

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALIST HELD FOR ARTICLE ON AQIM VIDEO

Moroccan authorities have arrested and detained independent journalist and editor Ali Anouzla, a well known critic of government policies. He is a prisoner of conscience, held for an article published on his news website about a video released by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). He has been detained without charge since 17 September and is believed to be held under Morocco's draconian anti-terrorism law.

Police arrested journalist **Ali Anouzla**, editor of outspoken Arabic-language online news outlet *Lakome*, at his home in Rabat early on 17 September. They searched his home, confiscated books, documents and his personal computer before taking him to *Lakome's* offices, where they also confiscated several items including computer hard drives, according to journalists who were present at the scene. The same day the General Crown Prosecutor of Rabat released a public statement announcing that the editor's arrest had been ordered because of *Lakome's* publication of a video by the armed group al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) titled "Morocco: Kingdom of Corruption and Despotism". The Prosecutor claimed the video contained "a clear invitation and a direct incitement to take part in acts of terrorism in the Moroccan kingdom". In fact, the article criticized the armed group's video and could not be seen as endorsing its calls. *Lakome* did not republish the video itself, but posted a link to an article on the website of Spanish newspaper *El País*, which had posted a link to the video.

Ali Anouzla has not yet been charged, but Amnesty International fears he could be held under Morocco's anti-terrorism law, which allows the authorities to detain a suspect without charge for 12 days and without access to a lawyer for up to six days. The law undermines fair trial guarantees among other human rights. His lawyers visited him once on 20 September. He is currently held at the National Brigade for the Judiciary Police headquarters in Casablanca. Ali Anouzla is a prisoner of conscience and there are serious fears that he is being punished for *Lakome's* editorial independence and criticism of government policies, in a worrying setback for freedom of expression in Morocco. He faces the prospect of an unfair trial on terrorism charges for simply doing his journalistic work.

Please write immediately in Arabic, French or your own language:

- Expressing concern that Ali Anouzla is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression and calling for his immediate and unconditional release..
- Calling on the Moroccan authorities to uphold the right to freedom of expression as guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Morocco is a state party.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 NOVEMBER 2013 TO:

Minister of Justice and Liberties

Mustafa Ramid

Ministry of Justice and Liberties

Place El Mamounia – BP 1015

Rabat, Morocco

Fax: +212 537 73 47 25

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Interior

Mohand Laenser

Ministry of Interior

Quartier Administratif

Rabat, Morocco

Fax: + 212 537 76 68 61

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

National Council for Human Rights

President Driss El Yazami

CNDH, Place Achouhada- BP 1341, 10 001,

Rabat, Morocco

Email: elyazami@cndh.org.ma

Fax: +212 537 72 68 5

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

JOURNALIST HELD FOR ARTICLE ON AQIM VIDEO

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The length of Ali Anouzla's pre-arraignment detention suggests that he is held under Morocco's draconian anti-terrorism law, which does not provide suspects with adequate judicial safeguards among other human rights.

In this law which amends Morocco's Penal code, the offence of "terrorism" is vaguely defined; authorities can hold suspects in *garde à vue* (pre-arraignment detention) for up to 12 days. In addition, it extends the period in which they are denied contact with their lawyers for up to six days. These provisions make detainees vulnerable to human rights violations, including torture or other ill-treatment, as well as affecting their right to an adequate defence.

The arrest of Ali Anouzla also takes place in a wider context of harassment and intimidation against journalists critical of the authorities in Morocco.

On 17 June 2013, Moroccan authorities convicted journalist Youssef Jajili, editor of *Al An* magazine, of defamation, handing down a two-month suspended prison sentence.

Omar Brouksy, an Agence France Presse reporter, was beaten by police officers in August 2012 for reporting on an opposition-led demonstration against a traditional ceremony of allegiance to the King.

Two months later, the Ministry of Communication revoked his accreditation after he published an article reporting that "candidates close to the royal palace" were competing for parliamentary seats in legislative elections in Tangiers.

To date, no investigation into Brouksy's assault has taken place and without his accreditation, he cannot work as a journalist in his own country.

Meanwhile, Morocco's Press Code and Penal Code continue to criminalize peaceful expression when it is deemed to amount to defamation, to undermine the monarchy or the territorial integrity of Morocco, or to denigrate Islam.

Name: Ali Anouzla

Gender m/f: m

UA: 261/13 Index: MDE 29/012/2013 Issue Date: 23 September 2013