

Ali Sebbar: My Story

Before I start, I have to say one thing: what is happening at the Royal Moroccan Chess Federation (FRME) is unimaginable. I think most readers will believe that it is impossible that such things exist in the world, but I assure you and I swear to you that all I am going to quote is true!

I had decided to stop talking about my case with Amazzal for a simple reason: what matters to me is the future of chess in my country and the future of Moroccan children in general. That is the cause I have been campaigning for over the last 10 years. I have been continually writing and describing the chess situation in Morocco and defending the Moroccan champions for more than 10 years. All this despite my own career. But since you insist on knowing the story, I will try to tell you in brief:

My story with the federation's president, "Mr Mustapha Amazzal" goes back to the year 2001. At the time, I was a junior Moroccan champion and a member of the Moroccan national team. He had just been appointed as president of the FRME. He came to ask the president of my club "Ittifak Ain Chok" if he could 'borrow me' to play for his club. I stress, he asked to 'borrow me'. The president of my club consented and so did I. I had no problem with that because all my concern at that time was to be able to practice my favourite game.

I played without any pay for the president's club until 2004, and this is when problems started. I told the president that I would like to leave his club because I wished to play for another club. He asked me to give my reasons behind my decision. I told him that I did not really feel I need to give reasons and that I should be free to play for the club I want. From that point on, he started a war against me... He would tell to his allies: 'Either Ali plays for me or I will prevent him from playing definitely'.

At that point, I decided to stop playing at competitions once and for all and I would just play my favorite game on the internet ... After about a year, friends started urging me to come back to the chess scene, suggesting that it would be a pity for Morocco to lose one of its talented players ... They convinced me to return, but to do so, I had to be officially accepted by another club. The first club that asked me to become their member was the biggest club in the chess history of Morocco, "ITTIHAD SPORTIF" of Casablanca. We made the necessary steps for the transfer, but the federation's president objected to this, defying all laws! He mounted a war against both, myself and the club, which ended with a four and a half year suspension order for me and simultaneous attacks against "ITTIHAD SPORTIF". Eventually, he managed to destroy this great club, too. "ITTIHAD SPORTIF" stopped participating in competitions, I believe since 2008.

When I was suspended, at the end of 2005, I knew that I could not dream any longer of a good chess career and I decided to focus on training young people, an activity that I had started as an amateur since 1997.

However, the president's attacks would not stop. He prevented me from being present with my students at the Championship of Morocco by categories in 2006. This was an attack not

only against me but also against my students who were just innocent children. It was something really hard to imagine and simply impossible to describe.

Despite all of this, I continued training young people independently of the FRME; also, I would play some tournaments that had no relationship with the FRME.

After a successful participation at the international tournament of Marrakech, I signed a contract with the " CLUB ROYAL " of Marrakech. My new club had managed with difficulty to complete the transfer from the president's club; until then, I had been prevented from playing tournaments or championships under the umbrella of the FRME.

Things changed when "Amazzal" left the federation, temporarily, after being suspended by the FIDE. The Ministry of Sports and Youth had appointed an interim commission to lead the federation. The new leaders invited me to represent Morocco at the pan-Arab games in 2011. From then, things have normalized between me and the FRME.

At the expiry of his suspension, Amazzal returned to the head of the FRME. It was exactly during the ZONAL (zone 4.1) qualifier for the World Cup in 2013, which I won. His hatred towards me had never abated, but what could he do? He tried all means to convince me to return to his club, but my answer was always NO, except for one time when I agreed to represent Morocco with his club " Raja " of Casablanca at the Arab Championship of clubs, which we won.

In 2014, after 10 years of absence, I played at the Championship of Morocco and I won. The hatred of the president towards me increased ever more. His desire was to destroy me but finally he had to realize that he failed despite all his power!

At about this time, I received an offer from the club "FORTERESSE AL QODS ", but that was the beginning of the problems for this young club as well, because, according to "Amazzal", clubs were allowed to do anything apart from receiving Ali Sebbar. He told openly to the president of the 'Forteress Al Qods', Mr Soufiane MOUNTAZ: " You chose your problems when you chose to welcome Ali Sebbar ". This new war ended with a suspension for the club and a new suspension for me.

Prior to this last suspension, he had proposed, for the last time, that I join his club. I, once again, refused. His reaction was – a new suspension order against me. The reason he gave for the suspension: my critiques on Facebook!

The last thing I would like to say, and I would like to be quoted in your article: What really hurts me is not "Amazzal ", but my friends who betrayed me, the Moroccan chess players who failed to understand why I have been militating all these years.