

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsfs.org/morocco-website-editor-held-for-posting-19-09-2013,45197.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Morocco

arbitrary arrest

## Website editor held for posting Al Qaeda video

19 September 2013

Reporters Without Borders condemns the arrest today of **Ali Anouzla**, editor of the Arabic-language news portal *Lakome* who was detained after posting a video message purporting to be from Al Qaeda's North African wing on his site.

"We call for the immediate release of Ali Anouzla who published the video for purely informative reasons," the press freedom organization said.

"It is intolerable that a journalist should be prosecuted for keeping the public informed and that computers should be seized from the *Lakome* editorial offices.

"If proceedings are taken against him, we shall be paying close attention to ensure the investigation scrupulously adheres to the principles of independent inquiry in a case in which freedom of expression is clearly at stake."

In a [statement](#) issued by the Rabat prosecutor's office, the crown attorney general said: "Following the publication by the online newspaper *Lakome* of a video attributed to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which includes an unequivocal and direct incitement to commit terrorist acts in the Kingdom of Morocco, the prosecutor general has given instructions to the criminal investigation police to arrest the head of the online newspaper for investigation."

The news portal's offices were searched by the police who seized the central processors of its computer system and questioned the journalists who were present. Anouzla was taken into custody by the national brigade of the criminal investigation police in Casablanca, which is responsible for terrorist matters.

His lawyer, Naima Guellaf, told Reporters Without Borders the prosecutor's office would not allow her to contact her client by phone or to see him in person until this Friday.

The management of the French version of *Lakome* posted its [condemnation](#) of the arrest of its Arabic-language editor on the site and pointed out that the portal had only published a link to the video.

It added that it was a propaganda video and was presented as such in an article published on the [14 September](#) about AQIM, an organization that none of its websites support.

It points out that the publication of AQIM videos is "common practice in the international media ... The AQIM video was also posted, for example, by the news site [Huffington Post](#) (France), while other news organizations such as [L'Express](#) and *LCI* published a link enabling readers to view the video on YouTube".

The justice minister, Mustapha Ramid, said in a separate [statement](#) that the Moroccan government planned to issue proceedings in Spain against the newspaper *El Pais* for publishing the video on its website. The daily's North African correspondent **Ignacio Cembrero** told Reporters Without Borders action could be taken against the paper could be prosecuted for publishing an "apologia for crime".

The video, entitled "Morocco, kingdom of corruption and despotism", was published last week on several electronic media outlets before it was removed by *YouTube* for breaching its policy

on violent content.

Anouzla is well known for his columns critical of the government and his calls for greater press freedom. The *Lakome* site was the first to report on the "Danielgate" case, about the Spanish paedophile Daniel Galván who was pardoned by mistake by Morocco's King Mohammed.

It is not the first time he has been investigated by the justice authorities. A case has been pending against him since 17 June for publishing an article about a tribal brawl in a district of Fez, in which there were casualties.

Although he immediately withdrew the report and published [a denial](#), he was accused of deliberately publishing false information in breach of [article 42 of the Moroccan press code](#). He was summoned and charged by the Fez police. His trial, originally scheduled for 26 July, was postponed until late September.

Anouzla told Reporters Without Borders at the time that he was the victim of a campaign of harassment and judicial persecution. The erroneous story was first carried by the website *Rasd*, which published a subsequent report on 18 July explaining that [the original story was made up](#) to demonstrate that some journalists were less than scrupulous in checking the facts. Several sites, including *Hibapress.com* and *scoop.ma*, also picked up the fake story but have not so far been prosecuted.

Anouzla, former editor and publisher of the daily *Al-Jarida Al-Oula*, was prosecuted in a Rabat court in 2009 over a report about [the health of the king](#), quoting an unidentified medical source. He was convicted of publishing false information and "mendacious allegations and facts with the intention of causing harm".

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