



Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.  
University of Arizona  
1232 North Cherry Avenue  
Tucson, Arizona 85721

June 1, 1994

President Zine Abidine Ben Ali  
President of the Republic  
Presidential Palace  
Tunis/Carthage  
Tunisia

Your Excellency:

The Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association wishes to express concern for the imprisonment of Moncef Marzouki, professor at the Medical Faculty of Sousse and formerly president of Tunisia's well-known and well-respected Ligue pour la Defense des Droits de L'Homme. MESA, as you may know, comprises 2300 academics worldwide who teach and conduct research on the Middle East and North Africa. The association publishes the respected *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and is committed to ensuring respect for the principles of academic freedom and human rights throughout the region.

As scholars with academic interests in the Middle East, we were disturbed to learn that Professor Marzouki was arrested on 24 March 1994 and has since been detained without bail. It is our understanding that Professor Marzouki was charged with spreading false information liable to disturb public order and insulting judicial authorities, and that the accusations are based on a declaration to the Spanish press that he in fact denies making. It would appear that Professor Marzouki is being detained solely for the exercise of his right to freedom of expression, guaranteed both by the Tunisian constitution and by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Tunisia is a state party.

Professor Marzouki's arrest is particularly alarming in view of the public commitment the Government of Tunisia has made to the promotion and safeguard of human rights and of the leadership role it has determined to play in this area. It would, in fact, appear to contravene many of the public statements and diplomatic actions your government had undertaken to advertise its commitment to international standards.

We respectfully urge you to review Professor Marzouki's case and move either to release him from prison or clarify the charges for which he continues to be detained, and to ensure that his detention is not based on his exercise of rights and freedoms guaranteed under international human rights law.

Sincerely,

Anne H. Betteridge  
Executive Director

cc: M. Sadok Chaâbane, Ministre de la Justice  
M. Habib Ben Yahia, Ministre des Affaires étrangères  
M. Iadh Ouederni, Conseiller présidentiel pour les Droits de l'Homme  
Ambassador Ismail Khelil