

# Reporters Without Borders

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Middle East/North Africa - Lebanon

On trial

## Special Tribunal for Lebanon puts journalist and TV station on trial

21 April 2015

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Reporters Without Borders reiterates its support for Lebanese TV journalist Karma Khayat, whose trial before the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) in The Hague on charges of contempt of court and obstructing justice began last week.

Created to investigate Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's assassination in 2005, the STL [accuses Karma Khayat](#) and her Arabic-language TV news channel, *Al Jadeed TV*, of endangering supposed confidential witnesses by filming them for a report after learning of their identity from an anonymous leak.

The report, which *Al Jadeed TV* broadcast in instalments from 6 to 10 August 2012, has not been removed from the station's website or YouTube account. The charges were originally announced in April 2014.

This is the first time that a TV station has been the subject of a prosecution by an international court. The company that owns *Al Jadeed TV*, New TV S.A.L., is also being prosecuted. The STL is the [first](#) international court to be set up to investigate a single act of terrorism.

Now *Al Jadeed TV*'s vice-president, Khayat says the report's aim was to draw attention to the STL's problems and did not endanger the supposed witnesses because their names and their faces were pixelated in the video footage. The STL accuses her of undermining the public's confidence in its ability to protect witnesses.

She is facing the possibility of a 7-year jail sentence and a 100,000-euro fine at the end of the trial, which began on 16 April.

Reporters Without Borders, which [supports](#) Khayat and her TV station, believes it is vital to preserve freely-reported news coverage in Lebanon at a moment in its history that is extremely delicate from both the political and security viewpoint.

*"We condemn the decision to try Al Jadeed TV and Karma Khayat, who are guilty solely of holding the STL to account by broadcasting information obtained from leaks,"* Reporters Without Borders programme director Lucie Morillon said. *"The media have a duty to question the way the courts operate and to encourage a public debate on this subject."*

International media that covered this story have not been [charged](#). They include the Canadian broadcaster *CBC*, the German news magazine *Der Spiegel* and the French dailies *Le Figaro* and *Libération*, which [used](#) confidential documents and internal STL leaks.

Khayat [told](#) the judge on 16 April: "The International Court was created for us and with our money. It is our duty to monitor its work." Her lawyer, Karim Khan, [said](#) Khayat and other *Al Jadeed TV* employees have received death threats in connection with the case.

According to our sources, the report's two main aims were to show that confidential information was being leaked from within the TSL, thereby endangering the proceedings, and to highlight the fact that it was easy to access "protected" witnesses, who had not been briefed about the confidential nature of their status as witnesses.

The first session of the trial, which began with the prosecution presenting its arguments, is due to

end tomorrow. The trial will resume on 12 May, when the defence will have three days to present its witnesses and arguments. No date has been set for the verdict.

Members of a [group](#) that supports Khayat and *Al Jadeed TV* attended the start of the trial. They include Florence Hartmann, a French journalist who was convicted of contempt of court by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

The STL has also charged **Ibrahim Al-Amine**, the editor of the daily *Al-Akhbar*, and the company that owns his newspaper, with contempt of court and obstruction of justice. No date has so far been set for their trial.

Reporters Without Borders submitted an [amicus brief](#) on the Khayat case to the STL when a preliminary hearing was held on 13 May 2014.

Lebanon is ranked 98th out of 180 countries in the 2015 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).

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