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<http://www.rsf.org/morocco-call-for-release-of-journalist-03-04-2015,47759.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Morocco

Arbitrary conviction

Journalism NGO apparent target of "adultery" conviction

3 April 2015

Reporters Without Borders is alarmed by Hicham Mansouri's conviction and imprisonment on an adultery charge, suspecting that the real target is the organization he works for, the Moroccan Association of Investigative Journalism (AMJI).

Hicham Mansouri has been sentenced to ten months in prison and a fine of 40,000 dirhams (3,800 euros) for alleged "complicity in adultery" under articles 490 and 491 of the criminal code. According to the information obtained by Reporters Without Borders, his trial on 30 March was marked by irregularities.

The AMJI's project manager, Mansouri was with a woman when a dozen or so plainclothes policemen stormed into his Rabat home on 17 March without showing a warrant, and then undressed him and beat him before taking him to a police station. Several human rights groups condemned the violent nature of his arrest.

Prevented from speaking to his lawyers during the first 24 hours after his arrest, he was brought before prosecutors on 18 March and charged with "adultery and preparing premises for the purposes of prostitution."

At his trial, the judge refused to hear defence witnesses while the evidence presented by the prosecution did not suffice to prove the charge, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) [said](#).

"We firmly condemn Hicham Mansouri's arbitrary arrest and conviction and we call for his immediate and unconditional release," Reporters Without Borders programme director Lucie Morillon said.

[Calling](#) it a "political trial," AMJI president Maâti Monjib accused the authorities of picking on Mansouri in order to undermine an organization that defends human rights. It was clear that the AMJI was the target, he [said](#).

Journalists, news media and NGOs that investigate sensitive issues are closely monitored by the Moroccan authorities and the AMJI – launched during the "Arab spring" in 2011 to promote free speech, investigative journalism and the right to information – is no exception. According to our sources, its activities have been systematically blocked since last September.

Without giving any reason, the authorities [prevented](#) an international conference on investigative journalism from being held in a Rabat hotel on 22 January on the initiative of Germany's Friedrich Naumann Foundation.

Morocco is ranked 130th out of 180 countries in the 2015 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).
