



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

1957 E Street NW, Suite 401
Washington, DC 20052

Phone 520-333-2577

Fax 520-207-3166

caf@mesana.org

mesana.org



17 May 2023

His Majesty King Mohamed VI
King of Morocco
The Royal Palace
Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco
c/o the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco, Washington DC
washingtonembmorocco@maec.gov.ma

His Excellency Aziz Akhannouch
Prime Minister
Government of Morocco
fax: + 212 537-768656

Your Majesty, 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 express our outrage at the ongoing mistreatment of and retribution against Dr. Maati Monjib, about whom we have previously written three times ([13 October 2015](#); [3 November 2020](#); [15 January 2021](#)). A tireless advocate for civil liberties and democratic governance in Morocco, Dr. Monjib was abducted and then wrongfully incarcerated for three months, beginning 29 December 2020. Most recently, on 1 March 2023, he was suspended, without pay, from his position as professor of History at the Mohammed V University in Rabat. We vehemently object to these and other punitive measures taken against a prominent scholar and citizen-activist for peacefully exercising his right to academic freedom and freedom of expression.

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 close to 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.

While Dr. Monjib was incarcerated following his abduction in December 2020 ([see our letter dated 15 January 2021](#)), a bogus trial was held at which neither he nor his lawyers were present but where he was sentenced to one year in prison for supposedly endangering internal state security. Likely in response to the international outcry regarding this miscarriage of justice, Monjib was provisionally released from detention on 23 March 2021. Since then, he has been systematically harassed by regime authorities. Moreover, his bank account and other assets have been frozen, and he has been denied the right to travel, to see his family, seek medical attention or pursue his professional activities abroad. In addition, on 1 March 2023, Dr. Monjib received an official letter from the Ministry of Higher Education and Research informing him that he

had been suspended from his duties as professor of History at the Mohammed V University, with cessation of payment of his salary. In fact, even before receiving this letter, he had not received his salary for several months. This latest punitive measure was accompanied by a new public defamation campaign, suggesting that his suspension resulted from his alleged “absenteeism” from his place of work, even though the official letter notes that it stemmed from his sentencing in January 2021 to a year-long prison term.

It is important to highlight that Dr. Monjib’s troubles with the Moroccan authorities are longstanding. On 16 September 2015, he was prevented from boarding a plane at the Casablanca airport to attend two conferences in Europe. He was informed by border police at that time that he was “wanted for undermining the security of the State.” Thus began the various difficulties he has faced in pursuing fully his professional activities and scholarship. Then, on 28 October 2015, the Rabat Trial Court Royal Prosecutor issued criminal charges against him 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 while his trial on the criminal charges has been ongoing since 2015, at each scheduled court session since the first one on 19 November 2015, the trial has been postponed and re-scheduled, at three-month intervals, until today: in other words, thirty-five times over a period of seven and one-half years. Furthermore, Dr. Monjib’s sentencing to a year-long prison term occurred more than two years ago; he was released provisionally after three months. All this suggests that the charges against him are baseless and the dossier empty. However, since Dr. Monjib has re-engaged in peaceful civic activities, including writing in the press, it appears that the recent suspension from his position at the university is yet another form of pressure on him.

We call upon the government authorities to end their mistreatment of Maati Monjib, lift the suspension on his university appointment, and remove the obstructions on his rights to gainful employment, scholarly research, international travel, and civic activities. We urge you, as well, to put an immediate end to the efforts to smear Dr. Monjib’s reputation with malicious fabrications.

We await your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Eve Troutt Powell
MESA President

Professor, University of Pennsylvania



Laurie Brand

Chair, Committee on Academic Freedom

Professor Emerita, University of Southern California

cc:

Abdellatif Ouahbi, Minister of Justice, Kingdom of Morocco

Abdelouafi Laftit, Minister of the Interior, Kingdom of Morocco

Nasser Bourita, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Morocco

Abdellatif Miraoui, Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation, Kingdom of Morocco

Mohamed Mehdi Bensaid, Minister of Culture and Communication, Kingdom of Morocco

Abdellatif Hamouchi, Director, Direction générale de la Sûreté nationale

Amina Bouayach, President, National Human Rights Council (CNDH)

Princess Lalla Joumala Alaoui, Ambassador, Embassy of Morocco

Mohamed Benchaâboun, Ambassador, Kingdom of Morocco, Paris, France

Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Irene Khan, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Maria Arena, Chair of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights

Viktor Almqvist, Press Officer for the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament

Hannah Neumann, Vice-Chair of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights



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Raphael Glucksmann, Vice-Chair of the European Parliament
Subcommittee on Human Rights

Bernard Guetta, Vice-Chair of the European Parliament Subcommittee on
Human Rights

Christian Sagartz, Vice-Chair of the European Parliament Subcommittee on
Human Rights

Dunja Mijatović, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

Puneet Talwar, Ambassador, Embassy of the United States in Morocco

Mohammed Rhachi, President, Université Mohamad V, Rabat, Morocco

Jamal Eddine El Hani, Dean, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences,
Université Mohamad V, Rabat, Morocco