

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALIST JAILED FOR PRESS FREEDOM WORK

Moroccan journalist Hicham Mansouri is serving a 10-month prison term for “adultery” and other charges, handed down after an unfair trial. He appears to have been targeted for peacefully promoting investigative journalism. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Ten plainclothes police officers broke into **Hicham Mansouri’s** home on 17 March and arrested him and a married female friend who was visiting him. He has said that police officers forced him and his visitor to strip naked and pose for compromising photographs, before transferring them to a police station. Hicham Mansouri said that he had only a towel to cover himself. He said the interrogating officers refused to let him speak to his lawyer, in breach of Article 66 of the Moroccan Code of Criminal Procedure. He also said he was asked many questions unrelated to the charges later brought against him including questions about his relationship with several independent journalists. He said he was also asked about his colleagues and activities at the NGO Moroccan Association for Investigative Journalism where he works to help journalists investigate and expose corruption and other serious crimes by politicians, government officials and corporations.

Hicham Mansouri was convicted on 30 March of complicity in adultery and preparing an apartment for prostitution, by the Rabat Court of First Instance, which sentenced him to 10 months in prison and a fine of 20,000 Moroccan dirham (approximately US\$2,000). The court convicted the woman arrested with him of similar offences, and imposed an identical sentence. An appeal hearing is due on 28 April. Both are held in Salé II Local Prison near the capital, Rabat. His lawyer told Amnesty International the court had rejected the defence’s arguments without explanation, and had refused defence witnesses including Hicham Mansouri’s brother and flatmate, as well as his concierge and neighbours, who were all ready to testify to his good behaviour.

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

- Calling on the Moroccan authorities to release Hicham Mansouri and his co-defendant immediately and unconditionally;
- Urging them to ensure journalists and press freedom advocates are protected from assault, harassment and prosecution in reprisal for their work peacefully defending the right to freedom of expression;
- Reminding them that Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Morocco is a state party, protects the right to privacy.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 3 JUNE 2015 TO:

Minister of Justice and Liberties

El Mustapha Ramid
Ministry of Justice and Liberties
Place El Mamounia
Rabat, Morocco
Fax: + 212 5 37 26 31 03
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Communication

M. Mustapha Khalfi
Ministry of Communication
Avenue Allal Al Fassi
Cité El Irfane
Rabat, Morocco
Fax: +212 537 68 01 81
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

National Council for Human Rights
President
Driss El Yazami
CNDH, Place Achouhada
Rabat, Morocco
Fax: + 212 5 37 54 00 01
Email: elyazami@cndh.org.ma

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

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

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Hicham Mansouri, 34, is Director of Programmes at the NGO Moroccan Association for Investigative Journalism (*Association marocaine pour le journalisme d'investigation*, AMJI), which provides support, training and funding to investigative journalists in Morocco. AMJI have been operating since 2008 when they first applied for registration as an association, although the authorities only delivered their registration in 2011.

Before his recent arrest, Hicham Mansouri had reported being assaulted and injured on the night of 24 September 2014 in Rabat. He had filed a complaint with the police, but the investigation is not known to have progressed. A colleague from AMJI told Amnesty International that Hicham Mansouri reported being harassed and receiving threats, some by phone, in relation to his work and advocacy of investigative journalism.

Hicham Mansouri's lawyer said that during his trial the defence's arguments that were rejected in court included the fact that under Morocco's Penal Code, the prosecution had no right to order the arrest for adultery in the absence of a prior complaint from the wronged spouse; that the evidentiary standard required to prove adultery was not met, as the pair had not been found *in flagrante delicto* and no medical examination was ordered to establish that sexual intercourse had taken place.

Amnesty International opposes all "adultery" laws which criminalize consensual sexual relations between adults. Such laws violate the right to privacy and other human rights. In any event, the organization believes these charges have been brought as pretext to punish Hicham Mansouri for his promotion of investigative journalism.

Name: Hicham Mansouri

Gender m/f: m

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