



A French Teacher and France's State of Emergency

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If France has often presented itself as a modern democracy, a Republic which values have revolved around the guarantee and protection of personal freedom and free speech, such claims no longer reflect ground realities.

France today is an empty shell of a Republic, a pretence democracy governed by an elite which has played terror, fear, and prejudices to better exert its control over a gullible populace. For all its grand-standing on despotism, France today eerily resembles those dictatorships it once slammed for being illegitimate.

And if France once did in fact held Freedom and Liberty in the palm of its Republican hand, its new state of emergency long disappeared any hope of Justice for those who still dare stand as free men.

Under the ever-suffocating shadow of the Elysee, France has learnt that any murmur against the state, any contention, and any criticism can, and will be prosecuted.

Saleh Lamrani stands testimony to France's new dystopian reality. In February 2016, Professor Salah Lamrani, a French Literature Middle School tenured teacher in the Paris popular suburb of Seine Saint Denis was unjustly, and unlawfully suspended, following phantasmagorical claims he espoused radical tendencies.

Mr Lamrani, whose professional file remains without so much as a blemish, exemplifies France's descent into ultra-national fascism – this new sense that France needs to stand puritan and absolute in the declaration of its values – even if it means ... especially if it means, silencing those who still dare live pluralism as a God given right.

It all began with one teacher's love for writing and a passion for the French language. A tradition which gifted the world of the likes of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile Zola and Baudelaire has risen today a tyrant, suppressing thoughts, words and philosophies, wielding fear and repression to better bully so-called potential dissidents into not just silence but intellectual uniformity.

A free thinker, Mr Lamrani came to clash with a narrow-minded head-teacher, both a product and a tool of the "system". Mrs Khadidja Bot, his head-teacher did not approve you see of his writings, his ideals, and the ideas he explored and debated on his own personal blog. Never mind the fact that, she, had not right, and more importantly no jurisdiction over his thoughts.

Never mind that, she, a person of authority working for the Republic, should have abided by those principles which read still: Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.

For he, a teacher of the Republic weighted on matters of politics and foreign policy, he was castigated by a system which demands intellectual submission.

Because Mr Lamrani openly challenged France's state of emergency, a zealot Mrs Bot took it upon herself to "teach" him a very republican lesson - that freedom comes at a price ... a heavy one at that!

In an interview I conducted with him on February 14, Mr Lamrani explained how his troubles stemmed from the implacable authoritarianism his school's most senior figureheads demonstrated against his person.

"I was suspended without any investigation and in spite of my formal complaint for moral harassment and slander due to my school authoritarian management - who didn't like my Union and blogger activities, and who accused me publicly of being a dangerous terrorist."

In times such as ours such claims should not be taken lightly as they can result in dramatic repercussions - not the least Mr Lamrani's personal safety, and freedom.

Mr Lamrani's "crimes" were that he denounced state repression, while proclaiming personal political truths on a platform which was his own, outside school hours, and without any effect on his work as a teacher.

Because one head-teacher, Mrs Khadidja Bot, imagined herself a "keeper" of the establishment, a self-appointed tyrant of the national education complex, one man's life and future now stand in jeopardy. Because, she, a person of authority, chose to slander and label, to better assert her "power", a valuable teacher has been shunned by his community and vilified by his colleagues. Without so much as a shred of evidence, without the authorities ever bothering to open an inquiry into his alleged "radicalism", one man was stripped of his professional dignity.

Mr Lamrani's calls for justice today have been answered with despicable brutality, and intolerable cruelty.

In the throes of a legal battle against Mrs Bot, Mr lamrani has been systematically picked upon, lied about, and harassed.

To better rationalize the illegitimacy of her position against Mr Lamrani, and because this one tenacious teacher has persisted in his silent vigil t before the school gate, Mrs Bot resorted to the use of violence, hoping to co-opt her victim into breaking the law.

Students have been threatened should they speak to him, students have faced disciplinary actions for supporting him, parents have been bullied by the school administration for demanding an explanation, and lies have been cultivated so that Mr lamrani could be dismissed as a dangerous dissident - a nut case no worth listening to, let alone believe.

Only Mr Lamrani is not crazy, and he is not the violent fascist Mrs Bot has been so keen on portraying him as ... It is, she, who acted a tyrant. It is she, who chose to shut down the

school, and thus disrupt students' education so that she could drive her rejection of Mr Lamrani further still.

The victim of an unjust system, and a clear case of abuse of power, Mr Lamrani is being painted as the guilty party for standing up to a bully.

It is she, who has yet to anchor her decision to dismiss him in the rule of law.

How far before we say too far? More importantly why are we allowing for wannabe despots to wield authority without transparency?

Accountability is implied in the word democracy ... it might be time to practice it.

Today Mr Lamrani could be arrested ... on what charge no one can really tell since he never once broke the law. But since France is under a state of emergency, police needs only to decide for him to be incarcerated.

How grand France Republic truly is, when it is intellectuals who populate its prisons.

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