

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALIST FACING LEGAL HARASSMENT

On 29 July 2020, Moroccan journalist Omar Radi was charged with “harming national security” and “rape”. The Moroccan authorities had been harassing him since the publication in June 2020 of an Amnesty International report revealing they had unlawfully spied on him through his phone. Omar Radi is a vocal critic of the government’s human rights record and has investigated corruption by the authorities.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Head of Government Saad Dine El-Othmani
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Your Excellency,

*I am writing to raise concerns that the Moroccan authorities are subjecting Moroccan journalist **Omar Radi** to legal harassment. On 25 June 2020 and six subsequent occasions in July 2020, he was summoned by the Central Bureau for Judicial Investigations and questioned about phone calls and text messages dating back to 2011 and transfers of funds to his bank account. On 29 July, he was charged and detained and is due to stand trial before the First Instance Court of Casablanca on 22 September 2020. On 22 June Amnesty International had published [a report](#) revealing that he had been targeted for surveillance through spyware on his phone.*

Omar Radi is charged with “harming national security” based on an accusation that he received funds from sources linked to foreign intelligence agencies. Amnesty International understands that funds transferred from abroad were actually for research grants in the context of a journalism fellowship and freelance consultancies. Amnesty International therefore has serious concerns that the charge is spurious and indicates an intensification of government harassment. He is also charged with “rape”, based on an accusation by a woman who alleges he assaulted her on 12 July. He denies this, affirming that he had a “consensual sexual relationship” with her. Sexual assault is a serious offence and accusations of such conduct, if genuine, warrant investigation and prosecution before a fair trial. While such accusations must each be considered on their merits and Amnesty International is not well placed to assess their veracity, I note with concern that the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found in another case that the publisher of an opposition newspaper was accused of rape and arbitrarily detained in what amounted to “judicial harassment attributable to nothing other than his investigative journalism”.

I urge the Moroccan authorities to drop the “national security” charge against Omar Radi. I ask them to impartially and thoroughly investigate the complaint on which the “rape” charge is based, while guaranteeing his due process rights. In accordance with the right to presumption of innocence, I call on them to release Omar Radi pending trial unless they can demonstrate to a court that it is necessary and proportionate to deprive him of his liberty.

Yours sincerely,

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Omar Radi is an investigative journalist and activist from Morocco. He is a founder of and journalist at [Le Desk](#), an independent Moroccan news website. He has worked with several national and international media outlets, including radio station Atlantic Radio, magazines *Le Journal Hebdomadaire* and *TelQuel* and news website *Lakome*. His investigations have focused on political affairs, including the relations between political powers and business elites in Morocco and suspected corruption by the authorities. In 2013, he won the first investigative journalism award of International Media Support (IMS) and the Association of Moroccan Investigative Journalists (AMJI) for an investigation into the exploitation of sand quarries published on *Lakome*. In 2016, he was the author of an investigation report widely known as “Servants of the State” in which he revealed the names of around 100 senior officials alleged to have illegally acquired state land.”

Omar Radi was questioned seven times by the Central Bureau for Judicial Investigations in Casablanca. The first session, on 25 June 2020, lasted for more than five hours; the interrogators accused him of obtaining funds from sources linked to foreign intelligence agencies. He was summoned for questioning again on 2, 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25 July. The Office of the Prosecutor of the First Instance Court in Casablanca charged Omar Radi with “sexual assault”, “rape”, “undermining external state security by maintaining relations with agents of a foreign authorities to harm Morocco’s military and diplomatic situation” and “harming internal security” by receiving foreign funds that could “prejudice the integrity, sovereignty or independence of the Kingdom or shake the allegiance of citizens towards the State and Moroccan people’s institutions,” under articles 485, 486, 191 and 206 respectively of the Penal Code. His trial on these charges is scheduled to begin on 22 September 2020.

In a separate case, Omar Radi and fellow journalist Imed Stitou were arrested on the night of 4 July 2020 and kept in custody for 48 hours. On 6 July they were brought before the prosecutor of a court in the Casablanca district of Ain Sebaâ on charges of “public drunkenness” and “violence”. On the same day, the court referred them to trial, scheduled the first hearing for 24 September and ordered their release in the meantime. Omar Radi has said that they were followed on the street by a journalist from Chouf TV, a TV station considered to be supportive of the government and provoked into an altercation.

[On 17 March 2020](#), a court in Morocco handed Omar Radi a suspended four-month prison sentence and a fine of 500 Moroccan dirhams (US\$52) for a [tweet](#) in which he criticized an appeal court judge for upholding heavy prison sentences against [Hirak El-Rif](#) activists. Omar Radi has previously been subjected to legal harassment. In 2016-17, he covered protests by Hirak El-Rif, a social movement demanding socioeconomic rights for the marginalized Rif region in northern Morocco. In 2018, he co-directed a documentary called [Death Over Humiliation](#), about events related to Hirak El-Rif in the province of Al Hoceima.

The report Amnesty International issued on 22 June 2020 revealed evidence that Omar Radi was targeted by the Moroccan authorities using spyware produced by NSO Group, an Israeli company. Following its publication, the Moroccan authorities launched a smear campaign against Amnesty International, in an attempt to discredit the organization’s findings and distract from the unlawful surveillance in Morocco of human rights defenders and journalists. In October 2019 Amnesty International had published a report presenting evidence Moroccan human rights defenders Maati Monjib and Abdessadak El Bouchattaoui had similarly been targeted by surveillance technology produced by the company NSO Group. Amnesty International has underlined the gravity of the threat that unlawful targeted surveillance poses to the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly in Morocco.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic, French or English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 12 October 2020.

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Omar Radi (He/him)

And copies to:

His Excellency Mr Abdesselam Abouddrar
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