

23 October 2020

Morocco: Judicial harassment of human rights defender Maâti Monjib

On 26 October 2020, human rights defender **Maâti Monjib** is due to present himself for interrogation before the National Judicial Police Brigade in Casablanca. The questioning relates to an investigation led by the Public Prosecutor since 7 October 2020, in which he is suspected of carrying out money laundering.

[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.

The National Judicial Police Brigade in Casablanca have summoned Maâti Monjib in for questioning on 26 October 2020. It comes after the announcement on 7 October 2020 by the Public Prosecution that the 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 family members of the human rights defender were summoned to attend an interrogation at a police station in Casablanca despite the fact that they live almost 90 km away, in Rabat. They were not informed of the reasons for their summoning, and during the questioning were asked for details about Maâti Monjib's human rights work. On 12 October 2020, Maâti Monjib started 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, he was due to attend the latest hearing session at the Court of First Instance in Rabat, in relation to a 2015 case opened against him and other human rights defenders for "threatening the internal security of the State". 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. Hearing sessions related to the case have been repeatedly the subject of delays and rescheduling. In August 2015, a travel ban was imposed on the defender. It was lifted on 29 October 2015, after Monjib had spent 24 days on hunger strike. The human rights defender is frequently the subject of defamation campaigns, led by the State-owned media outlets, which accuse him of inciting violence and embezzling civil society funds.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the judicial harassment and intimidation of human rights defender Maâti Monjib. Front Line Defenders believes that Maâti Monjib 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 drop the allegations against Maâti Monjib as it is believed that they are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Maâti Monjib as well as of the members of his family;

3. Take measures to ensure that government officials or media outlets refrain from making statements or declarations stigmatising the legitimate work of human rights defender Maâti Monjib;
4. 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.