



# Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.

The University of Arizona · 1232 North Cherry Avenue · Tucson, Arizona 85721

May 4, 1995

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

Your Excellency:

We write to express our continued concern about the refusal of the Tunisian government to allow Dr. Moncef Marzouki to travel, and interference with his research and professional activities.

The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2400 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.

We have written before to protest Dr. Marzouki's jailing and the travel ban, penalties supposedly imposed as a result of comments he made to a Spanish newspaper. The fact that the Spanish publication involved has admitted that he was misquoted makes the charges against him for defamation and disseminating false news seem unfounded. Moreover, regardless of what he said, punishment for peaceable speech would in and of itself constitute a violation of his human rights. We also understand that Dr. Marzouki is still unable to participate in international research projects and to treat patients at the school of medicine in Sousse, and that he is being subjected to close surveillance.

Now we understand that his passport was confiscated on March 18 as he tried to fly to Brussels for a conference -- without explanation. All this adds up to a pattern of mistreatment and harrassment of Tunisia's most famous human rights advocate that can only bring discredit to the Tunisian government. Further, we understand that Dr. Marzouki was recently prevented from traveling to Cairo, where he planned to attend the April 22 meeting of the Arab Organization for Human Rights executive committee. The decision to prevent his attending this important human rights meeting will prompt more doubts about the Tunisian government's human rights policies, and is to be regretted.

We respectfully urge that the Tunisian government take immediate action to ensure that the interference with Dr. Marzouki's professional activities will cease forthwith.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Anne H. Betteridge  
Executive Director

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