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**Reporters Without Borders**

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**Evidence of Reporters Without Borders, an NGO with special consultative status, about  
press freedom in MOROCCO**

**Press freedom**

The situation has changed significantly since Mohammed VI became king in 1999. Journalists have greater freedom than in other Arab countries but are still censored. A privately-owned press, in Arabic and French, flourishes alongside the official and pro-government media.

Despite many reform promises, the government has still not amended the harsh press law, which has a score of articles that allow imprisonment for press offences. Journalists are sometimes put on trial. During Mohammed VI's reign, 34 media outlets have been censored and 20 journalists given prison sentences under the press law, the criminal law and anti-terrorist legislation. One journalist was tried and banned from working for 10 years under the criminal law.

**Free flow of information online**

Internet users have few problems, though the authorities quickly censor websites like YouTube when they carry clips considered disrespectful to the king. The government also blocks access to sites that favour the Polisario Saharan independence movement as well as to the website of the anti-monarchist and Islamist movement Justice and Welfare.

## **Government efforts to improve the situation**

The government announced a press law reform in February 2007, calling it an “important and historic” step towards greater freedom of expression and the media. But the reform contains no guarantee that journalists will be protected.

## **Cooperation with NGOs**

The government has met with Reporters Without Borders officials three times in the past two years to talk about press freedom, but nothing substantive has resulted and arrests and convictions of journalists and seizure of publications have continued.

## **Recommendations**

Reporters Without Borders calls on the new government appointed in September 2007 to resume negotiations with journalists over a new press law that would eliminate prison sentences for insulting members of the royal family. It also asks for the 10-year work ban imposed on journalist Ali Lmrabet in 2005 to be lifted.

## **Methods used**

The material in this update was gathered and checked by Reporters Without Borders, which has a worldwide network of correspondents (in 130 countries) and partner organisations (in about 20).

Journalists in some countries can be sent to prison for several years just for a word or a photo that offends. Jailing or killing a journalist eliminates a vital witness and threatens the right of each of us to be kept informed. Reporters Without Borders has been fighting day-by-day for press freedom since it was founded in 1985.

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