

## Press Communiqué and Emergency Appeal for International Solidarity

### THE MOROCCAN PRESS GAGGED!

#### **WE APPEAL FOR INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND DEMAND THAT THE CHARGES BE DROPPED AGAINST THE 7 MOROCCAN JOURNALISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS WHO APPEAR IN COURT ON JANUARY 25, 2017 IN RABAT**

The Interprofessional Press-Media-Culture-and-Entertainment Union (SIPMICS), and both the Communication-Culture-and-Entertainment Federation and the International Secretariat of the National Labour Confederation of France (CNT-F) wish to express their full support for the seven Moroccan activists, five of whom are journalists, accused of "undermining state security" and who stand trial on January 25, 2017, with a likelihood of stiff sentences.

We wish to draw the attention of journalists, trade unions, political associations and the general public to **the wave of repression in Morocco that is sweeping human rights activists and independent journalists at the moment.**

The crackdowns in recent years in Morocco have been growing in intensity since the February 20 Movement, a popular protest movement that has affected much of the country since 2011. Indeed, today there are more than 200 political prisoners in Morocco, and the intimidation, harassment and lawsuits are multiplying. Human rights activists, social movement activists, trade unionists and journalists are directly targeted. Not to mention exploitation and the contempt of the authorities –*Hogra*, which Moroccans have to face on a daily basis, and that can sometimes end in death as witnessed in the dreadful event that led to the death of Mohcine Fikri, a fish monger, crushed by a refuse truck in the Autumn of 2016 as he tried to get back his fish confiscated by the authorities.

**On 25 January, seven activists, including five journalists, appear at the Court of First Instance in Rabat in a trial adjourned from November 18, 2015.**

On October 26, the day the hearing was originally supposed to be held, the authorities gave false pretexts for the trial to be postponed.

After having argued last June that two of the accused were absent -even though their lawyers were present, in October the pretext was that summonses had not been served to some of the accused: "address unknown" for one and for another: "the accused's mother refused to accept the summons". This is absurd. The authorities have had the addresses of each of the accused for a long time. And the mother in question declared that she had never actually received a summons. Indeed, in the absence of a court officer's justification, there is no evidence whatsoever that summonses were actually served. We do know, of course, that the authorities frequently use adjournments as a tactic to sap people's strength.

The accused are known for their activist work in defense of investigative and independent journalism, and for reporting news on the suppression of the February 20 Movement. They are also members of various organizations and because their activities are considered a disturbance, they have suffered harassment from the Moroccan government. Some of them have already been jailed - most recently in the wake of false accusations by the authorities, merely on account of their activism. It should also be noted that the judge in charge of the case was already the judge who in the past,

sentenced one of the seven journalists! The repressive fury of the Moroccan authorities continues via its judicial tool!

**Today, these seven comrades face serious charges:**

**Maati Monjib** (historian, journalist and Chairman of *Freedom Now*, an organization which defends Freedom of Speech in Morocco and former chairman of the Ibn Rushd Center for Studies and Communication); **Hicham Mansouri** (a project leader at the Moroccan Association for Investigative Journalism, AMJI) **Abdessamad Ait Aishah aka Samad Iach** (journalist, member of the AMJI and former coordinator of the Ibn Rushd Center Training Project); **Hisham khrinchi aka Hisham Almiraat** (former Director of Global Voices Advocacy, founder and former chairman of the Association of digital rights - DNA); and **Mohamed Sber** (Chairman of the Moroccan Association for Youth Education - AMEJ), are accused "of 'endangering state security', which may result in a sentence of five years in prison, under the pretext of organizing training courses for the use of free software applications on smartphones as part of their work (training provided by the Center Ibn Rushd and AMEJ, in partnership with the Dutch NGO Free Press Unlimited) and receiving funding from abroad.

**Rachid Tarik** (journalist, current chairman of the Moroccan Association for Investigative Journalism - AMJI) and **Maria Moukrim** (journalist, former chairwoman of the AMJI) are accused of not reporting to the authorities that they received funding from abroad for the activities of the association, although the regulations and rules of implementation are far from clear. They face a fine of 20,000 dirhams (€1,000 each).

This is not the first time this type of political trial has been held in Morocco and in recent years, we have stopped counting. We call for an international mobilization to break the media blackout on the current situation in Morocco of which our comrades, colleagues, and the Moroccan people are victim in their struggle for social justice against the dictatorship, the repression and systematic torture, the political trials, insecurity and exploitation.

**We**, the workers of the Interprofessional Press-Media-Culture-and-Entertainment Union and of both the Communication-Culture-Entertainment Federation and the International Secretariat of CNT-F, **denounce obstacles to Freedom of the Press and Freedom of Speech, but also the current shackling of political, trade union and association liberties, which is on the increase in Morocco.**

**CNT-F** denounces the holding of this political trial on 25 January 2017, and **demands the immediate dismissal of charges** against Maati Monjib, Hicham Mansouri Abdessamad Ait Aicha, Hicham Almiraat, Sber Mohamed Rachid Tarik and Maria Moukrim!

**We also demand the immediate release of all political prisoners held in Moroccan jails!**

**We call on union and political organizations and associations and comrades in France and elsewhere to express their support for the 7 accused militants by sending *en masse* a letter by mail or by fax to the Moroccan authorities (sample letter available at [www.cnt-f.org/sipm](http://www.cnt-f.org/sipm) with mail contacts and faxes) requesting the dismissal of charges against them.**

Paris, January 19, 2017

**A Blow to One is a Blow to All!**

**International Solidarity!**

**Their Support Committee has put on line a petition which may be signed here :**

**[https://secure.avaaz.org/fr/petition/Premier\\_Ministre\\_du\\_Maroc\\_Ministre\\_de\\_la\\_Justice\\_Ministre\\_de\\_linterieur\\_Abandon\\_des\\_charges\\_retenues\\_a\\_lencontre\\_des\\_sep/?pv=10](https://secure.avaaz.org/fr/petition/Premier_Ministre_du_Maroc_Ministre_de_la_Justice_Ministre_de_linterieur_Abandon_des_charges_retenues_a_lencontre_des_sep/?pv=10)**

**We also call on our journalist comrades and colleagues and on their union or professional organisations, here in France and elsewhere, to get in touch with the Support Committee for information about their state, the trial, and in order to communicate on the subject.**

**Support Committee contact: [solidaritemonjib@gmail.com](mailto:solidaritemonjib@gmail.com).**