

Reporters Without Borders

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Middle East/North Africa - Morocco

Political trial

Editor facing jail

24 January 2013

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Reporters Without Borders calls for the withdrawal of criminal proceedings against **Youssef Jajili**, the editor of the [magazine Al-Aan](#), for criticising a government minister's behaviour while abroad, and deplores the fact that, after the minister complained, the police questioned him without referring to the judicial authorities.

Jajili is due to appear before a court in the Casablanca suburb of Ain Sebaâ on 28 January in connection with [an article](#) he published on 22 June 2012 about an official visit to Burkina Faso by industry, trade and new technologies minister Abdelkader Amara (a member of the Justice and Development Party).

The article alleged that, during the visit, Amara spent 10,000 dirhams (900 euros) on a private dinner in his hotel at which alcohol was accused. The allegations elicited a strenuous denial from the minister and a complaint against Jajili.

Jajili was summoned and questioned by the police for five hours on 23 October. When the police summoned him a second time on 14 December, they gave him a summons to appear in court on 14 January. He is now facing a possible sentence of three months to a year in prison and a fine of 1,200 to 100,000 dirhams (110 to 9,000 euros).

"More than 18 months after the adoption of a new constitution guaranteeing a number of fundamental rights, including the right to a fair trial, Morocco urgently needs to bring its laws into line with the constitution's provisions," Reporters Without Borders said.

"This case also highlights the degree to which freedom of information in Morocco needs the media law reform promised by the new government, which would decriminalize press offences."

In [a statement](#) posted on his Facebook page on 26 June 2012, the minister announced his intention to prosecute "any person directly or indirectly involved in this action, which attacks my honour and dignity, and the honour of my position, my family and my party."

Jajili's lawyer, Ibrahim Rachidi, told Reporters Without Borders he intended to dispute the bases of the charges against Jajili. "He cannot in any way be concerned by article 42 of the press law, which concerns the publication of information that jeopardizes public order and causes panic," Rachidi said.

"We also object to the fact that he was summoned and interrogated by the judicial police. He should have been questioned by a court. It is important that Morocco's laws conform to the new constitution, article 120 of which says that every citizen has the right to a fair trial."

A weekly founded by Jajili in April of last year, Al-Aan specializes in investigative reporting. In 2011, Jajili won Morocco's national press prize for a report from the Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf, in southwestern Algeria.

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