



## France, the Police State, and the Intellectual

Victimization in the Land of Voltaire

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Mondialisation.ca, 17 février 2016

[EpicTimes](#) 16 février 2016

Région : [Europe](#)

Thème: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

*They say the road to hell is paved with good intentions. In the case of France's state of emergency, it is the road to Freedom which is littered with gags and shackles. One teacher most of all: Mr Salah Lamrani has learned what it costs to speak "en Français."*

France continues to project this aura of democratic fortitude; lecturing the world on how countries should behave and govern themselves, due to some colorfully narrated history as the "République" representing Freedom, Equality and Fraternity, when in fact it's on course to become the very despot it warns against.

A police state hiding behind the veneer of Western democratic sainthood, France is in fact a racist and intolerant state vying for complete political, social, economic and intellectual control ... Of course one cannot ignore the religious sphere. In the land of Voltaire, one should not overtly say God; only deny his existence, worshiping instead at the altar of secularism.

Where France once stood for Freedom, its state now wrestles with selective freedoms. Paris is actively looking to thin out the rights civilians are still allowed to practice. How beautiful the French Marianne today! How strong the 5<sup>th</sup> Republic ...

What is left to say of a state which persecutes its intellectuals and teachers? What is left to say of a system which promotes witch-hunting and fear-mongering, targeting those with views that differ from the Establishment's?

Isn't intellectual diktat the very character of a dictatorship? Has France lost all sense of republican pride and identity that it stooped to policing its most dedicated teachers in the name of politica conformity?



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 for four months 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 ... actually, 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", for he dared express certain opinions on such matters as politics and foreign policy on his personal blog, outside the sphere of control his office could have ever claimed to exert upon his person. Still, he was castigated.

Lamrani openly challenged France's state of emergency. He dared suggest Russia and Iran were in fact abiding by the spirit of international law in their resistance against Daesh in Syria. An opinion that saw him likened to those rag-tags mercenaries whose blades have inspired only disgust and fear.

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.

This is France's state of emergency! How it treats its nationals, how it rewards free-thinking and intellectualism. France has many lessons to teach the world when it comes to totalitarianism.

But if Mr Lamrani has lost a battle against the Establishment, he is not admitting defeat. In fact, he has vowed to expose the very system which has claimed his freedom and attempted to silence his voice, so that others will learn to speak unhindered.

It was Jean Jaures who said:

All of us forget that before everything else, we are men, ephemeral beings lost in the immense universe, so full of terrors. We are inclined to neglect the search for the real meaning of life, to ignore the real goals - serenity of the spirit and sublimity of the heart ... To reach them - that is the revolution.

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