

## Communiqué from Éditions La fabrique

Wednesday 19 April 2023<sup>1</sup>

Ernest [Moret], the director of foreign-language rights at La fabrique, has finally been freed from custody, after his arrest and detention by the British anti-terrorism police upon his arrival at the London train station. We are all very relieved that he is now free, but we are also quite shocked by what has happened.

On the one hand, Ernest isn't out of the woods just yet. His telephone and his professional computer were seized and remain in the hands of the British police, who want to extract all the data from them in order to analyze and exploit it. Even more serious is the fact that our colleague has been ordered to be in London in four weeks so that the British anti-terrorism squad can question him again. British anti-terrorism is unique in Europe when it comes to the legislation of the state of exception: it is the only one that permits the police – without any investigatory leads, suspect behaviors, prosecution or even official “police custody” – to stop, detain and interrogate people answerable to the law, who automatically expose themselves to judicial proceedings if they refuse to cooperate. British anti-terrorism also provides a very permissive juridical framework to police officers so that they can extract the totality of the data from any computer or telephone owned by the person being interrogated. Despite being freed on bail, our colleague's fundamental rights are being trampled upon and his life is now subjected to arbitrary measures by a totally opaque State apparatus.

On the other hand, Ernest was interrogated for several hours and very troubling questions were posed to him: his opinions about the retirement reforms in France, the French government, Emmanuel Macron, the Covid-19 crisis, etc. Perhaps even more serious still, during his interrogation, he was asked to provide the names of the “anti-government” authors who are published by éditions La fabrique, the publishing house for which he works. In addition to the scandalous situation of an anti-terrorist squad that dares to investigate the intentions and the political and philosophical views of people who have been deprived of their freedom, none of these questions are pertinent to the work of a *British* police officer. To pose such questions to a representative of a publishing house, in the framework of anti-terrorism, about the opinions of its authors, pushes even further the logic of political censorship and the repression of dissenting currents of ideas.

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In the context of the [recent] authoritarian escalations of the French government, which have been undertaken during a period of rising social movements, these steps are truly chilling.

How are such measures compatible with the fundamental principles – freedom of expression and democratic rights – glorified by countries such as France and Great Britain? How should one characterize a regime that allows a person who comes to the International Book Fair in London to be detained for almost 24 hours without any concrete evidence against him and then remain subject to anti-terrorism proceedings for an undetermined period of time? Why have the British police devoted themselves to interrogations in which the questions seem to have been prompted by the French intelligence services? Must we suppose that, from now on, while traveling between France and the United Kingdom, we must fear bringing our telephones and computerized materials with us, and expect that they will be seized and searched by the anti-terrorist services? All those who attach importance to democratic principles will be disturbed by such a serious symptom in the evolution of the maintenance of law and order.

This affair sets a precedent for any person who is engaged in intellectual work and whose productions might be judged bothersome by those in power. If any telephone or computer containing confidential manuscripts or journalistic or sociological sources can be stolen, fully analyzed and decrypted by a foreign police force that benefits from draconian prerogatives thanks to state-of-exception legislation, then the freedoms of the press, of academics, and of expression, and the rights to have one's personal data protected, are very seriously threatened.

Éditions La fabrique demands the cessation of all the procedures and legal proceedings against its director of foreign-language rights.