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Your Excellency,

I am writing to urgently condemn the authorities' arrest and arbitrary detention of academic and human rights defender Maati Monjib on 29 December 2020. Security agents in civilian clothes took him by force and without prior notification from a restaurant in the capital Rabat to the court of First Instance in Rabat, where he was brought before the prosecutor. The latter referred him to the investigating judge, who, after interrogating him without the presence of a lawyer, ordered his pretrial detention.

On 7 October 2020, the prosecutor's office at the Rabat Court of First Instance, following a referral from the Financial Information Processing Unit, opened a new investigation against Maati Monjib for alleged embezzlement and money laundering apparently stemming from the receipt of foreign funds to conduct training workshops for citizen journalists. Maati Monjib told Amnesty International that this renewed harassment and intimidation are due to a recent radio interview where he criticised the General Directorate of Territorial Surveillance (DGST, internal intelligence) for their repression of political opponents as well as his open support to detained journalists Omar Radi and Suleiman Raissouni.

The Central Bureau of Judicial Investigation (better known as BNPI) has over the past months summoned Maati Monjib more than seven times for interrogation in Casablanca and in Rabat. Four members of his family, with no relation to political activism, were also summoned, including his 70-year-old sister who has Alzheimer's and had to travel to Casablanca, hours away from her home, to be interrogated for more than four hours. Maati Monjib denies all accusations against him.

I therefore ask you to immediately and unconditionally release Maati Monjib, as he is a prisoner of conscience solely detained for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and association. I urge you to close the open investigations and drop all charges against him. I also urge you to explicitly recognize the legitimacy of human rights defenders and publicly support their work, acknowledging their contribution to the advancement of human rights and to end the criminalization of their receipt of foreign funds to pursue their human rights work.

Yours sincerely,