

Reporters Without Borders

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Middle East/North Africa - Tunisia

RWB secretary-general discusses new media law with Tunisian president

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[Read in Arabic \(بالعربية\)](#)

Christophe Deloire, secretary general of Reporters Without Borders, held talks at Carthage Palace yesterday with Tunisian President **Moncef Marzouki** on the country's new press law.

The meeting provided an opportunity for the organization to express its concern at the repeated delays in the legislation, known as decree-law 116-2011, which was due to have been applied more than a year ago, and to ask the president to appoint the independent members of the Independent High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HAICA) as soon as possible.

President Marzouki gave a commitment to appoint the HAICA members before the second anniversary of the Tunisian revolution on 14 January, the date on which President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali was overthrown. "Its members will be independent in accordance with the criteria established in the course of two months of meetings with representatives of the Tunisian media," the president said. He did not deny that the consultation process had been subject to political pressure. "I shall not resort to coercion, but there is a line that I will not cross," he added. "The priority is to appoint independent individuals in the knowledge that we have to build the reforms on a chaotic morass. By some miracle, a reassessment has emerged, which I believe to be positive."

According to information reaching Reporters Without Borders, all prospective members of HAICA have undergone police checks to ensure their suitability. At the meeting, Deloire, who was accompanied by RWB's Tunis bureau chief **Olivia Gré**, deplored the atmosphere of tension – even violence – in which the Tunisian media must operate. He noted that Reporters Without Borders had recorded a high number of attacks, death threats and harassment directed against journalists. "A feeling of insecurity is growing among journalists, and fear has re-emerged," Deloire said.

In 2012, another decree-law, no. 115-2011, was enacted and applied on occasion, but did not provide justice for journalists subjected to physical violence. Furthermore, there was no evidence of the political will to do anything about the climate of impunity in which such abuses were perpetrated. This legislation, which governs the work of journalists and regulates the media sector, at least provides a minimum level of protection, despite its shortcomings.

After the meeting, President Marzouki presented the organization's representatives with a commendation acknowledging Reporters Without Borders' support for human rights campaigners during the Ben Ali dictatorship. Its inscription read: "From Tunisia in gratitude to Reporters Without Borders for its active support during the years of fire." "We are honoured to receive this mark of appreciation, which pays tribute to the work and the courage of the Reporters Without Borders team and to all those in Tunisia who have fought for freedom of information when so many souls resigned themselves to human rights abuses," Deloire said.

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