

5 January 2020

Morocco: Ongoing Detention of Human Rights Defender Maâti Monjib

On 30 December, the Investigative Judge at Rabat First Instance Court ordered the preventive detention of human rights defender **Maâti Monjib** on the charge of “money laundering” and scheduled his next investigation session to be held on 20 January.

[Maâti Monjib](#) is the President of Freedom Now, an association that works to defend freedom of expression and journalism in Morocco. He is also a co-founder and a member of the Moroccan Association for Investigative Journalism (MAIJ), an association that works on exposing corruption issues in the country.

Maâti Monjib was arrested on 29 December 2020 at noon at a restaurant on Al Alawiyyin street in the neighborhood of Hassan in Rabat by plainclothes security forces who arrived at the restaurant in two police vehicles minutes after the arrival of the human rights defender. Maâti Monjib was brought before the Public Prosecutor at the Court of First Instance in Rabat where he was charged of ‘carrying out money laundering’. The human rights defender was then referred to the Investigative Judge who ordered his preventive detention and scheduled his next investigation session to be held on 20 January. Maâti Monjib is currently detained in a solitary confinement in El Arjat 2 prison in the city of Salé near Rabat.

Over the past few months, Maâti Monjib has been repeatedly summoned for questioning by the National Judicial Police Brigade in Casablanca. On 7 October 2020, the Public Prosecutor announced that the human rights defender is under investigation for money laundering. Maâti Monjib believes that the accusation is in retaliation for his criticism of the General Directorate for Territorial Surveillance, who he has accused of carrying out illegal surveillance on civil society and opposition politicians. In the days after the Public Prosecutor’s announcement, several of Maâti Monjib’s family members were summoned to and interrogated at a police station in Casablanca, despite the fact that they live almost 90 kilometres away, in Rabat. During the questioning, they were not informed of the reasons for their summoning, and were asked to provide details about Maâti Monjib’s human rights work. On 12 October 2020, Maâti Monjib began a hunger strike in protest against the allegations and the harassment of his family members. He ended the hunger strike on 15 October 2020.

Maâti Monjib has been frequently [harassed](#) for his peaceful human rights work. On 21 October 2020, the human rights defender was due to attend the latest hearing session at the Court of First Instance in Rabat, in relation to another case opened against him and other human rights defenders for “threatening the internal security of the State” in 2015. The session did not take place after the courthouse informed the defender’s lawyer that two of its employees had tested positive for COVID-19. Subsequent hearing sessions related to the case have been repeatedly delayed and rescheduled. In August 2015, a travel ban was imposed on Maâti Monjib, which was lifted on 29 October 2015, after he had spent 24 days on hunger strike. The human rights defender is frequently the subject of defamation campaigns, led by the pro-government media outlets, such as Annahar al-Maghribia and AlAhdath al-Maghribia, which accuse him of inciting violence and embezzling civil society funds.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the detention and the judicial harassment of human rights defender Maâti Monjib as it believes he is being targeted in an effort to inhibit his work in defence of human rights, freedom of expression, and exposing corruption.

Front Line Defenders urge the authorities in Morocco to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Maâti Monjib and drop the charges against him as it is believed that they are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Maâti Monjib, while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the 'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
3. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Morocco and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

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