detention by August 1983, six months before those uprisings.¹¹ The year 1984 alone would see more than eighty trials for "*délit d'opinion*" (crimes of opinion), with 1,600 persons tried. The arrests fell most heavily on two groups seemingly at opposite ends of the political spectrum: Islamist activists and the radical left, notably the Marxist-Leninists of the *Ilal-Amam* (*En avant*) movement.¹²

Taken to Derb Moulay Cherif, the Islamists, like so many political prisoners before them, were forcibly "disappeared" and endured savage tortures while awaiting a trial that only took place some seven months later. Accounts of life in Derb Moulay Cherif are increasingly being published in Morocco by victims of the prison who come from all political persuasions.¹³ The trajectories of interrogation and torture for Moroccan political prisoners were in many respects similar, but specific mistreatments were reserved for each group: while prison guards forced Marxist-Leninists to recite the Muslim profession of faith, the *shahada*, Islamists were forbidden from performing ritual ablutions and also from praying aloud, which their torturers defined as a forbidden form of communication among themselves. Ahmed Haou, the acknowledged leader of the Islamist political prisoners in Group 71, recalls his torturers telling him, "If we could put your God through a session of *al-tayyara* [the so-called "airplane" torture, in which the victim is trussed and suspended to be beaten and electroshocked], we would do it."¹⁴

Collectively and by consensus, Islamist prisoners organized a series of committees to negotiate with authorities, to produce communiques to the Moroccan minister of justice and to the outside world, to demand improved conditions, to share food distribution, and to create, as the Marxist-Leninist political prisoners did, a rich cultural life in detention, including ceremonies, religious festivals, sports activities, cultural conferences, and the variety of celebrations that characterize closely knit human societies. They also produced clandestine prison newspapers: in the Ghibla prison in 1984 there was a newspaper called *Bidanciés*, Moroccan slang for "penitentiary," and in the Safi prison in 1985-86 there was *Madrasat Youssef* (Joseph's followers), named to honor the Joseph of the Koran, a potent symbol as an early political prisoner who had addressed a tyrant in these famous words: "Prison is preferable for me than doing what you demand." New models of organization and activism emerged

from the space of prison. Only after 1990 did Amnesty International take up the cases of these prisoners abroad, after long written exchanges with the Islamists, who had to persuade the outside world that they were indeed nonviolent and had been arrested as prisoners of conscience.

Forms of Resistance

The status of "political prisoner" in Morocco is not defined by any laws; instead, it is acquired according to combined pressures exerted internationally and nationally, but principally it emerges as an identity definition from within groups of prisoners themselves, immediately upon their incarceration. The most extreme form of resistance universally available to prisoners to establish the claim to political-prisoner status has been the hunger strike, whether it be partial or, more dangerously, unlimited. The efficacy of the hunger strike depends on wide media coverage, that is, the passage of individual pain into the realm of public knowledge. It is the flip side to the fact of torture undergone by political prisoners. The hunger striker inflicts pain and deprivation on the body as part of collective willed decisions. The striker instigates his or her own physical destruction as an active participant who makes of the human body a weapon and a message projected outward to the world.

Extreme prison deprivations could call for extreme hunger strikes. In 1986 Islamists condemned to death began a hunger strike that lasted more than fortyfive days, with some, like Haou, going into coma on the thirty-third day; force feedings were initiated in the prison hospital on the thirty-seventh day. The strikers demanded and eventually received the right to information, medical care, direct and longer family visits, decent food, and the continuation of their studies. To gain and retain acquired rights, which were often subject to being rescinded by prison authorities, innumerable unlimited hunger strikes took place in the various prisons. When radio, television, newspapers, and books were initially forbidden for Islamist political prisoners in the Safi prison, hunger strikes of twenty-four or seventy-two hours were undertaken. In October 1985, in solidarity with another group, the Group 26 of Marxist-Leninists imprisoned in the same penitentiary, the Islamists joined leftist political prisoners in their hunger strike — one in which three Marxist prisoners, Moustapha Belhouari and the two Doureidi brothers, would die.¹⁵

Unlimited hunger strikes posed theological and spiritual problems for the Islamists. If one were to die as a hunger striker, would one be considered a *shahid* (martyr)? Does *Sharia* (Islamic law) authorize death by hunger strike? For many Islamist political prisoners, the inability to pursue a hunger strike to the point of death weakened its usefulness as a weapon, but there was no escaping its definition as an act of suicide, condemnable (*munkar*) and figuring among the greater sins (*kaba'ir*) leading to hell. Discussions led Islamists to conclude that they needed to find a pretext to stop before jeopardizing their health. Indeed Islamists originally housed together in Kenitra in 1985 were able to profit from the advice of earlier Kenitra hunger strikers: Driss Benzekri, of the Marxist-Leninist group Ilal Amam (imprisoned after trials in Casablanca in 1977), counseled them against hunger strikes except as a last resort, and to avoid unlimited ones but to come out mentally and physically intact. From 1987 on, Islamist political prisoners innovatively embarked on what they called *idrab tanawubi*, or rolling hunger strikes: a group of two to four hunger strikers would fast for twenty-four or forty-eight hours, then would be replaced by another group. The unlimited hunger strike persisted as a physical condition, but instead of being attached to the suffering body of a single prisoner, the state of being on hunger strike rotated among the collective bodies of the group.

If the prison hunger strike to the death prevented Islamists from being considered martyrs, the Moroccan state created martyrs when its courts liberally handed out death sentences, which were not always carried out but did lead to many years of residence on death row. Six of the members of

Group 71, including Haou, were condemned to death. Prisoners embraced the martyrdom of being a political prisoner about to die, a status that resulted from specific political convictions and was validated by the state. When that status was removed — by the reduction of a death sentence to life imprisonment — its loss was keenly felt. Belkacem Hakimi, an Islamist political prisoner currently serving a life sentence in Oukacha prison, wrote in his diary on March 7, 1994,

They say our death sentence has been commuted and perhaps this is valid for me too. I really do not know from where this wave of sadness that invades me comes. I should be happy. But it is completely the opposite. I am sad and distressed. For me the death sentence was like a crown God placed on my head that mattered greatly. Everything was so clear to me: "You are dead, they are all dead." When I was condemned to death, I was free, very free, nothing mattered. Now, how will things unfold? Will fear finally inhabit my heart? Everyone knows they will die. But a death sentence is so concrete. I sensed death. I even touched it. More than that, I dared to befriend it. But now it confirms that it is always stronger. It escapes when I thought I had it. I truly fear it will vanquish me, make me submit to become like those "flocks of the silenced." People have a perverse logic, I would say even "reversed." Some came to congratulate me. Don't they know that this death sentence was God's promise to me that I have vanquished death forever, that I would "die" a martyr? Does this promise still hold? That's what I fear most.¹⁶

In effect the death sentence was enlisted as the supreme example, the sign of a proffered martyrdom in the world to come while remaining a fundamental attribute of, even a paradoxical metaphor for, day-to-day resistance against the prison world and the struggle to remain human and alive.

Postdetention Activism

By the late 1990s, all of the leftists and many Islamist political prisoners benefited from royal amnesties.¹⁷ In the post-1999, post-Hassan II "new era" (*ahd jadid*), writings by El Ouadie and Haou, and their performances and political activism on behalf of the Moroccan Forum for Truth and Justice, seem to herald a different Morocco, willing to begin addressing the issue of a state's acknowledged crimes against its own citizens: decades of illegal detention, forcible disappearance, and torture.¹⁸

In 1998, in the last years of the reign of King Hassan II, a royally appointed and mandated Conseil Consultatif des Droits de l'Homme (Advisory council on human rights) began to hold meetings to discuss the "disappeared." The Conseil Consultatif and its president, Driss Dahak, issued a press release establishing a list of 112 people: 56 of these were declared dead with no accompanying information, the others were described as having disappeared in unknown situations, and to be presumed either dead or living abroad or in Morocco. While these figures are absurdly low, the memorandum implicitly confirmed the state's official recognition of the fact of forcible disappearance. On the ascension of King Mohammed VI to the throne, in 1999, the new king's first, televised speech from the throne confirmed his commitment to establish the rule of law, to safeguard human rights and individual and collective liberties, and to institute a constitutional monarchy, multipartyism, economic liberalism, and policies of regionalism and decentralization. On August 17, 1999, King Mohammed ordered the Conseil Consultatif to activate an independent indemnity commission with a mandate, to expire midnight on December 31 of that year, to indemnify former victims of forcible disappearance and arbitrary detention. The council's bulletin describing the procedures, the mandate, and the membership of this indemnity commission was widely criticized by Morocco's community of victims and human-rights activists, two groups with overlapping memberships: the council had predetermined the number of "disappeared," and, most outrageously, had granted immunity to torturers and to all those responsible for a state apparatus of secret detention centers, illegal detention, (*garde-à-vue*), unfair trials, and

the systematic practice of torture in police stations and prisons. By the end of the year, on the December 31 deadline set by the council for filing claims against the state, only 5,819 dossiers demanding damages had been submitted to the indemnity commission.

Human-rights violations evoke several national responses: create a governmental organ intended to record the truth about past history; declare an amnesty, or prosecute those responsible, or do both; arrange indemnities for the victims and their dependents by means of official rehabilitation and material compensation. A Chilean national commission on truth and reconciliation formed in 1990 extensively documented violations but had no authority to judge those responsible. In Argentina, a national commission on disappeared persons, established in 1983, published its findings in *Nunca más* (Never again), listing almost 9,000 unsolved "disappearances" along with charts of secret detention centers; the results included over 1,000 cases in Argentine civilian courts. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission of 1996, chaired by Bishop Desmond Tutu, created several subgroups to promote national reconciliation: a Committee on Violations of Human Rights to identify victims and review compensation proposals, a Committee on Amnesty to grant amnesty or indemnities, and a Committee on Compensation and Rehabilitation to provide victims of human-rights violations with a public forum to narrate what befell them. South African victims of serious human-rights violations also have the right to file a request for compensation. It was South African policy to grant amnesty if information was fully disclosed about political acts, defined as acts committed by a political organization or a member of the security troops within the framework of obligations and authorities.¹⁹

The Moroccan indemnity commission, by contrast, began at the end, with indemnities, rather than at the beginning, with information seeking, where any genuine truth commission begins. Indemnity as conceived by the Moroccan Conseil Consultatif implicitly recognizes illegal state practices. Compensation suggests something compensatable. In Morocco, the problem of past humanrights violations is posed in material terms only, meaning that the only way for victims to be acknowledged is for them to file claims requesting indemnification. In Morocco, there are no public hearings and no attempts to provide the nation with an account of the past. Blanket amnesties were declared as part of the creation of the indemnity commission. An astounding example of a Moroccan official remaining in office despite much newspaper coverage of his misdeeds is Mahmoud Archane, former police officer and torturer at the Rabat Commissariat, and currently a member of parliament.²⁰ In Morocco, no one has been tried, crimes are considered to be unproven, and no Moroccan judge has proceeded to prosecution.

Even in situations in which truth and reconciliation processes are available, amnesty is hotly debated. In Moroccan practice, impunity is the rule for crimes that perpetrators have committed by order of governments or other authorities. Individuals often go unprosecuted because mitigating circumstances are offered, such as "following orders." Crimes are subject to a statute of limitations — in Morocco, twenty years. Meanwhile international instruments of human rights, though ratified, were not in force until recently in the country.

The response to the creation of a Moroccan indemnity commission in August 1999 was immediate. Groups of former political prisoners and humanrights activists formed the Moroccan Forum for Truth and Justice, electing a thirteen-member executive committee whose ten men and three women together represent a history of more than 200 mass political trials and tens of thousands of forcible disappearances. The Forum's executive committee includes not only leftists such as Benzekri (president) and El Ouadie (vice-president) but Islamists such as Haou (vice-treasurer).

The Forum's recommendations include public rehabilitation of victims, restitution of the remains of "disappeared" persons and the provision of death certificates for them so that they can be reburied,

monetary benefits to victims and relatives, and medical care, education, and shelter for all those involved. According to the Forum, the state is obliged to recognize individual suffering by issuing extensive official reports with attention to individual cases. Getting to the truth about past abuses requires cooperation from state officials, various police forces, and ministries. So far, unfortunately, none of these has been prepared to participate or cooperate. Even the number of victims is unknown. By June 2000, the Forum had established a standard form to be sent to everyone who had suffered from arbitrary repression, or to those competent to write on behalf of the dead, the disappeared, or others unable to write themselves.

In relation to other national efforts, the Moroccan approach is so far the most underdeveloped and the least serious.²¹ Both Chad and South Africa have changed regimes, a departure that allows for a clearer treatment of past violations. In Morocco the regime has not changed and is intent upon transforming itself from the inside, trying to become democratic while still retaining control — a process that parallels its approach to human rights. Difficulties initially arose when King Hassan II created the Conseil Consultatif as a nonindependent body with no clear mandate or procedures. The lack of change in Morocco underscores a fundamental paradox: the country is paying indemnities, and paying off perpetrators, without acknowledging state crimes.

Reconciliation is a process. Even if the Moroccan authorities were to release information to help establish an official report on the past, the punishment of perpetrators might not be an outcome. Moroccan human-rights activists have demonstrated the will to move toward something resembling a truth commission for Morocco. The Conseil Consultatif's bulletin of early 1998 announcing a mere 112 "disappeared" in effect helped to launch the Moroccan Forum, and could still serve as a point of departure for a genuine truth commission. A working group of the Conseil Consultatif, the Commission de la Verification de l'Enquete (Commission of verification of the inquiry), was established in 1998. The original inquiry that identified only 112 "disappeared" could be redone, and the council's mandate and powers could be expanded. In this way a continuity with the previous regime of King Hassan II, who established the Conseil Consultatif and its working groups, could be maintained. King Mohammed VI has made no public criticism of his father (in fact Moroccan law prohibits any negative commentary on members of the royal family, present and past).

In April 2000, six months after the establishment of the Moroccan Forum for Truth and Justice, a group of Islamist former political prisoners created another human-rights organization, Tajammu' min ajli karamati al-insan (Assembly for human dignity), known by its acronym, "Tamkine," which means "strengthening," "consolidation," "enablement."²² (The founders of Tamkine were members of the Forum, and remained so, maintaining its role as an umbrella human-rights group uniting all political prisoners.) Despite Moroccan laws requiring nongovernmental organizations to register with both the prefecture and the tribunal, Tamkine has been unable to obtain official authorization, and like many other associations must operate on the border between illegality and self-censorship.

The fact that people who have experienced torture, bogus trials, and long years of prison for their ideas have subsequently transformed this "gift" of pain and imprisonment into committed human-rights work is a somewhat astounding development that has been repeated country by country and in case after case. A similar intellectual trajectory has been followed by the Tunisian Islamists of the Mouvement de la tendance islamiste, or MTI, which in 1981-82 began to speak of human rights as part of its political platform. As documented by Mohamed Karem in his Ph.D. thesis, three main elements contribute to a recognition of the diversity of opinion and liberty of expression among certain Tunisian Islamists: "The repression that fell on MTI activists, the support of the Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH) because they defended them and denounced this repression, and finally the internal debates within the movement on questions of referents, identity, strategy, and kinds of actions

to adopt.”²³ Beginning in the 1970s but more clearly in the 1980s, Morocco has seen the emergence of several human-rights organizations and in fact of a culture of human rights rooted in the struggles since independence to free the political prisoners who have peopled the kingdom’s secret torture centers, commissariats, and tribunals.²⁴

No matter where Islamist political prisoners locate themselves on the theoretical spectrum, from a movement to “Westernize” Islamists or to “Islamize” human-rights discourse, their responses are practical and organizational, given that thirty-six remain incarcerated. Tamkine is one of the latest initiatives. Islamist political prisoners can participate in several social, political, and religious movements: first, as activists in an international human-rights movement; second, as political prisoners belonging to an ancient cross-cultural collectivity of victims of abusive regimes; and third, as Islamists participating in an Arabo-Muslim Islamist movement. From the 1990s on, the Moroccan Islamist human-rights movement, born during particular historical circumstances and in response to gross human-rights violations, has faced a double struggle. First, members of Tamkine and the nonsectarian Moroccan Forum for Truth and Justice see their tasks as addressing and educating those within their own Islamist movements who may perceive human rights as an alien, Western, secular dogma imposed from outside to mask a rapacious economic imperialism. At the same time, the Moroccan Islamist human-rights movement confronts Moroccan human-rights activists who often may have emerged from the secular left, and some of whom may view Islamists as enemies of a universalist discourse of the rule of law promoting democracy and equal rights for women. In Morocco there is room for, if not a perceived need for, yet another human-rights association, one that continues to campaign in support of all Islamist political prisoners. Haou advances reason (*‘aql*) and the possibilities of reinterpreting existing sacred law (*ijtihad*) as modalities in which to work toward changing the idea that human rights are Western notions; Islam too, he observes, has its referents.

I have offered no analysis here of the large body of complex discourses on religion, politics, and human rights produced either by Muslim or Marxist thinkers, many of whom serve as sources and reference points for political prisoners.²⁵ Rather, what has been presented is the evolution of human rights in its lived context, mainly the interaction of the world of political prisoners and the Morocco they found once liberated from prison. Abdellah Lamrani, a member of Group 71 and a lawyer defending Islamist political prisoners, makes explicit the public connection between the fate of all political prisoners and the campaign for human rights: “Political prisoners are like wood. When they start to burn, the machinery of human rights turns.”²⁶ Islamist political prisoners have produced a human-rights discourse that is modern in spirit. It is as inclusive as possible of diverse Moroccan political trends; to take Haou’s approach, what is needed is a minimum platform around which Islamists and others can unite. In effect, since no single political party or bloc can achieve the rule of law, everyone is needed to solve Morocco’s numerous, crushing problems. Moroccans interested in human rights have the will to move toward them and have identified several ways to produce change. Does the Moroccan state, on the other hand, have a desire for human rights, and an interest in finding a way toward them?

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- 4 See my book *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), especially chapter 5.
- 5 Carolyn Forché, *Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), p. 31.
- 6 Eleanor Roosevelt, quoted in Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001), pp. 239-40.
- 7 Abderrahman Benameur, "Quelques remarques sur la détention politique," *Attadamoun* (Rabat), no. 2 (February 1982): 3-4, and "Man huwa al-mu'ataqil al-siyasi?" *Attadamoun*, no. 3 (February 1983): 8-9.
- 8 This thesis is developed in Barbara Harlow, *Barred: Women, Writing, and Political Detention* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1992).
- 9 This and the following passages from Salah El Ouadie, *Al-Aris* (Casablanca: Dar al-Najah, 1998), come from a translation from the Arabic by the present author in Evelyn Early and Donna Lee Bowen, *Everyday Life in the Modern Muslim Middle East* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001). I thank Latifa El-Morabidine, Ahmed Jebari, Ahmed Goughrabou, and Mustafa Kamal for their advice on the translation.
- 10 See Vaclav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," *Open Letters: Selected Writings 1965-1990* (New York: Vintage, 1992), pp. 181-82.
- 11 See Ahmed Haou, "al-Mahkama" (The trial), *al-Jisr* (Rabat), no. 20 (July 1994): 13.
- 12 See Jean-Claude Santucci, "Chronique marocaine," *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* (Valbonne: Ed. CNRS, 1985), pp. 650-52. Some of those charged had no political connections to either movement, including Said Boudiaf, seventeen years old when he was arrested in Oujda, who spent five years in prison because of the political activities of his brother, Mohammed Boudiaf; Abdellah Fahd, who was sentenced to twenty years, and served thirteen, because he was unlucky enough to have slept over at the house of a friend who was arrested; Abderazzak Trigui, not even an Islamist, who was arrested while visiting a friend in the neighborhood and served fifteen years; and numerous individuals who were condemned to four years in prison for the crime of "nondenunciation" of already arrested family members.

- 13** See, for example, Abdelkader Chaoui, *Kana wa Akhaouatuha*, 1986 (first ed. seized, second ed. Rabat: Al-Ghad, 1999); Abdellatif Laabi, *Le Chemin des ordalies* (Paris: Denoël, 1982, republished in Morocco as *Le Fou de l'espoir* (Casablanca: Eddif, 2000); and "Rahal" (a pseudonym), *Dans les entrailles de ma patrie* (Paris, c. 1982), republished under the author's own name, Abdelaziz Mouride, as *On affame bien les rats* (Casablanca: Tank Editions, 2000).
- 14** Ahmed Haou, interviews with the author, Rabat, 1999-2000.
- 15** See Hélène Jaffé, "Aux cotés des victimes de la répression," *Droits de l'Homme et violences au Maghreb et en Europe* (Paris: Publication Hourriya/Liberté, 1997), pp. 78-81.
- 16** Belkacem Hakimi, prison diary, Monday, March 7, 1994/24 Ramadan. Translated from Arabic to French by Belkacem Hakimi, reproduced by permission of author. English translation from the French by Susan Slyomovics. See also Hakimi, "Bayni wa-bayn al-mawt," *al-Mishkat*, November—December 1988, pp. 108-9, and Hakimi, "Lettre à Aragon ... d'un homme à mourir," *L'Infini*, no. 23 (1997): 62.
- 17** As of this writing, thirty-six Islamists claiming the status of political prisoner are still serving their sentences in Moroccan prisons, according to Lajnat al-Wafaa, founded on March 5, 2000, as an organization uniting former Islamist political prisoners. They belong to different organizations and were tried in a variety of political trials. For a complete list, see the Lajnat al-Wafaa communiqué *La'iha al-mu'ataqalin al-siyasiyyin al-islamiyyin* (March 5, 2000), published in *al-Sahifa* (Casablanca), March 25-31, 2000, p. 8.
- 18** By the 1990s, however, changes in the laws and in their application formally and legally recount the history of the treatment of political prisoners in Morocco. In a famous and much quoted speech delivered on July 8, 1994, King Hassan II promised "to turn the page definitively" and to "resolve the pressing issue of political prisoners." See Driss Basri, Michel Rousset, and Georges Vedel, *Le Maroc et les droits de l'Homme* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994), p. vii. Four years earlier, on March 8, 1990, the king had created a royal advisory council on human rights; in 1993, a new ministry of human rights had been formed; on June 21, 1993, Morocco had ratified the United Nations Convention against Torture (though this change was not in force until it was published, on December 16, 1996, in the *Bulletin Officiel*); in 1996, revisions to the Moroccan penal code had limited *garde-à-vue* — *incommunicado detention*, in the terms of Anglo-American law (Morocco has no *habeas corpus*) — to forty-eight hours, with one twenty-four-hour extension allowed at the prosecutor's discretion (although in cases of state security, the rubric under which political prisoners were tried, the *garde-à-vue* period remained ninety-six hours, with possible extensions by the prosecutor); and finally, in 1998, the ministry of justice and the prison administration had implemented a law that made autopsies routine for any death occurring in detention.
- 19** See John Borneman, *Settling Accounts: Violence, Justice and Accountability in Post-Socialist Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), and Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998).
- 20** Articles about Ahmed Jaouhar, who names Archane as his torturer, are included in the January 4-10, 1999, issue of the Arabic-language weekly *al-Sahifa*. They are preceded by an interview and cover story in which Archane denies all such charges.
- 21** See Mohamed Moustaid, "L'Approche marocain est la moins réfléchie," *Le Journal* (Casablanca),

December 25-31, 1999.

- 22** Communiqué, Tajammu' min ajli karamati al-insan (Tamkine), Balagh min al-Jami'a al-huquqiyah al-wataniya (Casablanca), May 12, 2000.
- 23** Mohammed Karem, "La Notion des droits de l'Homme au Maghreb," Ph.D. diss., Université d'Aix-Marseille, 1991, P. 231.
- 24** For excellent histories of the human-rights movement in Morocco, see Ann Elisabeth Mayer, *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics* (3rd ed., Boulder: Westview Press, 1999); Susan Waltz, "Making Waves: The Political Impact of Human Rights Groups in North Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), no. 20 (1991): 481-504, and *Human Rights and Reform: Changing the Face of North African Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and Marguerite Missoffe-Rollinde, "De l'unanisme nationaliste au concept de citoyenneté. Le militant(e) marocain(e) des droits de l'Homme," Ph.D. diss., Université Paris VIII, 2000, 2 vols.
- 25** The bibliography is immense, including the Mayer, Waltz, and Missoffe-Rollinde works cited above; the large corpus of writings by Abdullah An-Na'im; Mohamed Moaquit, "Le Mouvement des droits de l'Homme au Maroc: Du Makhzen à l'état de droit," *Annuaire de l'Afrique de Nord* (Valbonne: Ed. CNRS, 1995), pp. 271-87; and articles in Basri, Rousset, and Vedel, *Le Maroc et les droits de l'Homme*.
- 26** Abdellah Lamrani, interview with the author, Casablanca, March 2000.