

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2015		77	Morocco	<i>Maâti Monjib</i>
	2015			<i>follow-up 1</i>
	2015			<i>follow-up 2</i>
	2016			<i>follow-up 3</i>
	2021			<i>follow-up 4</i>

Announcement

On 29 December 2020, Moroccan historian Maâti Monjib has been arbitrarily detained on charges of money laundering and embezzlement. This is widely believed to be a trumped-up charge as punishment for his recent criticism of the Direction Générale de Surveillance du Territoire (DGST – General Directorate of Territorial Surveillance; internal intelligence agency) for its repression of political opponents. A petition has been launched for his immediate and unconditional release.

Please urgently sign the petition [here](#) (scroll down to add your email, name, and affiliation).

Please find below:

- A NCH Bibliography about historian Maâti Monjib.
- The text of the petition to release historian Maâti Monjib.

The Network of Concerned Historians has already campaigned for our colleague in 2015 and 2016. Please see [\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#) and [\[4\]](#).

With best wishes,

Antoon De Baets and Ruben Zeeman
(Network of Concerned Historians)

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TEXT OF PETITION FOR HISTORIAN MAÂTI MONJIB ([7] January 2021)

Source: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdGGR-skPMQ4bCHMiXQg1kZL8g3PaOvAMJKSpHrP-1rc3VhAg/viewform?gxids=7628>

Freedom for Professor Maâti Monjib

January 2021

Freedom for Maâti Monjib!

On Friday December 29, 2020, Professor Maâti Monjib, a staunch defender of human rights and a brilliant historian of contemporary Morocco, was forced into an unmarked car by eight policemen in plain clothes and taken to an unknown location. Abdellatif Hamamouchi, a member of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH) whom Monjib was having lunch with in a restaurant in downtown Rabat, later recounted how Monjib's brazen arrest took place.

This display of state power took minutes and was witnessed by astonished bystanders. It was an abusive arrest that wrongfully rejected Monjib's request to be shown an arrest warrant. The arresting police produced no warrant, and Monjib's attempt to resist the police was easily overcome. In record time, the prosecutor issued a statement in which he informed the public that Dr. Monjib was taken into custody and arraigned by a judge before being jailed, pending further instructions and a trial. The judge decided to keep Monjib in prison while the case is being prepared despite the fact that Dr. Monjib provided reliable guarantees that he would remain at the disposition of the Moroccan justice system until the end of his trial.

At age 58, Dr Monjib is diabetic and suffers from a heart condition. When he was sent to jail, Dr. Monjib was deprived of his medicine, and given no blanket or proper clothing. The judge interrogated him in the absence of his lawyer, and his family was not notified about his whereabouts. It is only later, on December 30, 2020 that his sister and a friend were allowed to visit and bring what was needed.

Prison officials refused to allow this distinguished scholar to have any book during this period of awaiting trial! Such treatment was vindictive and consistent with a pattern of abuse accorded Dr. Monjib.

The judge in charge of the dossier has declared that he is conducting an investigation under the General Prosecutor's office about some facts. These facts are susceptible to indicate that Dr Monjib has been involved in money laundering! Conviction of such a crime could send Dr. Monjib to jail for up to five years or more.

One of us, Abdellah Hammoudi, a professor of anthropology at Princeton University, has been a close friend and academic colleague of Dr. Monjib for many years. Hammoudi and Monjib worked side by side on several academic and human rights issues, including under the auspices the Moroccan Associations for Human Rights. On the basis of this experience, Hammoudi is fully confident that Dr. Monjib is innocent of the charges brought against him.

The funds that the government is relying upon as proof of Monjib's laundering of money were donated and used to found and administer the Ibn Rochd Center for Research and Information. A private think tank, Ibn Rochd Center offered programs on Human Rights issues, Independent journalism, and freedom of expression and opinion. Dr. Monjib founded

and directed the work of the Center until he was forced to terminate its operations in 2014 due to political pressure from the government. The EU and American NGOs funded the Center, which had been transparent throughout its existence, and adhered to best practices for an academic undertaking with a human rights mandate. Neither the European Union nor the USA-based NGOs that provided the funds ever raised concerns about the mismanagement of their resources.

As a leading professor of History at the Mohamed V University in Rabat, Dr. Monjib used the Ibn Rochd Center to organize influential workshops on such vital topics as democratization, freedom of the press, independent journalism, training in investigative journalism, and related concerns. The Center developed a following that made it threatening to the authorities who took steps to shut it down.

Dr. Monjib is a remarkable scholar, a prolific writer who publishes in both Arabic and French. He has written several books, and numerous articles in Arabic and French. He is widely read and appreciated in Morocco, Europe, the Maghreb, and the Arab World. Monjib is an internationally recognized scholar. Among US and foreign appointments, Monjib was a Fellow at the Brookings Institution, a visiting professor at the University of Florida-Gainesville, a Fulbright Scholar at Rainy River Community College, and a professor at Gaston Berger University, Saint Louis, Senegal (1992-2000).

This is not the first time that Monjib's lifetime commitment to human rights and democracy had agitated the Moroccan government. He had previously endured exile in Senegal. Since his return to Morocco to resume his teaching assignments at Mohamed V University, Monjib has been subjected to intrusive forms of surveillance and additional forms of harassment that have made his private life miserable.

An initial court case was opened against Dr. Monjib in 2015. He was accused of unlawful reception of funds from foreign sources and of behavior threatening the security of the state. Also, he was banned from travel abroad. In fact, these accusations were punitive responses to the Center's training of the first generation of investigative journalists in Morocco. The ban was lifted only after pressures mounted by a long hunger strike and an international solidarity campaign. The accusations against Monjib were proven to be baseless according to the opinion of many lawyers and independent observers in both Morocco and abroad. Nevertheless, Dr. Monjib has been frequently required to attend court proceedings arising from these accusations, but on each occasion the judges have deliberated for a few minutes and then postponed the trial. This is a classic pressure tactic to keep a criminal file open as a form of intimidation tactic, keeping a targeted person beneath the guillotine of the law.

Taking advantage of the conditions created by the pandemic, which the government used as a pretext to intensify surveillance and control over the entire country, the police frequently summoned Dr. Monjib to appear before the special branch of the judiciary in Casablanca. The summons expanded to include his family members. An intense defamation campaign has been orchestrated by the Moroccan government to reinforce these appearances before the investigative branch of the police. As part of the campaign to discredit Monjib, the value of his property and wealth were exaggerated. A house he owns in the city of Temara, an apartment in the neighborhood of Agdal, which he uses as an office, and some agricultural land he inherited from his family were treated with suspicion in media articles published by what Moroccans call the "yellow press," which has prospered in recent years with official encouragement. Dr. Monjib's personal information, which is only available to the police and

the justice system, has been divulged to millions of readers, apparently to prepare public opinion for the drastic step of arresting and sending him to jail. This propaganda assault consistently fails to mention that Dr. Monjib is an internationally respected professor, keynote speaker, consultant, and professor, who depends on several funding sources that allow him to earn a decent income, which he uses to carry on his professional activities, including buying an office.

Dr. Monjib and the observers of his case knew that his arrest was imminent. Those intent on punitive action waited for him to recover from a COVID-19 virus attack before proceeding to arrest him in a manner that reminded Moroccans of the “years of lead”—a long period spanning the 1960s/80s, which became notorious for arbitrary detentions and forcible disappearances of dissidents. The state has again recently proceeded to arrest opposition figures before major holidays in order to ensure that they would not be released from confinement for quite a long time as the justice system suspends its work during holidays. Dr. Monjib’s arrest on the eve of the new year meant that he could not expect to be released anytime soon, unjustly depriving him of the companionship of his beloved family during these holidays, particularly precious to the Moroccan people.

Dr. Monjib is now facing two trials. The first trial has been going on since 2015 involving allegations of undermining the security of the state. The second trial originated late in 2020 on the money laundering charges. While the first proceeding was clearly political, given the accusation of endangering state security, the second one purports to be economic alleging money laundering, which observers insist that despite appearances, is also motivated by political retaliation for Monjib’s connection with activities perceived to be critical of and opposed to government policies. Several journalists have been accused of crimes that seem unrelated to the real political reasons that explain their accusations and arrests. Foregoing political accusations against Dr. Monjib seems also best explained as part of the effort to defame his character and depoliticize his trial so as to disguise its obvious character.

Dr. Monjib’s case is but the last in a series of increasingly bold efforts to clamp down on activists, journalists, and dissenters who are doing nothing more than exercising their constitutional rights. Legal processes and the justice system are instrumentalized to implement a new generation of grave violations of human rights by the institutions of government. This pattern is narrowing the margins of freedom that the authoritarian government reluctantly conceded under popular pressure during the Arab Spring back in 2011.

The broader picture of Moroccan repression is relevant to the treatment of Dr. Monjib. The Rif Hirak leaders are still serving the heavy sentences they received during unjust trials. Journalists are accused of sexual crimes. Political figures and ordinary citizens have found themselves objects of fabricated sex tapes. Independent journalists, in particular, have become the enemy of the state: Ali Anouzla, a journalist respected for his integrity, faces charge for allegedly glorifying of terrorism. Taoufik Bouachrine is serving a 15-year jail for crimes of sex, rape, human trafficking, and recording of pornographic content. Hamid Mahdaoui served a three-year sentence for the bogus crime of not informing the police of a phone call he received from someone claiming to plan smuggling a tank into the country. Mahdaoui real ‘crime’ for which he was arrested and tried was in response to his honest reporting on the Rif Hirak. Hajar Raissouni, a journalist in Bouachrine’s daily newspaper Akhbar al Youm, was detained with her fiancé on accusations of abortion. Her uncle, the editor-in-chief of Akhbar al Youm, Souleymane Raissouni, has been in jail for eight months now because of a Facebook

post from a fake account, accusing him of a rape attempt. Omar Radi, an investigative journalist, has been arrested since September accused of rape. Although Radi claims a consensual relationship, he has yet to receive his day in court after several months in jail. While rape and sexual violence should be taken seriously by the justice system, the Moroccan police apparatus seems to have used the moral opprobrium associated with these crimes to elicit hostility toward its opponents. The uncertainty surrounding allegations of sexual violence makes it almost impossible to organize international support for these journalists. The nature of such crimes also divides human rights activists, confuses the public, and helps the state implement its repressive agenda. It needs to be appreciated that denouncing corruption, injustice, and ecological devastation by special interests and the powerful are the true reasons behind these serious accusations. Those who are brave enough to expose these wrongs, instead of being honored, become targeted by the state in ways that will minimize their influence.

Moroccan law and courts are being manipulated to sustain an ongoing and systematic campaign of state terror designed to silence dissenting voices. The impact of this campaign has been a generalized feeling of insecurity giving rise to an uncertain future for many intellectuals, journalists, and human rights activists.

We ask the Moroccan government to free Dr. Maâti Monjib without imposing conditions and annul the current and older court cases against him. The accusations leveled against him are baseless and do not begin to overcome the presumption of innocence that every person is entitled to, and journalists and scholars, especially so. We believe that Dr. Monjib is being punished solely for speaking truth to power.

We also ask the Moroccan government to free other human rights defenders currently serving prison sentences, or being investigated, some of whom are being held illegally under arrest.

We demand that Moroccan authorities show respect for human rights as embodied in the laws and constitution of the country. The content of these norms was clarified by the findings of Morocco's own Equity and Reconciliation Commission. Above all we ask that the police and judicial system honor the presumption of innocence until the accused is proven guilty by reliable evidence of sufficient weight to establish guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. We ask that such defendants be left at liberty during the investigations of evidence and throughout the trial. Individuals of responsible character and respected social stature do not pose threats of fleeing the country to avoid prosecution if the law is being properly administered.

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