

COLUMBIA WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL

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Former President of Tunisia and Turkish Newspaper Executive in Exile Visit Columbia as US Administration Forms Its Foreign Policy

Columbia, S.C. (March 16, 2017)—The Columbia World Affairs Council (CWAC) hosts both Dr. H.E Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, former president of Tunisia (2011–2014), and Abdülhamit Bilici, recently exiled editor-in-chief of the largest daily newspaper in Turkey, at separate speaking engagements in the coming weeks. The two leaders of democracy, human rights, and free press visit the capital city at a pivotal time for US foreign policy, [Turkey, in particular](#).

Dr. Marzouki is the guest speaker for the CWAC’s Distinguished Speaker Series at noon, Thursday, March 23, at the Columbia Marriott (1200 Hampton). Marzouki was the first democratically elected president of Tunisia after the January 14th Revolution in 2011, a seminal moment in modern Arab history which heralded the onset of multiple popular revolutions throughout the Arab World.

Marzouki is a doctor of medicine, a human rights activist, an author of numerous works on political philosophy in the Arab world, and founder of the center-left Congress Party for the Republic (CPR). In 2015, he founded the Movement for Popular Citizenship (“Harak al sha’b al muwatineen”), a civil movement seeking to encourage active citizen participation amongst all Tunisians, particularly those marginalized under previous regimes.

The event is made possible through a partnership with the University of South Carolina’s Walker Institute of International & Area Studies and the Darla Moore School of Business. The Distinguished Speaker Series is sponsored by BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina.

Mr. Bilici presents “The Recent Turmoil in Turkey & Freedom of the Press” at noon, Tuesday, April 4, at The Palmetto Club (1231 Sumter). Bilici is a prominent newspaper executive in exile following recent political turmoil and government oppression of the media in Turkey. Before leaving the country, Bilici served as editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Zaman Daily* and CEO of its English-language version, *Today’s Zaman*. He also served as general director of Cihan News

Agency and as editor of *Aksiyon Weekly Magazine*. Bilici is an expert on Turkish politics and is widely sought as a speaker on the ongoing political crisis.

The luncheon program is hosted in partnership with the Atlantic Institute (AI) of South Carolina. The talk examines recent events in Turkey with a particular focus on the essential role of journalism in a democracy.

“The Atlantic Institute of South Carolina is pleased to partner with Columbia World Affairs Council to host Mr. Abdulhamit Bilici to discuss the recent turmoil in Turkey,” says Dr. Akif Aydin, president of AI, South Carolina.

“Turkey has been a vital U.S. ally for decades, but the recent, escalating crackdown on the opposition calls into question the sustainability of this partnership. The Turkish government’s increasing repression of dissidents and minorities also threatens the country’s hard-won democracy. At a time when Erdogan is aggressively seeking to expand his presidential powers, its domestic and foreign impact remains a separate question,” says Dr. Aydin.

For more information and registration, visit columbiaworldaffairs.org or contact Dickson Monk at dmonk@columbiaworldaffairs.org, 803-252-2197.

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About the Columbia World Affairs Council:

Founded in 1993, the Columbia World Affairs Council (CWAC) is a private, non-profit, non-partisan organization in the Midlands region of South Carolina, located in the state capital. CWAC serves as the bridge between our local community and its global counterparts. In recent years, South Carolina has experienced rapid growth in international business, politics, and culture. Devoted to promoting intercontinental awareness in South Carolina, the Columbia World Affairs Council exists not only for the state’s benefit, but also for its citizens by enhancing their opportunities to engage in projects that are beneficial to the international community.