



Just when Fatima Bouchar thought it couldn't get any worse, the Americans forced her to lie on a stretcher and began wrapping tape around her feet. They moved upwards, she says, along her legs, winding the tape around and around, binding her to the stretcher. They taped her stomach, her arms and then her chest. She was bound tight, unable to move.

Bouchar says there were three Americans: two tall, thin men and an equally tall woman. Mostly they were silent. She never saw their faces: they dressed in black and always wore black balaclavas. Bouchar was terrified.

They didn't stop at her chest – she says they also wound the tape around her head, covering her eyes. Then they put a hood and earmuffs on her. She was unable to move, to hear or to see. "My left eye was closed when the tape was applied," she says, speaking about her ordeal for the first time. "But my right eye was open, and it stayed open throughout the journey. It was agony." The journey would last around 17 hours.

Bouchar, then aged 30, had become a victim of the process known as extraordinary rendition. She and her husband, Abdel Hakim Belhaj, a Libyan Islamist militant fighting Muammar Gaddafi, had been abducted in Bangkok and were being flown to one of Gaddafi's prisons in Libya, a country where she had never before set foot. However, Bouchar's case is different from the countless other renditions that the world has learned about over the past few years, and not just because she was one of the few female victims.

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