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Loss of press freedom in Algeria - the figures speak for themselves

On the eve of the start of Algerian journalist Khaled Drareni's retrial, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the increase in attacks on the media and oppressive behaviour by the Algerian authorities during the past few months.

What with arbitrary arrests, prosecutions and prison sentences, the past several months have seen yet another surge in press freedom violations.

"The press freedom situation was already worrying, so it is regrettable to see it becoming more so by the day," said Souhaieb Khayati, the head of RSF's North Africa bureau. *"We urge the Algerian authorities to put a stop to the violations that could have a lasting impact on journalists' right to report the news and on the right of Algerian citizens to be properly informed."*

Three journalists get prison sentences

- *Radio M* journalist **Kenza Khatto** was sentenced on 1 June to three months suspended imprisonment after covering a peaceful demonstration in Algiers on 14 May.
- **Mustapha Bendjama**, the editor of the regional daily *Le Provincial*, was fined 20,000 DZD (125 euros) and was given a two-month suspended prison sentence on 27 June on a charge of "endangering the national interest."
- The French-language daily *Liberté's* correspondent in Tamanrasset, **Rabah Kareche**, was sentenced on 12 August to 12 months in prison (four of them suspended) and a fine of 20,000 DZD after being found guilty of "deliberately spreading false information likely to endanger public order," "managing an electronic account dedicated to spreading information likely to cause segregation and hatred in society," and "using various means to undermine national security and unity."

A journalist fined

- Although the prosecutor requested a six-month prison sentence for *Essafir Broadcast* website director **Abdelhakim Setouane**, he was sentenced to pay a fine of 30,000 DZD (190 euros) in a defamation suit by a parliamentarian. The court postponed its decision twice.

Two journalists in pre-trial detention

- *Liberté* reporter **Mohamed Mouloudj** was formally placed in detention on 14 September pending trial on charges of "endangering national unity," "publishing false information" and "membership of the movement MAK", which the Algerian authorities recently classified as a terrorist organisation.
- **Hassan Bouras**, a freelance journalist and member of the Algerian Human Rights League (LADDH), has been detained since 6 September 2021 on nine charges including "endangering national unity," "spreading false information" and "using technological means to mobilise persons against the authority of the state."

Three journalists facing prosecution

- **Nadjet Ben Messaoud**, the producer and presenter of the health programme "Your doctor live" on a local radio station in the eastern town of El Taref, has been charged with criminal defamation since 6 August in connection with a report about an oxygen shortage in the region's hospitals. The director of a regional hospital disputed the report's claim that one of its patients died as a result of an oxygen shortage.
- **Jamila Loukil**, a photojournalist with the daily *Liberté* in Oran who has covered the "Hirak" anti-government protests and who tries to draw attention to problems linked to the situation of migrants in Algeria, has been charged with "conspiring against state security in order to incite

citizens to take up arms against the authority of the state or to endanger the integrity of the nation's territory" and with "publishing information that could endanger the national interest."

- **Said Boudour**, a journalist with *Radio M* who covers corruption, has been charged with "conspiring against state security in order to incite citizens to take up arms against the authority of the state or to endanger the integrity of the nation's territory" and with "publishing information that could endanger the national interest."

Two journalists arrested arbitrarily

- *Radio M* director **Ihsane El Kadi** and *Casbah Tribune* director **Khaled Drareni**, were arrested by the security branch of the police on 10 June, two days before parliamentary elections, and were interrogated for 30 hours. Drareni had been on conditional release since February following a presidential pardon and after winning an appeal. His retrial is due to begin on 23 September. A year ago, in September 2020, he was sentenced to two years in prison on charges of "inciting an unauthorised demonstration" and "endangering state security."

Two foreign media outlets stripped of their accreditation

- The communication ministry stripped the TV news channel *Al Arabiya* of its accreditation on 31 July for "failing to respect professional ethics and resorting to disinformation and manipulation."
- The French state-owned TV news channel *France 24* was stripped its accreditation on 13 June for allegedly "failing to respect ethics."

After falling 27 places since 2015, Algeria is ranked 146th out of 180 countries in RSF's 2021 [World Press Freedom Index](#)

ecoi.net summary:



Attacks on the media and
oppressive behaviour by
authorities have increased
within a few months

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Algeria

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