

Moroccan authorities impeding Spanish journalists

NEW YORK: The Committee to Protect Journalists has expressed its alarm by an increasing climate of hostility for Spanish journalists in Morocco, highlighted by official measures to prevent Spanish journalists from covering clashes in the Western Sahara. CPJ has called on authorities to allow journalists to do their work unimpeded.



According to CPJ, on Monday, 8 November 2010, at least 10 Spanish journalists were prevented from reaching the Saharan city of Laayoune, which is part of an ongoing territorial dispute between Morocco and the Algerian-backed Polisario Front. Their tickets for a Royal Air Maroc flight from Casablanca to Laayoune were cancelled and airline employees informed them that they are not allowed to purchase other tickets to Laayoune. The airline is government-owned and the main carrier in Morocco.

Alleged police brutality

Also on Monday, police officers attacked John Thorne, a correspondent for the UAE daily *The National*, and Brahim Elansari of the Saharawi Association for Human Rights Victims. Elansari said in an email that was published in the Spanish media. They said they were both chased and beaten with sticks. After the incident, plainclothes officers apologised to Thorne, saying that they thought he was from Spain, not the US, the Spanish national daily ABC reported.

On Friday, 5 November, several Spanish journalists were also attacked in a court in Casablanca, where they were covering the trial of Sahrawi activists, *El País* reported. A mob of 50 spit at them and insulted them. Antonio Parra and Eduardo Marin were beaten and kicked. The attack came only two days after Moroccan Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi-Fihri accused Spanish journalists of "distorting the facts about Morocco and the regional conflict over the Moroccan Sahara," the Moroccan media reported. The president of the Federation of Journalists in Spain, Elsa González, accused the Moroccan minister of creating a "breeding ground" for the attack in the Casablanca court, Spanish media reported.

Call for investigations

"We call on Morocco to grant access to Laayoune for all journalists and to investigate the recent attacks on Spanish journalists," said Mohamed Abdel Dayem, CPJ's Middle East and North Africa program coordinator. "Restricting access to the Western Sahara amounts to censorship and should be stopped immediately."

The Western Sahara was a Spanish colony until 1975, when Spain relinquished control and Morocco annexed the territory. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro (Polisario Front) is a national liberation movement composed of native Sahrawis and supported by neighbouring Algeria.

The National Syndicate of the Moroccan Press condemned the assault in court, saying that such attacks on media are "unacceptable," and called for a thorough investigation to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Article published courtesy of [CPJ](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>