

# Morocco journalist gets 1-year jail for 'illegal abortion'

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Mon, 2019-09-30 18:02

RABAT: Moroccan journalist Hajjar Raissouni was sentenced in a Rabat court Monday to one year in jail for having had an "illegal abortion" and sexual relations outside marriage.

Her gynaecologist was given two years and her Sudanese fiance one year in prison, while an anaesthetist was handed a one-year suspended sentence and a medical assistant eight months, also suspended.

Lawyers for 28-year-old Raissouni had called for her acquittal during the trial, denying she had had an abortion.

"This trial had no foundation – the accusations were baseless," said defense lawyer Abdelmoula El Marouri after the verdict.

A journalist for Akhbar Al-Yaoum – an Arabic-language newspaper which has a history of run-ins with the authorities – Raissouni was sentenced under Article 490 of the legal code of the Muslim kingdom.

That article punishes sexual relations out of wedlock, while the law also forbids all abortions unless the mother's life is in danger.

Meriem Moulay Rachid, lawyer for the convicted gynaecologist, said: "The judicial system has had its word, (but) we will appeal."

Relatives of Raissouni also told AFP that they would appeal.

Raissouni had appeared serene when arriving at the courtroom, wearing a black veil covering her head.

She waved to her relatives before taking her place in the dock.

Raissouni was arrested on August 31 as she left a clinic in Rabat.

In court, she denied having had an abortion and said she had been treated for internal bleeding – testimony backed up by her gynaecologist.

The journalist denounced a "political trial," saying she had been questioned by police about her family – including an uncle who is an outspoken Islamist newspaper columnist – and about her own writing.

The prosecution insisted she had been seen by a medic and showed signs of pregnancy and of having undergone a "late voluntary abortion."

It had contended her detention had "nothing to do with her profession as a journalist."

The reporter herself said she had been "forced into a medical examination without her consent."

Her lawyers said that medical examination was a "humiliation tantamount to torture," while they also pointed to "judicial police failures" and "fabricated evidence."

The case has caused a storm in Morocco, creating debate on personal freedoms in the North African state and on the treatment of critical figures.

It has also received significant attention far beyond the country's borders. Reporters Without Borders say Raissouni's treatment amounted to "meddling in

the private lives of journalists and the use of personal information” with the intent of defamation.

Between 600 and 800 back-shop abortions occur each day in Morocco, according to estimates by campaign groups.

In a manifesto published on September 23 by various Moroccan media outlets, hundreds of women declared themselves “outlaws” by claiming to have already violated the “obsolete” laws of their country on abortion and other social norms.

In the early 1970s, in a similar text, French women calling themselves the “343 sluts” famously declared they had had an abortion when it was still illegal.

Last year, Morocco tried thousands of people for sex out of wedlock, 170 people for being gay and 73 for pregnancy terminations.



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# Five more migrant bodies found from Morocco capsizing

Author:

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Mon, 2019-09-30 16:10

RABAT: The bodies of five migrants were found on Morocco's Atlantic coast near Casablanca on Monday, bringing to 12 the number killed when their boat capsized on Saturday, the state news agency reported.

On Saturday, authorities said seven Moroccan citizens had died and three were taken to hospital unconscious, reflecting a growing trend in illegal migration to Spain along the Atlantic coast after a crackdown on routes across the Mediterranean.

Morocco is located only 14 km (8.5 miles) south of Spain across the Strait of Gibraltar, and it shares land borders with the small Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta.

Moroccan authorities say they stopped 57,000 migrants illegally crossing to Spain during the first eight months of this year.

Figures released by the International Organization for Migration show arrivals to Spain by sea more than halved from Jan. 1 to Sept. 18 from the previous year to 16,894.

Spain last month approved 32.2 million euros (\$35.2 million) in aid to Morocco to combat illegal migration. The European Union has also promised 140 million euros in border management aid.



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## [Iraq and Syria open border crossing closed since 2012](#)

Author:

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Mon, 2019-09-30 11:37

QAIM, Iraq: Iraq and Syria on Monday opened a key border crossing between the two neighboring countries, seven years after it was closed during Syria's civil war and the battle against Daesh.

The opening of the crossing linking the Iraqi town of Qaim and Syria's Boukamal is expected to strengthen trade between the two Arab countries. But it is also a boost to Iran's influence in the region, allowing Iran-

backed militias in Iraq easier access to eastern Syria at a time of soaring tensions in the region between Tehran and Washington following the collapse of Iran's nuclear deal with world powers. The area has been a point of friction between US-backed Kurdish fighters, and Syrian government troops and their Iranian-backed allies.

In a symbolic gesture, Syrian Interior Minister Maj. Gen. Mohammed Khaled Rahmoun, accompanied by Syrian troops, crossed onto the Iraqi side of the border, where troops from both countries hugged and took selfies. Scores of Iraqis and Syrians who live in the border towns also attended the ceremony. "The opening of this border crossing is the result of victories achieved by our people in Syria and Iraq against terrorist organizations," Rahmoun said. The Boukamal crossing was closed in 2012 as rebels fighting to topple Syrian President Bashar Assad seized large parts of eastern Syria.

Qaim and Boukamal were then controlled by Daesh until 2017, when Syrian and Iraqi troops captured the towns from the extremists. The group's territorial defeat was announced in Syria earlier this year.

Kadhim Mohammed, who represented Iraq's prime minister at the ceremony, said the opening of the border "opens a new page that represents reconstruction." The border brings further relief to Assad's government after border crossings with Jordan and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights manned by UN peacekeepers were reopened last year. After eight years of war, Assad – with strong backing from Russia and Iran – has recaptured most of the country from rebels, and there is growing support within the Arab League for Damascus' readmission.

Iraqi authorities had set up tents for Monday's ceremony amid tight security, with troops deployed around the crossing. Despite their official defeat, Daesh sleeper cells are still blamed for deadly attacks on both sides of the border.

"The opening of Boukamal-Qaim crossing is a victory for Syrian and Iraqi friendship against takfiri terrorism," read a banner placed on the Syrian side of the border, a reference to Daesh's extremist ideology. The group once controlled large parts of Syria and Iraq where its leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi declared a so-called caliphate in 2014. The group lost its last sliver of land in eastern Syria in March.

Opening the borders, however, could benefit Iran as it tries to secure a land route to the Mediterranean through Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. Tehran enjoys wide influence through its allies in all three countries.

Omar Abu Laila, a Europe-based Syrian activist from the eastern province of Deir Ezzor that borders Iraq, told The Associated Press that the opening of the crossing will not chiefly benefit residents of the region, but Iran and the militias allied with it.

"The opening of the crossing will be a means for Iranians, Shiite militia and Hezbollah to boost their activities," he said. "The opening of the crossing is an Iranian defiance to America and the international community."

Some 800 freight trucks are expected to cross from Syria once the crossing has been opened, Syria's state news agency said.

Qaim was once a thriving stopover on the highway linking Damascus and Baghdad. Long before a hard border materialized in the latter half of the 20th century, tribes sent their grooms and brides across the frontier to marry, extending the branches of their families on both sides.

The opening of the crossing was postponed several times in recent weeks.

Earlier in September, Syria blamed Israel for a nighttime airstrike on an arms depot and posts of Iranian-backed militias in Boukamal that opposition activist said killed at least 18 fighters.

Israel considers Iran to be its greatest enemy, and as Syria's civil war winds down, it has repeatedly warned that it will not allow Iranian troops – who have been fighting alongside Assad's forces – to maintain a permanent presence in postwar Syria.

Syria and Iraq have three key border crossings between them, with Boukamal the only one controlled by the Assad's government. The second one is controlled by US-backed Kurdish-led fighters known as the Syrian Democratic Forces, while the third crossing, the nearby Tanf, is held by US-backed Syrian rebels.





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## [Eight killed in deadly UAE road smash](#)

Mon, 2019-09-30 12:12

DUBAI: Eight people were killed and six injured in a crash on one of the UAE's busiest highways early Monday morning, Dubai Police spokesman said.

The smash, involving a minibus carrying 14 people and a heavy goods vehicle, happened shortly after 4:30 a.m. on the Sharjah-bound side of Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Road close to Mirdif City Centre.

Police say the bus drove into the lorry which was stationary on the hard shoulder of the highway.

Eight people in the minibus, including the driver, were killed and six were injured – two of them seriously.

The bus driver and seven passengers died on the scene while two passengers sustained serious injuries and four others sustained mild injuries, all were taken to Rashid Hospital. The crash victims are all Asian nationals.

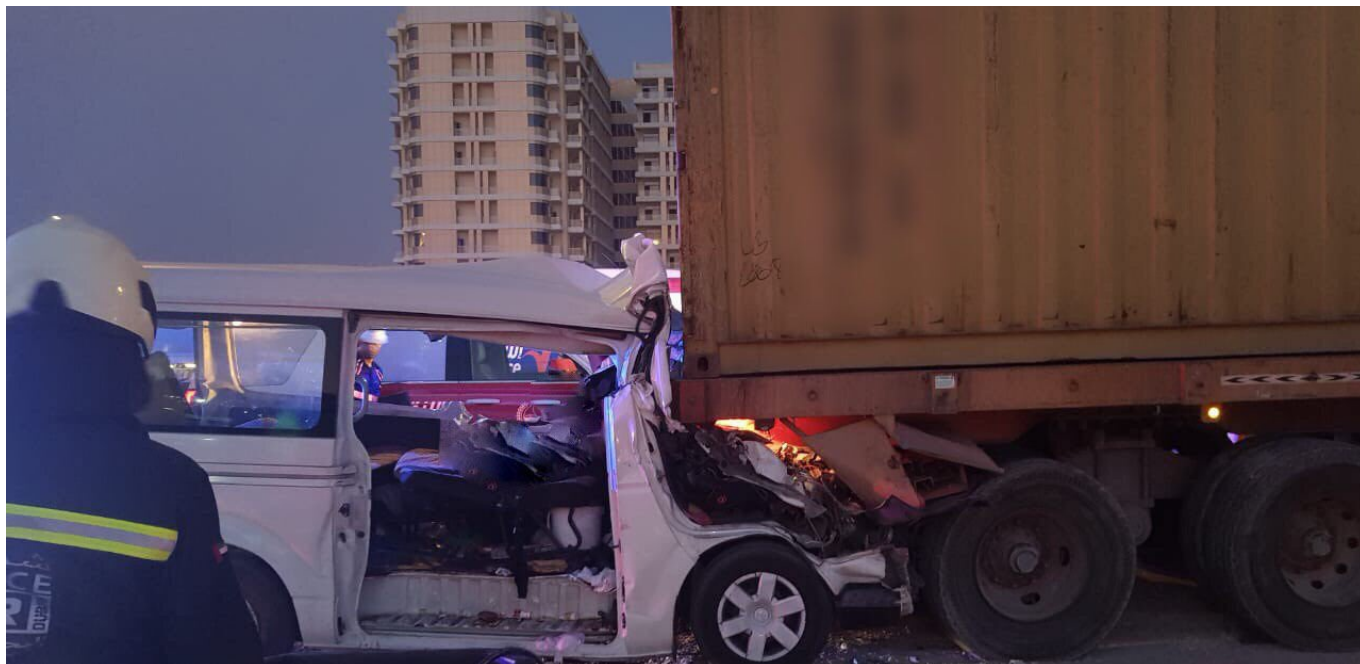
– Dubai Police شرطة دبي (@DubaiPoliceHQ) [September 30, 2019](#)

The road remained open while emergency services attended the scene, although traffic congestion caused delays in the area.

An investigation is underway in to what caused the road smash to happen.

Earlier this year, the UAE called for total ban on minibuses by 2023, amid concerns over their safety.





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## [NGO accuses Israel of torturing Palestinian bombing suspect](#)

Author:

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Sun, 2019-09-29 14:51

JERUSALEM: An NGO accused Israeli security forces Sunday of torturing a Palestinian arrested on suspicion of leading a cell allegedly behind a West Bank bomb attack that killed an Israeli teenager.

Israeli police and the Shin Bet domestic security agency said late Saturday they had arrested three members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine several weeks ago for the August 23 bombing.

The explosion near a spring close to the Jewish settlement of Dolev, northeast of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, killed 17-year-old Rina Shnerb and wounded her father and brother.

Shin Bet identified the cell leader as Samer al Arbeed. It said the cell "was preparing other attacks when the arrests occurred, notably gun attacks and a

kidnapping.”

On Sunday, Palestinian prisoner support group Addameer said that Arbeed was hospitalized after suffering a “serious health deterioration due to torture and ill-treatment during interrogations.”

According to a statement by Addameer, Arbeed was “harshly beaten” by the Israeli police who arrested him.

Shin Bet investigators “continued using torture and ill-treatment,” the NGO alleged.

Arbeed suffered several broken ribs as well as “severe kidney failure,” according to his lawyer, cited by Addameer.

Both Shin Bet and Addameer gave Arbeed’s age as 44.

Police refused to comment on the nature of Arbeed’s arrest, while the Shin Bet said that during his interrogation he said “he did not feel well.”

“In accordance with procedures, he was transferred to medical examination and care at a hospital,” the security agency said in a statement.

Shin Bet refused to provide further details since “the investigation of the terror cell was still ongoing.”

Following Addameer’s statement, Palestinian health minister Mai Al-Kaila appealed to international organizations to “intervene to save the prisoner.”

The Palestinian Prisoners Club called the incident “a crime authorized (by the Israeli) judiciary.”



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