Thursday 19 January 2023

P9_TA(2023)0014

Situation of journalists in Morocco, notably the case of Omar Radi

European Parliament resolution of 19 January 2023 on the situation of journalists in Morocco, notably the case of Omar Radi (2023/2506(RSP))

(2023/C 214/09)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to Rule 144(5) and 132(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas independent investigative journalist Omar Radi, who covered Hirak protests and state corruption scandals, has been detained since July 2020 and sentenced to six years in prison on trumped-up charges of espionage, as well as on rape charges in July 2021; whereas his sentence was upheld on appeal in March 2022; whereas numerous due process guarantees were violated, rendering the trial inherently unfair and biased; whereas these violations included prolonged pre-trial detention of one year without justification and prevention of access to his case file and two key defence witnesses, who were prevented from appearing in court; whereas Mr Radi has appealed to the Court of Cassation; whereas he was awarded the 2022 Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Prize;

B. whereas journalist Taoufik Bouachrine has been detained since February 2018 and was sentenced on appeal in September 2021 to 15 years in prison for sexual offences; whereas there were major violations of due process guarantees in the case of Soulaimane Raissouni, who in February 2022 received a five-year prison sentence for sexual offences in an unfair trial;

C. whereas press freedom in Morocco has been continuously deteriorating, dropping to 135th place in the 2022 World Press Freedom Index; whereas numerous journalists, e.g. Ignacio Cembrero, have been under digital surveillance, been intimidated and judicially harassed, and sentenced to long prison sentences, e.g. Maati Monjib;

D. whereas in 2020 Reporters Without Borders raised concerns with the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls regarding the misuse of sexual assault charges to discredit journalists, a worrying practice also condemned by the feminist organisation Khmissa and Morocco's Association for Human Rights;

1. Urges the Moroccan authorities to respect freedom of expression and media freedom, guarantee imprisoned journalists, in particular Omar Radi, Soulaimane Raissouni and Taoufik Bouachrine, a fair trial with all due process guarantees, secure their immediate provisional release and cease the harassment of all journalists, their lawyers and families; urges the authorities to fulfil their international human rights obligations in line with the EU-Morocco Association Agreement;

2. Strongly condemns the misuse of allegations of sexual assault to deter journalists from performing their duties; believes that this misuse endangers women's rights;

3. Is deeply concerned about allegations that the Moroccan authorities have corrupted Members of the European Parliament; calls for the application of the same measures as applied to representatives of Qatar; reiterates its commitment to fully investigate and address cases of corruption involving non-EU countries seeking to buy influence in the European Parliament;

4. Underlines that its resolution of 15 December 2022 called for a special committee tasked with identifying potential flaws in the European Parliament's rules on transparency, integrity and corruption and making proposals for reforms;

5. Urges the Moroccan authorities to end their surveillance of journalists, including via NSO's Pegasus spyware, and to enact and implement legislation to protect them; urges Member States to stop exporting surveillance technology to Morocco, in line with the Dual-Use Regulation;

6. Calls for the immediate and unconditional release of 2018 Sakharov Prize finalist Nasser Zefzafi; calls for the release of all political prisoners; condemns the violations of the rights of peaceful protesters and diaspora activists; deplores the flawed trials and convictions of 43 Hirak protesters, as well as their torture in prison;

7. Calls for the EU and its Member States to continue raising with the Moroccan authorities the cases of detained journalists and prisoners of conscience and attend their trials; calls for the EU to use its leverage towards concrete improvements in the human rights situation in Morocco;

8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Government and Parliament of Morocco.