

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
QUOTE**

25 November 2019

**Morocco: Sentencing of rapper Gnawi to one year in prison a flagrant assault on freedom of expression**

Responding to the news that a Moroccan court has today convicted the rapper Mohamed Mounir – widely known as Gnawi – for insulting public officials and has sentenced him to one year in prison and a fine of 1000 dirhams (100 USD) Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Director Heba Morayef said:

"This is a disgraceful verdict. There can be no justification for imprisoning the Moroccan rapper Gnawi for a year simply because he exercised his right to freedom of expression. The Moroccan authorities must quash his conviction and order his immediate and unconditional release.

"Expressing peaceful criticism of the police or the authorities is not a crime. International law protects the right to freedom of expression – even when the opinions shared are shocking or offensive.

"This verdict sends a clear message that the Moroccan authorities will not hesitate to clamp down on people who freely speak their minds and indicates that those who dare to openly criticize the authorities will face punishment."

Gnawi was arrested on 1 November 2019 and later charged with "offending" public officials and public bodies over a video in which he insults the police. His arrest came days after he released a music video for the song "Aâcha El Chaâb" (Long live the people), in which he criticizes the Moroccan authorities and indirectly makes a derogatory reference to the Moroccan King.  
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