



A Witness account : **El Ouali El Qadmi**,  
Son of retired Aloua Qadmi and Jmiaa Mohamed

We are a family comprised of nine children ( 6 girls and 3 boys) of which I am the sixth child.

I spent my childhood in Assa, an area which heavily contested the Moroccan colonisation process, here I was educated not to ply, to have backbone and develop strength of character. I had a happy childhood. I played football with my friends, we often went off into the desert together as a family or with friends, we left the town together for a week to escape in the Springtime where we hunted hares with a knotted rope, fought throwing mudpies and delicious meals prepared over a camp fire.

I became aware of colonial oppression around the age of twelve or thirteen years.

One day I questioned Souelma, my maternal grandmother about her son Hassana, who I didn't know. She told me the life story of my father's brother who left in 1985 to rejoin the Saharian armies fight. He died in combat in 1989. I was present when the police descended on the family home, they searched everywhere looking for evidence to verify if we had received anything from abroad due to my uncle Mohamed M'Barek Mouloud's presence in France as a militant activist for the Saharian cause.

During the academic year 2001/ 2002 I started participating in resistance demonstrations by organising events with the students. We formed a group of between seven and eight students, we wrote leaflets on pieces of paper that we discreetly distributed through doors.

On national occasions we painted Saharian flags on papers which we stuck on the walls and doors of garages. We took the same peaceful actions when any demonstrations were oppressed in the occupied territory of Southern Morocco. At school I was a good student. I studied at Assa secondary school then Zac college where I received my BAC.

On the 22nd May 2005, aged twenty in Laayounne I participated at the first widescale pacifist Intafada demonstration in Western Sahara. We organised a sit-in in front of the civil prison to demonstrate the deplorable conditions of detained prisoners and to prevent the eventual transfer of some of them to a prison in Agadir, an extra pain which separated them a further 700KM from their families.

The next day with friends we went to rejoin hundreds of other demonstrators along Smara Avenue that the Saharians renamed "Avenue Sidi Mohamed Daddach" in the name of the great resistant who was condemned to death under Hassan II. Sidi Mohamed Daddach left prison after 24 years following a long series of hunger strikes and international solidarity actions. We brandished the RASD flags, banners and chanted slogans hostile to the Moroccan colonisation forcefully demanding Western Sahara's Independence.

We were surrounded by police forces, around the end of the afternoon, the order was given to charge the demonstrators. They reacted with violence to break up the people. Some of my friends were stopped and incarcerated. Many people were hurt. I managed to escape the police unscathed, this experience enabled me to overcome my sense of fear.

Then into July we continued to demonstrate, once again I escaped police repression, I was determined and proud of my commitment. This convinced me to re-double my efforts to obtain the BAC which I hence achieved.

At the beginning of the university year 2005/2006 I went to study Sociology at the Juridical Science Faculty, economic and social of Marrakesh where I was immediately integrated into the network of Saharian students here I met hardened activists, Pro Polisaria in the heart of the Saharian students movement. Our active militants concentrated on union demands related to students rights to obtain grants, lodgings, transport tickets and political activities related to Saharian rights to autonomy and to denounce all forms of impingement to human rights and fundamental liberties.

Sometimes we took common action in the administration direction with the National Union of Moroccan Students, an organisation where there were numerous Marxists, sometimes they were separated.

When we took political action on the rights of Saharian people to autonomy, a part of the Moroccan left wing, the Berbers Cultural Movement Amazigh, the PDG ( Islamists) Adl Ihssan ( Justice in Progress) aggressed us.

We organised numerous pacifist sit-ins at Moroccan universities. The Saharian students from Agadir, Marrakesh, Casablanca and Rabat united with the reprimanded demonstrators in the occupied territories.

Spring 2008, the university restaurant served stale meals which led to the food poisoning intoxication of forty students. The Saharian students and students from the Moroccan extreme left wing went on strike from their studies for almost one month, everyday from morning to evening we were in the university and after 6pm we reassembled at the university premises to prepare ourselves for the days ahead. I was highly active in these activities, I intervened at these meetings and became the voice for the Saharian students, from this position I acted as the liaison between the students and the organisation " The Democratic Way".

On the 14th May 2008 we organised a large demonstration at the heart of the university campus. Around 5:30pm the police made a violent intervention to disperse us. We resisted but more reinforcements came with the objective to attack and break us up. We could no longer resist, we were dispersed and tried desperately to find a safe place. The police first of all headed towards building A which was occupied by the students where they ransacked the rooms, beat up the girls, many were hurt, they stole their lap top computers and precious personal possessions. Along with my friends we sought refuge in Building B and climbed up to the fourth floor where my room was. I didn't have time to put my key in the lock before I was set upon by five to six uniformed policemen. Whilst the others ran after my friends, they unleashed themselves upon me as if upon an animal to slaughter. They started to kick and thump me and beat me with a truncheon. Then threw me out the window like a discarded object. I must have fallen on my hands as my left broke in two along with several broken cervical I passed out. I regained conscience at Tofail hospital Marrakesh. I came round without being woken. At 23 years I had become a tetraplegic. I have suffered physically, emotionally and psychologically seeing my families' reaction to my suffering. I screamed and cried in silence. I begged the nurses to give me sleeping tablets so I wouldn't awake to see the physical damage to my lifeless limbs. During these times of great distress I often prayed to God to put an end to my days so the suffering would cease and to not see my parents crying for hours like children. In spite of all I'd gone through the police still didn't leave me alone the day to day attention and the help brought to me through the network the combat against the Moroccan occupation and various organisations in defence of human rights. The more the militants and activists became interested in my case the more the police attempted to menace, threaten and intimidate me into terminating all media attention which could possibly damage Morocco's image and reputation. When I witnessed to what had happened to me and alerted international public opinion, the police became even more threatening towards both me and my close relatives. Not wishing to further distress my parents who were concerned about more persecution, I decided to leave the country and seek refuge in Europe.

It took many long months to accept myself as I find myself today completely dismembered, but I have decided to consecrate the rest of my life to my people's cause with the means I possess: My Voice.

I want to state that other students have been subjected to the same mistreatment as me. One of them Abdelhebir Bahi, a law student is also paralysed and another , Moroccan student from the town of Demnaa is dead. Hundreds of students were stopped those days.

Today El Ouali el Qadmio has obtained the statute of political refugee in France. He is under the care of Meulan- Les- Mureaux for numerous deep scars and ulcers he has on his body due to the fact he cannot leave a sleeping position. The Doctors envisage undertaking a re-education of his upper limbs. El Ouali is surrounded by the Saharian community. His mother has come to be beside him, but she is tortured by the fact that her aging husband remains at the family home and is today seriously ill and bedridden. She hopes to find an administrative solution to enable her to be alternatively near both her son and husband.

Mureaux, 1st December 2012

Witness Michèle DECASTER  
Translated from Hassania by Boudjema LAAOUISSID  
Translated into English by Jennifer LAARAIBI

