

## **Raissouni has been pardoned by the King of Morocco, but when will Moroccan citizens no longer be outlaws?**

By Brianna Hertford, *Human Rights Without Frontiers*

HRWF (17.10.2019) – HRWF welcomes the news that Morocco’s King Mohammed VI [pardoned](#) journalist Hajar Raissouni, her fiancée Professor Rifaat al-Amin and her physician Dr Mohammed Jamal Belkeziz on 16 October 2019. However, it remains to be seen whether the underlying human rights issues involved in this case will now be addressed by the Moroccan Parliament.

There has been widespread criticism from the local and international community since Raissouni’s sentencing at the end of September 2019 that this was an attack on free [press](#). Raissouni expressed being targeted for her work at the Moroccan paper Akhbar Al-Yaoum and personal history, which fits within a pattern of Moroccan authorities silencing [critics](#).

However, the imprisonment of these three individuals was made possible by the articles of the Moroccan penal code criminalising premarital sex and abortion. These oppressive laws have a gendered component and infringe on individual rights to privacy and reproductive rights. They have and continue to significantly impact every Moroccan citizen’s ability to live and love freely without fear of imprisonment.

The official pardon was positioned as an act of compassion, as the Moroccan Ministry of Justice stated “that the royal pardon seeks to preserve Raissouni’s future and that of her fiancée, who were going to build a family in accordance with Morocco’s law ‘despite the error they may have committed,’ which led to their [arrest](#).” While understandable that the King justified the pardon as a gesture of mercy instead of publicly challenging the judiciary and executive branches, it is yet to be seen whether the Parliament will take action on this issue.

As HRWF has previously [reported](#), the group [خارجة-على-القانون \(Moroccan Outlaws\)](#) has taken a stand on the contested articles in the penal code. They are mobilising around this grave human rights issue and pressuring the government to change these laws.

This courageous movement has grown from 490 signatories to over [10,000](#). It is of the utmost importance that the international community actively supports them as they demand justice, not just for Raissouni, but for all Moroccan citizens who are currently living as outlaws.