



**Tiddukla Tadelsant Tamaziyt deg Marikan**  
**Amazigh Cultural Association in America**

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Dear Ms. Jennifer Jessup,

We are writing in a response to an initiative by the Arab-American Group NNAAC to re-classify the population from origins in the Middle East and North Africa ("MENA" region) as "Arab." It is disturbing when one ethnic group, called "Arab", is organized to include sub-national and ethnic groups who are referred to as minorities. These "minority" groups, including the Amazigh people of North Africa, do in fact view themselves as the majority, not a minority, and are the indigenous inhabitants of their respective regions. Consequently, the terminology in the survey perpetuates further cultural misrepresentations and conflicts, especially considering the current political environment and the lasting effects of "Arabization" policies on the Amazigh people, who do not refer to themselves with the derogatory term of "Berber".

The NNAAC survey currently reads: "A MENA classification will also allow many sub-national minority communities (i.e. Assyrians, Chaldeans, Kurds, Berbers, etc.) that originate from this region to self-identify." The Amazigh-American community is against being classified under an Arab ethnic identity, which would be discriminatory and refuse us the right to express our identity and culture. We urge you to consider clarifying this inaccurate information and prejudiced proposal, in which an Arab ethnic group sub-classifies non-Arab ethnic groups who have steadfastly refused that homogenization. We urge you to re-consider the ongoing misconception that North African Americans are a group from the Middle East, and respect our self-identification.

We hope that you will take into consideration the fact that the survey submitted by NNAAC is not only offensive to us because of its inaccuracy, but because it contributes to the exclusion and marginalization of Amazigh, Kurdish, and other groups' identities in public spheres and among policymakers. We do not have an issue with the Arab American classification existing. We have an issue with our communities being inappropriately classified as "Arab." The Amazigh Diaspora greatly values its American identity for the freedom it has given us to bring issues of marginalization and discrimination to a political platform and to advocate for more just and democratic societies.

We look forward to your response and thank you for your understanding.

Sincerely,

Mokrane Bouakiz, Outgoing President of ACAA (2013-2014)

Sonia Ladjadj, Incoming President of ACAA (2015-2016)

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