

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/judicial-confusion-continues-to-11-12-2013,45595.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Lebanon

Military justice

Judicial confusion continues to threaten freedom of information

11 December 2013

Reporters Without Borders and the Swiss-based human rights NGO Alkarama deplore the two-week jail sentence that a Beirut military court passed on 9 December on the journalist **Rami Aysha** on a charge of buying firearms, replacing the six-month sentence he received when tried in absentia last month.

Aysha, who attended the 9 December hearing, left the court a free man because he was deemed to have already served the sentence when detained for a month after his arrest in August 2012.

"Even if the sentence is short and has already been served, it is worrying that the military court failed to reverse Aysha's conviction," Reporters Without Borders and Alkarama said. "We urge Lebanon's supreme court, to which he appealed yesterday, to overturn the conviction and recognize his innocence, as the military prosecutor-general himself requested during the 9 December hearing.

"Aysha was arrested while researching a story on arms trafficking. It is crucial that the judicial authorities distinguish between investigative reporting and participating in an illegal activity. Any confusion between the two poses a grave threat to the future of freedom of information in Lebanon."

Reporters Without Borders and Alkarama also condemn all use of military courts to try journalists and other civilians.

In [a press release on 6 December](#), the two organizations condemned the six-month jail sentence passed on Aysha in absentia on 25 November, when he was on a trip abroad.

At a supreme court hearing yesterday, the presiding judge agreed to a request from Aysha's lawyers to examine the case in detail. The next hearing has been set for 16 December.
