

The absent perpetrators: Morocco's failed accountability, Tazmamart literature and the survivors' testimony for their jailers (1973-1991)

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Violence: An international journal
2020, Vol. 1(1) 80–101
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DOI: 10.1177/2633002420904672
journals.sagepub.com/home/vio



Abstract

The Moroccan Years of Lead (1956–1999) are an important case for the investigation of testimonial literature's potential to undermine impunity. Both survivors and families of the victims of this dark period of state-mandated violations of human rights have continuously demanded truth, justice, and state apology for the crimes it committed against them. Nevertheless, these demands were not met, even with the establishment of the Arbitration Commission in 1999 and the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (ERC) in 2004. In this article, I draw on writings of survivors of Tazmamart secret prison (1973–1991) to argue that their testimonial literature bears witness in lieu of perpetrators. Because the ERC was not mandated to investigate perpetrators, testimonial literature is the only place where we can gain knowledge about them and their violations of human rights. Indeed, Tazmamart survivors' testimonial literature provides a unique window through which readers can access the hidden and complex underworld of the perpetrators of state violence in Tazmamart prison camp. I first discuss the implications of the ERC's failure to report on perpetrators' crimes, then analyze several testimonial books to reveal how perpetrators are eventually held accountable in these works.

Keywords

Ahmed Dlimi, Ahmed Marzouki, Equity and Reconciliation Commission, Hassan II, Mohamed Raïss, Morocco, perpetrators, Salah Hachad, Tazmamart, testimonial literature

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Perpetrators, meaning people who are implicated in masterminding or executing criminal acts, usually resort to silence to deprive their victims of any sense of justice. In choosing silence, not only do perpetrators of political violence prevent their names from being circulated in the public arena, but they also create the conditions for the deniability of their acts. From perpetrators of the Nazi pogroms in Germany to those who committed political violence in apartheid South Africa, perpetrators found power in silence (Assmann, 2016: 148). However, protection through silence becomes short-lived when victims start speaking under new political circumstances. When victims bring their testimonies forward, perpetrators can either tell a counter-story to rebut the victims' narratives, deny the facts, continue to shield themselves in silence, or, very rarely, admit guilt and express regret about what happened (Assmann, 2016: 148). The examination of testimonies of Moroccan survivors of state violence during the Years of Lead (1956–1999) demonstrates that victims deploy their testimonies to hold their victimizers accountable. In this article, I draw on Tazmamart survivors' testimonial literature to argue that the survivors speak both for themselves and the perpetrators in this infamous prison camp in which they were held between 1973 and 1991.¹ Namesake of a military garrison in southeast Morocco, Tazmamart was a secret jail where the Moroccan state held dozens of soldiers found guilty for their involvement in the coups d'état against King Hassan II in 1971 and 1972. Although Moroccan perpetrators of state violence may have been spared retributive justice, the archivization of their actions in survivors' testimonial literature thrusts the details of their wrongdoing into future history. In fact, by registering the wrongs torturers did, testimonial literature is a space for a forward-looking accountability, beyond the political and consensual limits of both retributive and transitional justice.

Moroccan Years of Lead were a period of state-mandated violence. Specifically, arbitrary detention and forced disappearance were prevalent during the four decades that spanned Morocco's independence in 1956 to the passing of King Hassan II in 1999 (Hay'at al-Inṣāf wal-muṣālaḥa, 2006a: 18, 2006b: 51–53). The bloody Rif War (1959), the repression of the Marxist-Leninist activists (1972–1990), the disappearance of soldiers and civilians to multiple secret prisons (1973–1991), the mistreatment of Islamist detainees, and the brutal clampdown on social movements from the 1960s to the early 1990s were some of the notorious examples of this state-sponsored violence (Hay'at al-Inṣāf wal-muṣālaḥa, 2006b: 53–117). As a result of this violence, not only did authoritarianism impact Moroccans' relationship with the state, but it had a detrimental effect on spatial development, art and culture, and education (El Guabli, 2019; Fakihani, 2005). Within this multilayered legacy of the Years of Lead, Tazmamart prisoners stand out as a group that experienced state violence in its cruelest manifestations, and their written works have revealed crucial details about perpetrators' behavior when they were assured of total impunity (Bourequat, 1993: 194).

Tazmamart secret prison was active between 1973 and 1991. Established to make “disappear” 58 soldiers and officers who participated in the two coups d'état against King Hassan II in 1971 and 1972, Tazmamart also hosted 3 Franco-Tunisian-Moroccan civilians, known as the Bourequat brothers, as well as at least 12 sub-Saharan African imprisoned soldiers and 1 individual named Miloudi Seddik (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 123–127; Al-Rāys, 2001: 105). Made of two *'anābir* (warehouses), which the military transformed into 29 makeshift cells each, this prison housed about 74 known prisoners during its



18 years of operation. By sheer coincidence, *al-'anbar al-awal* (hangar 1) and *al-'anbar al-thānī* (hangar 2) were located on an uneven terrain, which made a significant difference between the death toll in each hangar (El Guabli, 2014: 179). *Al-anbar al-awal* was built above the watercourse, thus lessening the impact of rainwater and humidity on the prisoners, whereas *al-'anbar al-thānī* was located in a puddle-prone area, which exposed the prisoners to flooding and dampness. Midhat René Bourequat (1993), a survivor of hangar 2, alludes to this fact in writing that “[t]he glacial humidity of the harsh winters, which descended from the snowy peaks of the Atlas Mountains, penetrated my bones and joints, glutting them with pain and rheumatism”² (p. 220). Both topography and human factors favored the survival of the biggest number of prisoners in *al-'anbar al-awal*. In addition to its elevation, *al-'anbar al-awal* had some rich prisoners—among the officers from the failed coup d’état—who took advantage of the guards’ venality to survive their ordeal. Fifteen of the 20 officers disappeared in Tazmamart were jailed in hanger 1, which meant that they had more resources to bribe their guards to provide them with the means to resist imprisonment (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 73; Bourequat, 1993: 203). As a result, 7 deaths were registered in *al-'anbar al-awal* whereas 23 prisoners perished in *al-'anbar al-thānī* (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 73; Chberreq, 2014: 22).

Tazmamart survivors have authored a very rich testimonial literature. Published in the form of memoirs and autobiographies, this literature reconstructs its authors’ experiences before and after their lengthy detention in Tazmamart. Although the prisoners were held in the same military base, their solitary confinement emerges differently in their writings strategies and narratological choices. For instance, while Muḥammad al-Rāys’ omniscient narrator has included everything he had experienced and heard about Tazmamart, his colleagues Aḥmad al-Marzūqī, Aziz BineBine, and Driss Chberreq used limited narrators who focused only on recounting Tazmamart as they lived it from within their cells (El Guabli, 2017: 127; Al-Marzūqī in Ḥuzal, 2008: 33–34). Like every reconstruction of past events that relies on memory, survivors’ narratives require important nuances about truth and perspective. Testimony’s accuracy is impacted by temporal distance, spatial confinement, forgetting, and memory’s malleability. However, the cross-examination of the different writings about Tazmamart demonstrates the veracity of most accounts about the ignominious cruelties their authors endured.

Drawing on Aḥmad al-Marzūqī’s memoir *Tazmamārt: al-Zinzāna raqm 10* [Tazmamart: Cell 10], Muḥammad al-Rāys’ memoir *Min skhirāt ilā Tazmamart: Tadkhrat dhahāb wa iyyāb ilā al-jaḥīm* [From Skhirat to Tazmamart: A roundtrip to hell], Aziz BineBine’s *Tazmamort: récit* [Tazmamort: A narrative], Midhat René Bourequat’s *MORT VIVANT: témoignage, Rabat 1973–Paris 1992* [Living dead: A testimony, Rabat 1973–Paris 1992], Driss T. Chberreq’s *Le Train fou: mémoires d’un rescapé de Tazmamart, 10 juillet 1971 au 29 octobre 1991* [The mad train: Memoirs of a survivor of Tazmamart, July 10, 1971 to October 29, 1991], and Abdelhak Serhane’s *Kabazal. Les emmurés de Tazmamart : mémoires de Salah et Aïda Hachad* [Kabazal. The prisoners of Tazmamart: Memoirs of Salah and Aïda Hachad], I examine how these testimonial works presciently construct the perpetrators’ characters in order to hold them accountable in narratives, against the background of the Arbitration Commission and the Equity and Reconciliation Commission’s (ERC) disregard of individual responsibility.



Through Tazmamart survivors' testimonial literature we gain critical insights into the perpetrators' complex world in this secret jail. These insights would not have been possible without the long-term existence of Tazmamart. The fact that guards and prisoners spent almost two decades together gave the would-be survivors a rare opportunity to know their jailers' mental, financial, and psychological states. This deep understanding of their torturers allowed the survivors to occupy the tricky position of being both victims of these jailers and the ones who produce discourse about them (Al-Marzūqī, 2003; Al-Rāys, 2001; Chberreq, 2014; Serhane, 2004). Indeed, Tazmamart survivors' writings portray the complex combination of perpetrators' cruelty, venality, empathy, and even weakness. Instead of depicting a homogeneous group of coldblooded killers, Tazmamart survivors' testimonial literature reveals the many shades of gray that permeate the perpetrators' world.

The Equity and Reconciliation Commission (ERC): A transitional justice process without perpetrators

The perpetrators' fate posed a major problem in the Moroccan reconciliation process between 2004 and 2005. The Moroccan human rights movement called for holding them accountable for the crimes they committed during their mandate (Nabīl, 2006: 18). This way, the demand to have the Moroccan state issue an apology for its crimes against its citizens went hand in hand with bringing to justice those responsible for forced disappearance and arbitrary detention (Berrada, 2001; Nabīl, 2006: 18). The Moroccan Forum for Truth and Justice (FMVJ), the organization created in 1999 to represent the victims of the state, agreed with other human rights organizations that only a state apology and the prosecution of the perpetrators of state violence could help resolve the legacy of the Years of Lead (Hay'at al-Inṣāf wal-muṣālaḥa, 2006b: 33). However, the establishment of the *Instance d'arbitrage indépendante pour l'indemnisation des préjudices matériels et moraux subis par les victimes de la disparition et de la détention arbitraire et leurs ayants droit* (the Arbitration Commission previously mentioned; Al-Majlis al-Istishārī li-Ḥuqūq al-Insān, 2010: 16) and the ERC (2004) failed to settle the issue of accountability. Neither commission was empowered to establish individual responsibility for human rights violations. This, however, did not deter Moroccan civil society from insisting on perpetrators' accountability as a *conditio sine qua non* for reconciliation.

The Arbitration Commission was established by the king in 1999 to disburse financial reparations to the victims, that is, the survivors and their families, as well as the heirs of the deceased. Recommended by the *Conseil Consultatif des Droits de l'Homme* (CCDH) on 2 April 1999 in a letter to King Hassan II, the Arbitration Commission was conceived as a legal tool to implement the monarch's benevolence toward his subjects in preserving their dignity (Al-Majlis al-Istishārī li-Ḥuqūq al-Insān, 2010: 18). Because of its very technical mission, the CCDH proposed that the Arbitration Commission be constituted of "members of the council (CCDH), justices from the High Council of Justice, and representatives of the Ministries of Justice and Interior, and it be chaired by a judge from the High Council of Justice" (Al-Majlis al-Istishārī li-Ḥuqūq al-Insān, 2010: 18). The Arbitration Commission was empowered to seek the "assistance of experts whenever it



deemed it necessary to define the elements of compensation and its amount” (Al-Majlis al-Istishārī li-Ḥuqūq al-Insān, 2010: 18). The CCDH specifically indicated that the Arbitration Commission had the mission to “assess the amount of compensation for those who deserve it as a result of forced disappearance in a way that covers all material and moral damages” (Al-Majlis al-Istishārī li-Ḥuqūq al-Insān, 2010: 19). However, the detractors of the Arbitration Commission accused those behind it of granting perpetrators impunity in exchange for money paid to the victims and their survivors (Berrada, 2001: 168). Moreover, the Arbitration Commission’s purely financial and legalistic approach led to its boycott by an important number of former victims for whom financial reparation could only be meaningful if it was accompanied by holding individuals accountable for their crimes.³

The Arbitration Commission’s limited success led to the establishment of the ERC. Partly in response to the demands of Moroccan human rights associations and survivors’ rejection of the Arbitration Commission’s work, King Mohammed VI established the ERC on 7th January 2004 (Hay’at al-Inṣāf wal-muṣālaḥa, 2006a: 16). Similarly to the Arbitration Commission, the CCDH made a recommendation to the king to establish this new commission in order to resolve the violent legacies of the Years of Lead (1956–1999) (Al-Jarīda al-Rasmiyya, 2004; Qarāqī, 2015: 40).⁴ In the speech he addressed to the newly appointed commissioners, King Mohammed VI reiterated his commitment to ending the irresolution of the Years of Lead’s legacy through the “consolidation of a just, non-judiciary resolution” of the past (Mohammed VI, 2004). The keywords in the king’s speech indicated a preference for a non-judicial, albeit equitable solution, that would rehabilitate the victims and reconcile them with the state. This royal prescription was further institutionalized in the official definition of the ERC as a commission “with non-judicial prerogatives in the areas of the resolution of past and of grave violations of human rights” (ERC, 2004). The ERC’s fact-finding mission was consecrated in its founding decree’s articulation that stated that this “investigative and truth-seeking jurisdiction allows the commission to investigate the nature and the scope of gravity of past violations of human rights” (ERC, 2004). The language around perpetration of violence was vague, and there was no mention of responsibility except in the instance in which the commission was tasked with “determining the responsibility of the state apparatuses or any other party for the violations or events investigated” (ERC, 2004).

The ERC’s handling of the issue of perpetrators revealed the restrictions placed on its mission. No sooner had the CCDH made its recommendation to the king to create the ERC, than the main human rights stakeholders brought up the issue of perpetrators’ accountability. For instance, the Association Marocaine des Droits Humains [Moroccan Association for Human Rights] (AMDH) underlined the continuity of the violations of human rights until 2003 before asserting the fact that it has for a long time sought to end the “impunity for those responsible for grave violations of human rights” (Zobairi, 2006). AMDH argued that its stance was in “coherence with the principles and criteria of human rights as they are recognized globally” (Zobairi, 2006). In its turn, the FMVJ questioned the ERC’s legitimacy, attacking its powerlessness in regard to the establishment of individual responsibility for human rights violations. Moreover, the FMVJ condemned the equation that ERC’s founding recommendation created between demands regarding “establishing individual responsibility and accountability, and discord, hatred and



dissidence” (Zobairi, 2006). Furthermore, the FMVJ underlined the fact that “breaking with the past of violations passes absolutely through holding accountable those who were responsible for these violations and establishing the pillars of reconciliation”⁷⁵ (Zobairi, 2006). Even the New York-based International Center for Transitional Justice urged Morocco to implement “justice and accountability” in the cases “[w]here serious crimes were committed and individual perpetrators identified” (Opgenhaffen and Freeman, 2005: 3).

As a result of the constraints the state placed on its work, the ERC was unable to name perpetrators or address their individual responsibility for violations of human rights. Neither the public hearings organized in December 2004 nor the ERC’s final report revealed the names, functions, or chain of command of those who ordered or carried out violence in the name of the Moroccan state. Unlike other places where perpetrators were forced to testify in exchange for amnesty, Moroccan state agents were spared any accountability for their past violations of human rights (Nabīl, 2006: 18; Ould al-Qabla, 2005). As a result, none of the six books of the ERC’s final report contains any information whatsoever about the sponsors and perpetrators of the grave rights violations that the commission was established to investigate. This, in fact, turns the ERC into a truth-finding commission without perpetrators. Many questions arise from this reality, including whether the victims’ only truth is sufficient to reconcile Moroccans with their past and whether the ERC was not ethically obligated to force state agents to confront their accusers publicly. However, these critiques are also attenuated by the fact that the ERC was not the result of a regime change. The ERC might have undertaken its mission under a more humanizing version of the same authoritarian political regime, but there was no rupture in the political system that would have granted it more latitude to carry out its mission. In reality, the ERC had to collaborate with some perpetrators who continued to occupy prominent positions within the state despite the commissioners’ knowledge of their criminal past (Jebri, 2008). Therefore, the absence of the perpetrators’ names in the final report as well as its lack of any radical recommendations regarding their impunity mirrored the balance of power within a state that wanted to refashion itself without instituting any rupture within the political system.

The inscription by the ERC of perpetrators’ names in its final report would have been essential for both victims and history. The ERC’s rationale for the exclusion of perpetrators’ names was a desire to focus on the collective and institutional responsibility rather than on individual accountability. Aḥmad Shawqī Binyūb, a former ERC commissioner who now occupies an official position, has written that this was the result of ERC members’ conviction that the state had the “political, legal, moral responsibility for the violations that took place” (Al-Mandūb al-Wizāri, 2019: 125). While these compromises are prevalent in transitional processes, the ERC should have consulted with the survivors to incorporate their input in the process. Moreover, the absence of the perpetrators’ names from the ERC’s solemn report may deprive future Moroccan generations from learning about the rich histories that could be written from it as a future archive. Finally, the ERC’s final report did not register individual stories of those who survived state violence. While some victims’ names are mentioned in this official report, they remain ineffective without stories to tell. In a sense, this approach facilitates amnesia by centering on institutions instead of individuals.



In addition to the ERC's final report, its public hearings were a performance of societal acquittal of perpetrators. Organized to help the victims voice their repressed suffering, these hearings showcased victims from different ages, regions, genders, and social backgrounds who agreed to testify publicly in front of an audience in order to establish their truth about the violations that were committed against them, their family members, and their regions (Abdellatif, 2014: 52; Būdirqa and Binyūb, 2017: 242–243, 247). Although these hearings were hailed as an important and risky innovation in the Moroccan ERC's work, the survivors were only given 20 minutes to share their stories, and the honor code they agreed to restricted what they could say in their testimonies (Tuquoi, 2004). For instance, this honor code prohibited the use of the public hearings to defend or criticize any political or civil society organization as well as "mentioning the names of those they consider responsible for the violations they endured" (Hay'at al-Inṣāf wal-muṣālaḥa, 2004). In the commissioners' opinion, these measures were justified by the ERC's laws and by-laws' prohibition of addressing "individual responsibility" for political violence (Hay'at al-Inṣāf wal-muṣālaḥa, 2004). Thus, the public hearings organized in different regions were indeed cathartic moments for survivors to speak to other victims of state violence, but without being able to name or symbolically address the individuals and institutions that were responsible for their ordeal.

The ERC could have drawn on the South African model to force the perpetrators to tell the truth. For instance, in South Africa, perpetrators were only granted immunity in exchange for their true narrative about the events in which they were involved. For police officers and prison guards, being able to live peacefully in post-apartheid South Africa was contingent on telling the truth and coming clean of one's past. Thus, South African officers under apartheid had to convince the commissioners of the truth of their narratives (Kraft, 2014: 97, 105). Although truth is bendable due to perpetrators' avoidance of self-incrimination or due to strategic forgetting, especially when truth may be detrimental to their interest, it is still a process that Kraft (2014) sees as a crucial step that contributed to the disclosure of "multiple and contradictory truths" (p. 94). In this context, the "perpetrators recounted their misdeeds to persuade others to grant them amnesty and to organize their past experiences so they could coexist with memories of their former selves" (Kraft, 2014: 95). Unlike this dialogical model, which allows the truths to emerge from contestations between perpetrators and victims, the Moroccan approach, by granting perpetrators a blanket impunity without any public admission of guilt or wrongdoing, placed the burden of truth on the victims.

However, perpetrators' accountability is not an easy question to resolve. It is enmeshed in visions of democratization, justice, and retribution, which are also determined by the internal dynamics of each country. Not all countries witnessed a swift democratization, and only those who witnessed regime change gradually judicialized accountability. As I have previously stated, South Africa is a case of regime change in which perpetrators had to trade their truth for amnesty. Latin America further consecrates the importance of regime change and democratization for retributive justice to take place. Peru, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, which all lived under various forms of military dictatorship, had a gradual process between blanket amnesties in the 1980s and the 1990s and the prosecutions that took place in the 2000s. In fact, the stronger the democratization, the more prosecutions of perpetrators were carried out. It was only in the 2000s that these Latin American countries



witnessed the involvement of the justice system in the resolution of the criminal aspects of their dictatorial past after immunity laws were “annulled (Peru in 2001 and Argentina in 2005) or substantially reinterpreted (Chile from 2004)” (Collins et al., 2013: 9). The gradual progression from impunity to prosecution was also registered in Argentina and Brazil. Even if Argentina’s 1983 National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP)’ report silenced the names of perpetrators, the “testimony collected by commissions has been accepted as evidence in courts” when the era of prosecutions began (Jelin, 2016: 766–767). Brazil has also seen an upsurge in criminal prosecutions since 2009, especially after the National Truth Commission “push[ed] aside the 1979 amnesty law to prosecute those responsible for crimes against humanity, which under international law are not subject to amnesty or statutes of limitations” (Jelin, 2016: 768). Tunisia’s Truth and Dignity Commission is the latest example that shows the correlation between regime change and the possibility of retributive justice (Hay’at al-Haqīqa wal-karama, 2018: 170). Therefore, a combination of stronger democratization, application of international law, and reinterpretation of local laws have driven the initiatives that led to suing perpetrators in local courts in countries that witnessed grave violations of human rights.

In the absence of institutional conditions for the Latin American model to take root in Morocco, victims and survivors created practices and mnemonic rituals to fight impunity. Three symbolic ritualized events were specifically potent for Moroccan civil society’s fight against impunity. First, the publication of the list of the names of the 45 officials whom the AMDH considered responsible for committing grave violations of human rights during the Years of Lead (Alami et al., 2004: 22). Second, a mock trial held to prosecute the Moroccan state and the torturers (Slyomovics, 2005: 127). The perpetrators were found guilty, and the court ordered to strip them of their “civil and political rights” as well as the confiscation of their property (L’Orient-Le Jour, 2005). Third, the organization of alternative public hearings in which the victims were allowed to name the perpetrators (Alami et al., 2004: 21; El Maslouhi, 2007). Although these steps were only symbolic, the state shut down three journals (*Le Journal*, *Assahīfa*, and *Demain*) for publishing the names of perpetrators and sued the AMDH for championing the demands for holding perpetrators accountable (Vairel, 2004: 188).

One important aspect of the ERC’s failure to hold perpetrators accountable was its acting as a buffer between the state and the survivors throughout its mandate. Indeed, the ERC seemed to defend the positions of the state, which divided survivors of state violence into two camps. At least four of the ERC commissioners, including the president, were former political prisoners.⁶ However, by accepting to serve on the ERC, their former colleagues accused them of allowing impunity and rejecting their demands against perpetrators. Interestingly, these internecine fights among the survivors and their families over perpetrators shifted from being between victims and the state, to being between the ERC and the survivors. As a result of this shift in position of former victims, perpetrators and their crimes were eclipsed from the conversation. It was surreal to observe how former state victims, now in a position of authority within the ERC, disparaged their former cellmates’ calls for prosecution. Instead of pressuring the state to prosecute torturers, Driss Benzekri, the ERC chair and a former political prisoner, urged his former colleagues, who refused the ERC’s terms, to seek justice in the ordinary justice system (Tuquoi, 2004). Because of his full awareness that the Moroccan justice system was impounded by the state, Benzekri’s words were meant to intimidate survivors by



showing them that they had no other option than what the ERC was offering. In fact, as Tazmamart writings demonstrate, testimonial literature has already provided ample space for survivors to hold their torturers accountable.

The victims testify for perpetrators: Tazmamart as a case study

Meeting the prison's perpetrators: Prison director, supervisors, and guards in testimonial literature

The judicial, statal, and societal impunity the Moroccan state granted to perpetrators of its violence has met its match in an obdurate testimonial and literary accountability. A vibrant testimonial prison literature identified the perpetrators and chronicled their grave mistreatment of prisoners who were under their authority (Al-Bīh, 2001; Mdidech, 2000; Mouride, 2000; Serfaty, 1998; Serfaty and Daure-Serfaty, 1993; see El Guabli, 2020 for a detailed list). This rich literature recounts Tazmamart survivors' plight during an 18-year disappearance. Not only do these survivors' writings facilitate our analysis of the state apparatus behind the perpetrators' behavior, but they also help us understand the intricacy of the underworld in which a person can be both a perpetrator and a savior; an angel and a devil; a torturer and a healer. Between an unbounded cruelty and risking one's life to save prisoners' lives, perpetrators' behavior seems to be governed by many variables that Tazmamart testimonial literature allows us to grasp in very complicated ways.

Aḥmad al-Marzūqī's memoir *Tazmamārt: al-Zinzāna raqm 10* contains the most detailed description of perpetrators and their categories in Tazmamart. Although Muḥammad al-Rāys' memoir *Min skhirāt ilā Tazmamart*, Aziz BineBine's *Tazmamort*, Mīdhat René Bourequat's *MORT VIVANT*, Driss T. Chberreq's *Le Train fou*, and Salah and Aīda Hachad's *Kabazal* depict the authors' experiences with the guards within the disappearance system of Tazmamart, none of them has matched al-Marzūqī's meticulous documentation about the perpetrators and their actions. Indeed, *Tazmamārt: al-Zinzāna raqm 10* (Al-Marzūqī, 2003) is the memoir that provides a clear classification, combining a physical description of the guards, their moral character, and their disposition to be cruel or kind to the prisoners (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 74–89). Interestingly, Al-Marzūqī (2003) insinuates a highly problematic correlation between the guards' physical appearance and their disposition to be cruel (pp. 74–89). Although it has no scientific basis, Al-Marzūqī's (2003) links between the guards' ugly or beautiful looks, and their cruelty and generosity toward the prisoners (pp. 74–89), provides important details about how prisoners try to make sense of those responsible for their plight. While *Tazmamārt: al-Zinzāna raqm 10* is central for my argument in this section of the article, I also build on all these texts to elucidate how Tazmamart testimonial literature testifies for perpetrators.

The desire to record and memorialize their suffering in Tazmamart pushed the survivors to penetrate inside the ramifications of the perpetration system in the secret prison. For instance, Aziz BineBine (2009), a survivor of hangar 2, underlines the fact that "Tazmamart was first and foremost about humans. The dead and the living, angels and demons, the wise and the crazy" (p. 58). For BineBine, human relationships are essential for a full understanding of what happened in Tazmamart. Al-Marzūqī (2003), who spent 18 years in hangar 1, has also written that his "overview [about Tazmamart] would be



incomplete without talking about the fifteen guards among whose claws we melted the prime of our youth” (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 73). These human relationships are all the more complicated by the fact that very few guards were granted transfer from Tazmamart (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 73). Although al-Marzūqī has expressed his surprise at the fact that the guards did not request to be transferred either, he explains their continuous service in the secret prison by the advantageous benefits their sordid work conferred upon them. Al-Marzūqī (2003) writes that it is:

[N]ot difficult for anyone to know the cause. The generous, expert administration knew how to bestow its unlimited bounties upon them as it doubled their salaries and granted them multiple privileges, including free housing, frequent vacations, and an overabundance of rewards. (p. 73)

However, and lest the financial incentive would be understood as the only explanation of the jailers’ sedentariness, al-Marzūqī (2003) furnishes a more security-related consideration in suggesting that superior officers “knew that replacing these guards with others would increase the risk of leaks, which would have definitely led to the unveiling of their masked faces” (p. 74).

According to Al-Marzūqī, the perpetrators of state violence in Tazmamart seem to be divided into two broad categories that he has then specifically subdivided into subcategories, to reflect the variety of ways in which perpetrators inhabited various personalities and acted differently in the secret jail. Under the category of “The torturers: The director and the guards,” Al-Marzūqī (2003) includes the director Belkadi, the two supervisors of the guards, and 12 cruel guards (pp. 73–89). In this section, the reader encounters 15 perpetrators who, in Al-Marzūqī’s (2003) analysis, were “illiterate and cruel, and knew nothing but the language of iron and fire” (p. 74). The second category is made of the “Good guards,” who either actively helped the prisoners to survive or did nothing to hurt or help them (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 89–93). Of the five people composing this category of guards, two, namely Larbi Louiz and Mohamed Cherbadou, saved prisoners from certain death and provided services that saved numerous lives (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 89–92). Unlike al-Marzūqī’s elaborate rendering of the guards’ world, if Al-Rāys, BineBine, Bourequat, and Chberreq refer to the guards and their supervisors, they do not attempt to theorize or categorize them in the same way.

The prison director sits on top of the pyramid of perpetrators in Tazmamart. Belkadi is depicted as a severe, merciless, and corrupt monster. In Al-Marzūqī’s (2003) words, physically, Belkadi is tall, fit, and is characterized by a “dry face that looked as if it was chiseled from rock” (p. 74). During his service in the French army, Belkadi was arrested by Nazis and spent some time as a prisoner in their camps (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 74; Al-Rāys, 2001: 131; Chberreq, 2014: 113). The connection here is clear and insinuates that Belkadi might have applied to the prisoners some of the methods he internalized from the Nazi camps. To complete his portrait and the reason he was recalled from his retirement to be in charge of Tazmamart, Al-Marzūqī (2003) states that Belkadi:

[O]n the one hand, belonged to the category of the illiterate deaf-mute-blind who only signs off on things by the prints of his thumb. On the other hand, he combines extreme greed and unbounded sadism with a complete submission to his benefactor. (p. 75)



Therefore, Belkadi emerges here as an ignorant and corrupt officer who could do anything, especially with the existence of strict instructions, to subject the prisoners to “a slow, systematic death” (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 75). Belkadi’s cruelty had two dimensions. First, in the strict instructions he gave the guards as, for instance, to “only inform him about the prisoners if one of them died” (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 76) which they probably interpreted as death being the only desirable outcome in Tazmamart. Second, Belkadi transformed the secret prison into a business scheme to generate more revenues by embezzling the budget dedicated to the prisoners. Almost all Tazmamart testimonial writings depict Belkadi’s corruption, sadism and ignorance, which seem to determine his disregard of human life (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 75; Chberreq, 2014: 117–118).

Belkadi’s two immediate assistants (guard supervisors) are represented as being equally sadistic and ignorant. The supervisor nicknamed “Bin Drīs” was “one of the cruelest and most pernicious guards in Tazmamart” (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 77). Bin Drīs, as he also emerges in another guard’s testimony—Mohamed Cherbadoui’s, nicknamed “Jeff”—and analyzed below, was uselessly cruel, especially when he deprived prisoners of the most trivial things that could have alleviated their pain. Also nicknamed “the wire-man,” Bin Drīs “found great pleasure in closing the little windows of the cells” with iron wires to deprive the prisoners of light (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 77). Ḥamīd Frīḥ, the second supervisor whom the prisoners nicknamed “Foxthroat,” was a former colleague of the soldiers implicated in the 1971 coup d’état. Foxthroat was lucky to have missed work on the day of the coup in 1971, because it spared him the ordeal that would have ensued from his participation in the attack on the royal palace. Yet Foxthroat showed no mercy to his former colleagues. Foxthroat served as a deputy director of Tazmamart prison and, according to al-Marzūqī, knew nothing but the “robotic and mechanical execution of stupid orders” (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 78). Foxthroat’s disengagement from the prisoners’ suffering was such that in 16 years he never did anything to save their lives or appease their ordeal. Even worse, Al-Marzūqī (2003) has written that he was “one of the guards who was impossible to corrupt or get to show any mercy toward us” (p. 79). Despite the fact that the director was almost never there, these two supervisors continued to carry out his orders dutifully, thus sustaining the torture of their former colleagues for years.

Al-Marzūqī records the existence of 12 “evil” guards in Tazmamart. They hailed from all regions of Morocco. Their backgrounds were very diverse, but they all executed orders that hurt the prisoners and carried out acts that could be considered criminal in a democratic state. Instead of talking about each individual guard, I will discuss what made them a sub-category of perpetrators. The adjectives that Al-Marzūqī (2003) and other prisoners use to describe them denote cruelty, sarcasm, callousness, brutality, and a total disregard for human life (pp. 79–89). Phrases like “a creature created to hate and torture,” (p. 80) “he was characterized by a penetrating look and an unbounded cruelty,” he had a “heart like stone or even crueler,” and finally “he was unable to do good, cruel, and vulgar” are used to describe the guards who seemed to have no ideological basis for the torture they were meting out to the prisoners (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 79–89). The torture they inflicted upon their former colleagues looked purely mechanical, understood as the literal execution of orders, or entirely personal, related to their propensity to misuse the Godly authority they had. These guards used and abused the absolute power they had over the prisoners. In Bourequat’s (1993) words, the guards “could insult and humiliate



us, and deprive us of everything” (p. 194). That said, Al-Marzūqī (2003) tells the story of this guard, nicknamed “Al-Firmāṭshī” [meaning “the furnace”], who was cruel to the prisoners before he had a change of heart a few months before his retirement:

Al-Firmāṭshī contributed to our torture significantly, but what he did [to us] was motivated by imitation rather than evil. When he felt that he was close to retirement, his behavior changed entirely, and he sympathized with us completely and behaved as though he was racing against time to atone for his sins. He was never tired of talking to us, giving us enough water, and leaving the doors open during the distribution of food. (p. 84)

When Al-Firmāṭshī asked all prisoners for forgiveness, Al-Marzūqī (2003) writes that in that moment “humanity stood high and victorious in that disharmonious moment [. . .] and she poked fun at the big torturer in whom conscience had died” (p. 84).

The good guards, especially the ones who helped the prisoners, are described as embodiments of goodness. However, only two of the good guards intervened proactively to carry out acts that helped save the disappeared soldiers’ lives. The other three were included in the good guards’ category just because of their neutrality, which in Al-Marzūqī’s (2003) words was “a positive attitude” in Tazmamart (p. 93). Larbi Louiz served in Tazmamart between 1973 and 1982, and his small gestures alleviated the prisoners’ pain. Although he was a father and witnessed what happened to his colleague Aḥmad Kharbūsh, the guard imprisoned and then fired in 1973 for helping the prisoners to communicate with their families, Louiz continued supporting the prisoners until his transfer from Tazmamart in 1982. Because of the scarcity of food, Louiz’s pockets were always “full of chunks of bread, dates, candy, and sugar,” which he distributed furtively among prisoners (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 89). In addition to providing prisoners with small quantities of nutritive food and medicine to help them survive, Louiz “made [the prisoners] feel [their] humanity, using softness, politeness, and gentleness in his talk, [and] exhorting [them] to be patient and delegate the matter to God” (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 89). Everything Louiz did, from carrying out his duties to assisting the prisoners, was driven by a deep sense of justice and search for equity, both of which were absent in Tazmamart. The second guard who played a central role in saving the prisoners is Mohamed Cherbadoui, nicknamed “Jeff” or “Our Friend” (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 91). According to Al-Marzūqī, Jeff “remains without dispute our primary savior thanks to his courage and his will to make some decisive contacts [with our families] for us” (Al-Marzūqī, 2003: 91). However, it is not only Jeff’s courage that Al-Marzūqī (2003) describes in his memoirs; he also describes Jeff as “an amiable, humane man who had an abundance of good manners, and deep goodness, and wittiness” (p. 91). Jeff’s role in saving the prisoners from Tazmamart was such that Al-Marzūqī (2003) has written in his memoir that if the survivors of Tazmamart are “breathing fresh air and enjoying walking under the tender, warm sun of [their] Morocco, much of this great credit goes to this noble man” (p. 92). Thus, we see how some guards in positions of perpetration could also subvert orders and act conscientiously to miscarry orders they disagreed with.

These distinctions between the different categories of perpetrators exude a deep awareness of history. In fact, in the context of generalized impunity, the detailed accounts of the prison personnel’s actions contained in these writings aim at future historians.



Neither the removal of their names from official reports nor the blanket amnesty granted to them protect perpetrators from the court of history, which, in this case, is the place where another type of justice could be served. Indeed, the duty of memory toward deceased citizens and their families goes hand in hand with the duty of history. Both duties hinge upon the diligent disclosure of truth about the agents of the apparatus that attacked human dignity.

National-level perpetrators: Higher echelons of perpetration of state violence in Tazmamart testimonial literature

The perpetrators of violence in Tazmamart secret prison were not acting independently of state officials in higher levels of authority. The decision to construct a secret prison in a military base could not have been made without the approval of the highest military authorities in the country. Although the name of General Ahmed Dlimi keeps appearing in Tazmamart survivors' memoirs as the mastermind behind Tazmamart (Serhane, 2004: 289), his death in 1981 did not lead to the shutting down of the jail. Tazmamart's existence even after Dlimi's passing proves that the prison served higher political agendas during the Years of Lead. Although responsibility becomes more diffuse the higher we go up in the chain of command, Tazmamart testimonial literature provides critical information about national-level perpetrators and the power they wielded in their exercise of state violence.

A certain Colonel Fadoul (also written "Feddoul") emerges as the official in charge of everything related to Tazmamart from its inception in 1973 till its closure in 1991. This officer of the Moroccan gendarmerie appears in different testimonial works both as a perpetrator, who enforced disappearance, and a savior, who organized the release of the prisoners. Aziz BineBine (2009) describes him as a "devil" who sold his soul to the French Protectorate before entering the service of the independent Moroccan state (p. 87). Bourequat (1993) refers to Fadoul as a bad omen whose appearance always meant the worsening of the Bourequat brothers' situation. In Bourequat's (1993) words, "[s]ince we have been kidnapped, each appearance of this cop of the worst kind coincided with the aggravation of our situation" (p. 171). Al-Rāys (2001) also reminds his readers that Fadoul was in charge of carrying out the 1973 *Florence Operation*, which had the soldiers convicted of partaking in the two coups d'état disappeared in Tazmamart (p. 247). Fadoul's expertise in the disappearance machine has been highlighted in Bourequat's (1993) writing, as he referred to him as "the inevitable Fadoul of the transfers to the loci of misery," who also showed up to oversee their removal from Tazmamart (p. 262). Al-Marzūqī (2003) describes Fadoul as the Colonel with a "long experience in handling the files of vaults and cellars," meaning political disappearance (p. 224). However, Fadoul's task in 1991 was not so much to have the prisoners disappeared as to have them "reappeared" and transferred from Tazmamart to Ahermoumou military base where they would be restored before their release. Between 1973 and 1991, Fadoul, as a national-level perpetrator, did the thing and its opposite, which again complicates our ideas about those who are in charge of carrying out state violence.



Fadoul embodies the latitude authority affords to perpetrators, to act both as killers and saviors. When the state condemned 58 soldiers and the 3 Bourequat brothers to die slowly in Tazmamart, Fadoul used his power to exterminate them. However, when Morocco's dark human rights record triggered an international outcry against the state's violation of human dignity, Fadoul was again the person who, this time, was tasked with saving their lives and prolonging their existence. Thus, Fadoul, as a high-level officer in the Moroccan state, was a classic example of a state deciding who deserves to survive or die and when.

Fadoul was also in charge of covering the traces of the state's crimes through the demolition of Tazmamart and the restoration of its former inmates' living-dead bodies. He was there to supervise the erasure of the effects of the torture machine on the prisoners' bodies and psyches. Bourequat (1993) recounts his and his brothers "humanization" after the long years they spent in jail (p. 271). Instead of appearing as a torturer, Fadoul used the expertise of medical professionals to provide the survivors with the intensive care that was needed to erase the scandalous traces torture left on their bodies. Nutritive diets, medical care, and psychological support were the state's keys to the mending of the prisoners. Reflecting on Colonel Fadoul's roles, Al-Rāys (2001) has written that "[i]n deed, our weight increased quickly by the day. Colonel 'F.' had the magical power to make people gain and lose weight in record time" (p. 259). The same observation is made by BineBine (2009) as he underlines that the goal was not to heal the prisoners but "to patch [them] up, to make [them] presentable for the moment of [their] liberation" (p. 212). Through the example of Colonel Fadoul, we can see how perpetrators change positions, from inflicting pain and death to restoring life in the survivors. His acts were devoid of the sentiments or empathy that we can expect from ordinary individuals. In fact, Fadoul's ability to assume both roles without any apparent remorse would be worth more analysis in the future.

Tazmamart testimonial literature allows us to broaden the category of perpetrators to include professionals who used their expertise to support authoritarianism. In fact, Colonel Fadoul headed up a transient institution of medical professionals. In the rehabilitation period during which prisoners were taken to the makeshift hospital in the Ahermoumou military base to be "patched up" before their release, the reader notices the existence of doctors, psychologists, dentists, guards, and military health officials, whose concerted efforts aimed at deleting incriminating evidence from Tazmamart prisoners' tortured bodies and souls. For instance, one wonders whether the medical doctors, the nurses, and the other personnel involved in restoring the survivors should be classified under the category of perpetrators or not. Al-Marzūqī (2003) has written that these military medical doctors "were like the silent walls of Tazmamart. There is no doubt that they kept a lot of tragic secrets. They worked with a placidness and nonchalance that could only emanate from people who had been acclimatized by routine" (p. 230). Doctors were witnesses of the horror of torture, but they neither denounced it nor used their ethical duty to prevent it. For instance, BineBine (2009) reports that when he was about to be released "Fadoul came to see me accompanied by a physician" (p. 214). Bourequat recounts a similar situation, but in more detail. Fadoul visited him in his Ahermoumou makeshift hospital room in the company of a physician who "introduced himself, welcomed me back, adding that he was there to 'refurbish me'" (Bourequat, 1993: 265). The



medical professionals' share of responsibility for political violence can be clearly assessed as well in Al-Rāys' (2001) description of the conditions of the medical visits:

All our visits [. . .] to have blood tests or to see the eye doctor and the dentist took place in total secrecy and under high security measures. We used to always wear our djellabas and cover our faces so that we didn't see anything or be seen [. . .] During our visits with the doctors, all the doors of the hallway used to be locked, and the gendarmes made sure that our heads were covered. (p. 259)

Driss Chberreq, who also spent eighteen years in Tazmamart, has makes a perceptive observation about medical professionals in writing that: "The three men in white scrubs on the heels of the colonel must be physicians who effectively received formal instructions to accomplish an exceptional task. They always walk around together to treat their visitors—a classical way to force each party to keep its mouth shut. Their questions were limited to: "What do you feel? There? This way? How old are you?" However, questions, such as "How long [have you been in pain]? What were the causes of the pain? Why? How?", like all sly questions, were obviously suspicious and, as a consequence, avoided." (Chberreq, 2014: 174). Although these physicians were most likely part of the Royal Gendarmerie, agreeing to see patients in the conditions Al-Rāys and Chberreq describe, they further raise the question of whether their actions were not another way of meting out violence to powerless prisoners who were in limbo between imprisonment and freedom. A medical professional has ethical requirements that these doctors were clearly breaching. Unlike Brazil, where "[s]everal psychoanalytic and medical associations expelled doctors and other health professionals whose collaboration with torturers was documented in the BNM [Brasil: Nunca Mais] project" (Dassin, 1998: xiv), Moroccan medical and health professionals involved in the state's disappearance system have never been bothered. Apart from testimonial literature's depictions of their involvement, there is not much information about them either. Their affiliation with the army or the *gendarmarie royale* is even more reason for this sophisticated category of perpetrators to be shielded. Nevertheless, the existence of testimonies about them in Tazmamart testimonial literature defies any simplistic representation of perpetrators as ignorant, uncouth, and naïve individuals, who simply execute orders in a position at the lowest echelon of the authority ladder.

Blurring lines: A survivor's memoir as a space for the perpetrators' testimony

Mohamed Cherbadoui's testimony about his work as a prison guard in Tazmamart is a unique occurrence. Included in Aïda Hachad's section of the memoirs she co-authored with her husband, Salah Hachad, and entitled *Kabazal. Les emmurés de Tazmamart*, Cherbadoui's testimony speaks of the experience of a conscientious guard whose behavior defies any blanket statements about all the guards in Tazmamart. In a sub-section entitled "'Jeff', the horror's witness," Aïda Hachad (Serhane, 2004) reports Jeff's description of Tazmamart a few months before the release of the prisoners in 1991. Written in first person, Jeff's narrative provides a different perspective on the complicated situation of the perpetrators in Tazmamart. In fact, Jeff's testimony reveals the



myriad ways in which he and a handful of his colleagues were leading a schizophrenic life by implementing orders and disobeying them at the same time. Although Jeff perpetrated violence by carrying out orders that had a direct impact on the physical and mental well-being of the prisoners, he also acted as a savior by carrying out heroic acts that helped many of the prisoners, especially in hangar 1, to survive. Jeff occupies a gray zone in which being able to support the prisoners and save them also required being allowed into the perpetration system, which calls for more nuance in our understanding of the positions of the guards within the larger apparatus.

Jeff's testimony demonstrates that perpetrators' individual initiative was not curtailed by the disappearance prison system. He clearly shows that perpetrators had enough latitude to make a choice between a blind surrender to an unjust imprisonment regime and its *exterminationist* project, and using the room for maneuver available to them as soldiers to slow down the extermination process from within. The importance of Jeff's testimony lies in the fact that he had direct access to the military culture that shaped the secret jail. First of all, he states that the director of the prison and his bosses are to blame for the cruel treatment the prisoners received. He compares Captain Belkadi to another unnamed captain who was the first director to be appointed to the prison. While the first director, who only lasted in his position for one week, requested "a dining room for the prisoners, a kitchen, bathrooms, an infirmary, daily walks, sports field, and a room for family visits," (Serhane, 2004: 286), Belkadi, on the contrary, seemed to agree to take the position in order to exterminate the prisoners in Tazmamart. Jeff confirms al-Marzūqī's observation that Belkadi starved the prisoners, in part, to amass more wealth. This example shows that Belkadi's perpetration of violence against the prisoners was also motivated by his belief that "these men shouldn't exist, or [that] they were already dead" (Serhane, 2004: 288). It is only by understanding that he considered them already dead that we can make sense of the cruel treatment he subjected them to for 18 years.

If Belkadi's perpetration of violence against the prisoners was motivated by greed, the cruelty of his subalterns requires more explanation. In his testimony, Jeff specifically reflects on the behavior of a prison guard named Bin S'īd and his supervisor, named Bin Drīs (referred to as the "wireman" in Al-Marzūqī's memoir), who harmed the prisoners. Bin S'īd and Bin Drīs could have used their own agency and empathy to behave differently, but they instead chose to exacerbate the prisoners' ordeal. First, Bin S'īd caught a prisoner in the act of throwing a smuggled magazine to the cell of another inmate. Instead of covering up the incident, Bin S'īd "alerted all the guards who [then] decided to search all the cells" (Serhane, 2004: 291). Because the prison director was not present when the incident happened, the explanation of being afraid of any sort of authority is not very strong here. The most plausible explanation in this case is the fact that these jailers had lost their ability to empathize with others or that they became so deeply selfish and self-centered that they had nothing but disregard for the soldiers, who might even have been outside the realm of humanity for them. Second, if the guards agreed to burn all the stuff they confiscated from the prisoners so that Belkadi would not find out, Bin Drīs spared a radio set from their spoils for his own use. However, as Jeff says, the "same evening, he reported the incident to Belkadi who assembled us the next day in his office. His rage was only equaled by the severity of his heart" (Serhane, 2004: 292). Bin Drīs did not merely endanger the lives of the prisoners, he actually threatened the professional future of his



colleagues who could have been accused of complicity with the former. Bin Drīs knew fully well what happened to the guard named Aḥmad Kharbūsh in 1973. Kharbūsh was moved by the cruel conditions of the prisoners' detention and helped them to establish contact with their families, to provide them with what was necessary for their survival, especially medicine and money. Once Belkadi found out about Kharbūsh's contacts with the families on behalf of the prisoners, he jailed him in Tazmamart and requested that the army administration mete out the severest punishment to him. Unfortunately for Belkadi, the decision cleared Kharbūsh for lack of evidence, making him "furious at the authorities in the capital" (Serhane, 2004: 289). Belkadi had, in fact, told the other soldiers that had he known that nothing would have come out of his report against him, he would have "kept Kharbūsh prisoner [in Tazmamart] until his death" (Serhane, 2004: 289).

Jeff's own motivation to carve out a space in which he could use his agency to appease the prisoners' inhumane condition is instructive about perpetrators' agency. While many guards could not be anything but blind enforcers of their superiors' rules even if they went against what is humanely acceptable, others, like Jeff, had a sharp critical conscience and tried to chart a path between their individual conscience and the duties they were required to discharge as members of a security branch of the Moroccan state. Contrasting his own attitude to that of some of his colleagues, Jeff states that despite the terror Belkadi imposed in Tazmamart, he was one of the very few guards who "kept some humanity" (Serhane, 2004: 289). Jeff's success at funneling letters, money, and medication into Tazmamart for over 10 years does not only confirm his ingenuity but also his long-term commitment to saving the soldiers from certain death. While other guards were "simply human machines that executed orders blindly, and with a lot of zeal" (Serhane, 2004: 289), Jeff's empathy pushed him to save lives. He writes that the:

[A]cts accomplished for the prisoners were trivial, but they were of crucial importance to them: an aspirin tablet, a tube of eye or dermatological ointment, a candle, a piece of cheese, a pen, a piece of paper, some matches, and a piece of string. (p. 289)

Even though these objects sound simple and very ordinary, Jeff adds that they "could save a life in Tazmamart" (Serhane, 2004: 289). Therefore, for Jeff, saving the prisoners was an act of willful determination to be on the right side of history and humanity against all the paralyzing forces of state terror and military authority.

Jeff was both a perpetrator, given his job as a jailer, and a savior, given the heroic acts he carried out to help the prisoners. Although these two roles seem mutually exclusive, Jeff managed to straddle both worlds because his role as a savior was contingent upon the continuity of his role as a perpetrator. Only in keeping his job as a prison guard was he in a position to aid the prisoners. Finally, Jeff, like all people involved in the administration of Tazmamart, did not write his story. He told it to Aïda Hachad, who later transcribed it into her memoirs with her husband Salah Hachad, in partnership with Moroccan novelist Abdelhak Serhane. In a reversal of roles, the former victim is now giving space in her memoir to the voice of a former perpetrator-savior. This move is an extremely important shift that acknowledges Jeff's endeavor to save the prisoners and shows another aspect of testimony, as a locus for co-witnessing for both victims and perpetrators. Now that the tables have



turned, and in order to avoid clumping all the former guards and jailers together in one category, Aïda and Salah Hachad used the liberated space of their testimonial book to grant Jeff historical and archival existence beyond the time-bound concerns of the moment.

Conclusion

Throughout this article, I have argued that despite the state's protection of the public servants who committed acts of grave violations of human rights during the Years of Lead, civil society and testimonial literature challenge state-granted impunity. I have demonstrated that both the Arbitration Commission's work and the ERC process avoided holding perpetrators accountable for the acts of violence they carried out during their tenure in public service. Since the death of Hassan II in 1999, survivors of Moroccan state violence as well as the families of the deceased and disappeared have been demanding justice. The Moroccan state, nevertheless, has chosen the route of financial reparation over retributive justice and blanket amnesty for perpetrators over individual accountability. Given the constraining circumstances of regime continuity, which prevents a judicial approach to accountability, testimonial literature has indeed become a scriptural court in which the history of perpetration will be adjudicated in the future.

Because the state chose to shield the perpetrators and formalize their silence, most of the story will not be told in their own words. The lack of sufficient perpetrators' stories obstructs the possibility of understanding how those who executed orders reasoned and justified the crimes to themselves. Beyond the simplistic implementation of orders from their superiors, perpetrators brought their own personal touch to the work they were doing, and this is specifically the dimension that is lost with ERC's failure to publish its conversations with all or some of the guards who were involved in political disappearance. However, ERC's failure to make perpetrators speak left no choice for survivors but to become the voice through which we access the stories of their jailers. Indeed, a deep concern with truth and prospective history of the Years of Lead had inspired some of the victims of state violence, specifically Tazmamart survivors, to record their names, physical looks, and infinitesimal details of their moral character.

An important conclusion of this article is the fact that the world of perpetration of state violence is complex and cannot only be understood through dichotomies and binary oppositions. Although Aḥmad al-Marzūqī distinguishes between the evil guards and the good ones, Jeff, a former guard in Tazmamart, provides a penetrating testimony that further illuminates how these roles of good and bad can be nuanced through time and changing circumstances. Rather than accepting that all the guards were evil, quite a few prisoners as well as Jeff describe the little gestures and oftentimes the risks some of them took in order to succor the prisoners and provide for them, despite the severe consequences that could have had on their professional and personal lives. Tazmamart testimonial literature does, however, show the existence of a core group of guards who used a very narrow interpretation of instructions to harm the prisoners. The other group was more ambiguous and less defined, and its members were either actively involved in saving the prisoners or neutrally carrying out their work, with no zeal to inflict any additional pain or save the prisoners. In addition to the prison's perpetrators, I have shown how Tazmamart testimonial literature reflects the existence of a higher echelon of



responsibility that is occupied by high ranking officers and health professionals who assisted the state in its enforced disappearance and political detention projects.

Finally, the publication of the names of the perpetrators in testimonial literature inscribes them in the future archives. Although the ERC used neither its public hearings nor its final report to determine individual responsibilities nominally, Moroccan testimonial literature did just the opposite. Individuals' names, their positions, their ranks within the police or the army, and their crimes have been chronicled and will be there for historians to examine in the future. The absence of perpetrators' narratives from the public sphere grants testimonial literature the powerful role of being both an archive for historical work and a building site on the basis of which the perpetrators and their superiors could finally be held accountable.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Sonja Hegasy (2014) has written an important and insightful article about perpetrators in Morocco and Lebanon. In the Moroccan context, Hegasy has analyzed the testimonies and media declarations of Muḥammad al-Khulṭī, a police officer involved in the arrest of Islamist political prisoners, and Ahmed Boukhari, who was a Moroccan intelligence agent and the author of an important book about the Moroccan secret service in the 1960s and the 1970s. Although neither of them was involved in Tazmamart, their testimonies and their motivation are important for a broader understanding of how different individuals involved in state violence chose to address their victims.
2. Unless otherwise indicated, all the translations from the Arabic and the French are the author's.
3. In a detailed letter to the king, the Arbitration Commission reports that it had studied 5127 files and adjudicated 3653 of them. The Arbitration Commission compensated 5300 people for a total amount of 954,000,000 Moroccan Dirhams. The commission also rejected 885 files and disregarded another 139 files for lack of responses from the claimants or due to the incompleteness of their documentation. In addition, a total of 6500 files were discarded because they were submitted outside the deadline (*Al-Majlis al-Istishārī li-Ḥuqūq al-Insān*, 2010: 24–25).
4. Aḥmad Shawqī Binyūb, the current Interministerial Delegate for Human Rights, has attributed a significant role to testimonial literature in the establishment of the ERC (*Al-Mundūb al-Wizārī*, 2019: 123).
5. Thanks to Adel Zobairi's republication of these NGOs' responses to the establishment of ERC in 2003, these public statements can be accessed on his blog: <http://adelzobairi.canalblog.com/archives/2006/02/17/1384479.html>
6. These former prisoners include Driss Benzekri, Latifa Jbabdi, Salah El Ouadie, and Mohamed Berdouzi. Driss El Yazami was also persecuted and forced into exile for a while.



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