



**Middle
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15 January 2021

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 unequivocally condemn the flagrant abduction of Dr. Maati Monjib on 29 December 2020 and his detention since then in El-Arjaat prison in Salé. The circumstances of his arrest – from a restaurant in Rabat, by eight undercover police in two unmarked vehicles and without a warrant from the courts – are shocking, as well as illegal. Moreover, this is, alas, the latest episode in a five-year-long effort on the part of the government of the Kingdom of Morocco and its media services to undermine and delegitimize Dr. Monjib's activities in the pursuit of civil liberties and democratic governance, and to do so by harassing him and accusing him of improprieties. We call upon the Moroccan government to immediately release Dr. Monjib from prison and to stop, once and for all, the baseless and scandalous campaign against him, as well as other, recently detained Moroccans who advocate peacefully – with words – for democracy and social justice in Morocco.

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 more than 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.

Maati Monjib is a Professor of History at Mohamed V University (Rabat), the founder and former director of the Ibn Rochd Center for Study and Communication, the elected president of Freedom Now, an association that advocates for freedom of expression and the press in Morocco, and a member and co-founder of the Moroccan Association for Investigative Journalism (MAIJ). He is known and respected internationally for his scholarship, advocacy and integrity. This is the third time that the Committee on Academic Freedom is writing to you about Dr. Monjib (see letters dated [3 November 2020](#); [13 October 2015](#)). Just over five years ago, he was first, banned from travelling outside the country, and then, on 28 October 2015, he was accused by the Rabat Trial Court Royal Prosecutor of endangering state security [case no. 2015/2106/8776]. Ever since the first scheduled court session on 19 November 2015, the trial has consistently



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been postponed and re-scheduled – roughly twenty times. This strongly suggests that there was no evidence to support the charges against him.

In the absence of evidence confirming that Monjib posed a threat to the security of the state, certain media outlets began making slanderous allegations about financial irregularities at his workplace. In recent months, these allegations have evolved into fabricated accusations that Dr. Monjib has embezzled funds and thereby enriched himself. At the same time, government efforts at intimidation intensified: Monjib was subjected to persistent monitoring and surveillance, repeated interrogation, and attempts to defame him publicly, while female members of his family were called in for interrogation, as well. The fabrications relative to financial misdemeanors are being presented by the judicial authorities as the justification for his arrest on 29 December 2020.

Dr. Monjib's case appears to exemplify what has become a pattern in Morocco in recent years: in an effort to silence tireless, peaceful advocates for human rights and civil liberties, your government seeks to destroy their reputation and credibility by accusing them of (baseless) immoral or unethical behavior. It is regrettable that this has become the preferred response to critical voices in society.

We call upon you to immediately release Dr. Maati Monjib from detention, retract – fully and completely – the unfounded accusations you have levelled against him, and end without delay the flagrant mistreatment to which he has been subjected. Dr. Monjib must be free to continue his important work as a scholar and an activist, without unwarranted constraints and harassment.

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

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
Chowqi Benyoub, Inter-Ministerial Delegate for Human Rights
Amina Bouayach, President, National Human Rights Council (CNDH)
Princess Lalla Joumala Alaoui, Ambassador, Embassy of Morocco,
Chakib Benmoussa, Ambassador, Kingdom of Morocco, Paris, France
David T. Fischer, Ambassador, Embassy of the United States in Morocco