



**Middle  
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Studies  
Association**  
of North America, Inc.

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3 November 2020

His Majesty King Mohamed VI  
King of Morocco  
The Royal Palace  
Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco  
fax + 212 537-768515

His Excellency Saadeddine Othmani  
Prime Minister  
Government of Morocco  
fax: + 212 537-731010/769995/768656

Your Majesty and Your Excellency:

We write to you on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF) of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) to vehemently protest the ongoing and relentless harassment by the Moroccan authorities of Dr. Maati Monjib, professor of History at Mohamed V University (Rabat), founder and former director of the Ibn Rochd Center for Study and Communication, elected president of Freedom Now, an association that advocates for freedom of expression and the press in Morocco, and member and co-founder of the Moroccan Association for Investigative Journalism (MAIJ). While Dr. Monjib has been targeted repeatedly over the years for his peaceful activities promoting human rights in Morocco, government efforts at intimidation have intensified in recent weeks: he has been subjected to persistent monitoring and surveillance, and attempts to defame him publicly, while members of his family have themselves been badgered by the authorities. We call upon the Moroccan government to put an immediate stop to this baseless campaign against Maati Monjib, and allow him to focus on his scholarship and civic activities undisturbed.

MESA was founded in 1966 to promote scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa. The preeminent organization in the field, the Association publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and has over 2800 members worldwide. MESA is committed to ensuring academic freedom and freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere.

We had written to you on 13 October 2015 to protest a travel ban imposed on Dr. Monjib, following accusations by the National Brigade of the Judicial Police that he was “destabilizing citizens’ allegiance to (Moroccan) institutions.” We noted in our letter that at the same time, certain media outlets were making slanderous allegations about Dr. Monjib’s activities and in particular, to financial irregularities at his workplace. Then, on 28 October 2015, the Rabat Trial Court Royal Prosecutor issued criminal charges against Maati Monjib and six other activists [case No. 2015/2106/8776]. Monjib himself was charged with endangering state security (Article 206 of the Criminal Code) and management of an association engaged in activities not covered by its bylaws (Article 36 of Royal Decree on Associations). It is worth noting that ever since the first scheduled court session on 19



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November 2015, the trial has consistently been postponed and re-scheduled – at three-month intervals – until now. This suggests that the charges are baseless and the dossier, empty; the charade of a trial is meant simply to wear down the ‘accused’ and distract him from his activities.

On 7 October 2020, the Public Prosecutor at the Court of First Instance in Rabat announced that Dr. Monjib is under investigation for money laundering and embezzlement. Indeed, it appears that these accusations now replace the earlier, political charge of “threatening the internal security of the State.” And a new round of interrogation has begun, with a first summons for him to present himself before the National Judicial Police Brigade in Casablanca on 19 October. He was summoned to present himself again on 26 October and then, on 2 November. Moreover, in an effort to put additional pressure on Dr. Monjib, four female family members have been subjected to questioning and harassment, as well. With no evidence of his supposed engagement in activities that destabilize the state, your government, it seems, seeks to destroy Dr. Monjib’s reputation and credibility by accusing him of (equally baseless) financial improprieties. This is a typical maneuver to silence tireless advocates for the promotion of human rights and civil liberties. It has become, alas, a preferred tactic of the Moroccan government vis-à-vis critical voices in society.

We urge you to end without delay the flagrant mistreatment of Dr. Maati Monjib and to retract, in no uncertain terms, the unfounded accusations you have levelled against him. He must be free to continue his important work as a scholar and an activist, without unwarranted constraints and unfair distractions.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this pressing matter. We look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dina Rizk Khoury', with a long, sweeping underline.

Dina Rizk Khoury  
MESA President  
Professor, George Washington University

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laurie Brand', with a stylized, cursive style.

Laurie Brand  
Chair, Committee on Academic Freedom  
Professor, University of Southern California



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CC:

Fouad Ali El Himma, Advisor to His Majesty, King Mohammed VI  
Mohamed Ben Abdelkader, Minister of Justice  
Abdelouafi Laftit, Minister of the Interior  
Othman El-Ferdaouss, Minister of Culture and Communication  
Abdellatif Hamouchi, Director, Direction générale de la Sûreté  
nationale  
Mustafa Ramid, Minister of State in charge of Human Rights  
Nasser Bourita, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Conseil national des droits de l'Homme  
Princess Lalla Joumala Alaoui, Ambassador, Embassy of Morocco,  
Chakib Benmoussa, Ambassador, Kingdom of Morocco, Paris, France