

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/israel-disappointing-decision-in-wattan-09-12-2013,45571.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Israel

Security pretext

Disappointing decision in Wattan TV case

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Reporters Without Borders is extremely disappointed by the outcome of an Israeli [High Court of Justice hearing on 4 December](#) not to rescind a military order under which transmission equipment was confiscated from Palestinian broadcaster *Wattan TV* during a [military raid on its headquarters in Ramallah in February 2012](#).

"This High Court decision is very regrettable," Reporters Without Borders said. "No evidence was presented, as the grounds were considered classified, and *Wattan TV* had no opportunity to present counter-arguments to these grounds. The decision appears completely arbitrary, especially as *Wattan TV* is currently broadcasting on a frequency issued by the Palestinian Authority as required by the September 1995 Interim Agreement."

"We are outraged by the degree to which security – now given as the reason for the confiscation after two other pretexts were discarded – is used to legitimize everything in Israeli, even the most arbitrary actions."

Reporters Without Borders has learned that, during the 4 December hearing, the Israeli government's lawyer requested an *ex parte* hearing to explain why Israel's security required the equipment's confiscation.

The Court agreed to the request, despite the fact that *Wattan TV's* lawyers, Adv. Michael Sfar and Adv. Noa Amrami, stressed the importance of the right to be able to challenge every piece of evidence presented.

It was after this *ex parte* 15-minute hearing that the Court decided, without providing justification, not to overturn the IDF's decision to confiscate *Wattan TV's* equipment.

The Court did not, however, dismiss *Wattan TV's* petition. Deeming that the frequency it is currently using to broadcast its programmes is illegal, the Court gave the station 45 days to obtain a new frequency from the Palestinian Authority. Depending the outcome, the Court will give its final judgment in the matter.

Reporters Without Borders is meanwhile relieved to learn that **Mohamed Abu Khdeir**, a reporter for the daily *Al-Quds* who was [arrested by the Israeli security forces on his return from Cairo on 6 November](#), was finally released on 5 December.

He told Reporters Without Borders he was questioned about his journalistic work, including his interviews with Hamas members and other politicians, and his links with Hamas. He said he was kept in solitary confinement and was mistreated during his detention.
