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Morocco: Journalists Taoufik Bouachrine, Omar Radi and Soulaïmane Raïssouni Free at last



Les journalistes Taoufik Bouachrine, Soulaïmane Raïssouni et Omar Radi

ORGANISATION: RSF_en

Journalists Taoufik Bouachrine, Omar Radi and Soulaïmane Raïssouni were pardoned and released from prison on 29 July. The pardon also extended to five Moroccan journalists in exile. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) welcomes this long-awaited measure, which should mark the start of a new era for press freedom in Morocco.

The news broke in the early evening of 29 July: The King of Morocco, Mohamed VI, would pardon journalists **Taoufik Bouachrine, Omar Radi** and **Soulaïmane Raïssouni** to mark the country's annual Throne Day celebrations on 30 July. The families of the three journalists, all of whom had been imprisoned for years, immediately waited at their respective prisons for their release. Finally, at around 10 pm local time, Omar Radi left prison Tiflet 2 while his colleague, Soulaïmane Raïssouni left the prison Aïn Borja, both in Casablanca. Taoufik Bouachrine was released a few minutes later. The three journalists are renowned symbols of press freedom in Morocco.

Five other journalists also benefited from the royal pardon: Hicham Mansouri and Samad Ait Aicha, both prosecuted for "undermining state security"; Imad Stitou, convicted alongside the Omar Radi; and Afaf Bernani, convicted alongside Bouachrine. All five were forced into exile, along with a well-established defender of press freedom, historian Maati Monjib. Although they were not jailed, this pardon puts an end to their judicial harassment and the threat of imprisonment.

"The end of this detention for our colleagues Taoufik Bouachrine, Omar Radi and Soulaïmane Raïssouni, along with the end of the judicial persecution of five other journalists, is an immense relief. RSF welcomes this royal pardon, which finally terminates a situation that was unfair to these journalists and detrimental to Morocco. This decision is an important first step which must be followed by other actions — including reforms such as the removal of 'red lines' for the media and the repeal of the custodial sentences that threaten journalists in the Penal Code — in order to truly usher in a new era for freedom of information in the country.

Khaled Drareni
RSF's Representative in North Africa

[Taoufik Bouachrine](#) had been in detention since 2018. He was sentenced on appeal in October 2019 to 15 years in prison, and his appeal to a higher court was rejected two years later. In May 2023, his prison conditions had deteriorated following punitive measures taken against him by the prison administration.

[Omar Radi](#) and [Soulaïmane Raïssouni](#) had been behind bars for four years. They had been arrested and sentenced in 2020, on appeal, to six and five years' imprisonment respectively. Their appeals were rejected in July 2023.

"This release is excellent news for all our fellow journalists who have been freed, but the details of this pardon need to be examined carefully. This is not a full pardon. Journalists are always seen as criminals whose faults have been forgiven. Yet they're not criminals, and they haven't committed any crime.

Ali Lamrabet
Moroccan journalist and laureate of the 2003 RSF prize

RSF has defended these journalists since the beginning of their wrongful legal persecution, bringing their case to multiple international bodies. RSF's work

culminated in the adoption of a historic resolution by the European Parliament on 19 January 2023, which called for the journalists' release. The royal pardon comes a year after RSF's late Secretary General Christophe Deloire appealed to King Mohamed VI to release the journalists.

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