

Morocco: Journalist barred from his office

The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) has issued a statement in which it condemns what it terms the "arbitrary and degrading expulsion" of journalist Radwan Hifani from his office at the *Assabah* newspaper on 21 December 2011, due to his public and continuing solidarity with Rachid Nini, the imprisoned editor-in-chief of *el-Masaa* newspaper.

Despite being one of the founding members of the newspaper and having spent over 11 years working for it, Hifani was denied access to his office after he returned from his annual leave. He was denied access on the grounds that he had been absent without prior permission. The real reason, however, relates to the strained relations between Hifani and Khaled al-Herry, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper, due to Hifani's solidarity with Nini, who has served six months of his one-year sentence in the Okasha Central Prison in Casablanca.

It is worth noting that Nini, 41, in addition to being the editor-in-chief of *el-Masaa*, is also the writer of a well-known column entitled *Look and Reflect*. In June, the Court of First Instance in Casablanca convicted and upheld a one-year prison sentence and 1000 Dirham fine (about US\$115) against him, for "contempt of a judicial entity" and "reporting false criminal circumstances". There have been calls for the release of Nini, especially after the drafting of the new constitution that was approved in July.

"Such arbitrary practices by the *Assabah* newspaper's administrative board are unacceptable and antithetical to professional standards. They should have allowed room for negotiations and discussion if they truly found the matter to be purely administrative in nature and nothing to do with freedom of expression or Hifani's solidarity with Nini," said ANHRI.

"We continue to call on the Moroccan authorities to release Nini in light of the legislative reforms that have been undertaken. We also call on the 'Assabah' newspaper's administrative board to review its position and ensure freedom of opinion and expression for all of the paper's journalists, without gagging or dismissing them for expressing their opinions," added ANHRI.

Source: [Arabic Network for Human Rights Information](http://www.anhri.org/)