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How can a 15-mile journey take 30 hours and involve taxis, trains and a flight? Why would someone end up in prison for two months for visiting his daughter? Why would a woman have to get in touch with smugglers if she wanted to go to her mother's funeral?

These were some of the questions answered in an article about families divided by the Moroccan-Algerian border. The article was written during the workshop organised by *Media Diversity Institute* in Oujda at the end of January.

A team of journalists, participants in MDI workshop, investigated how the closure of the border in 1994 has left men, women and children facing huge round-trip journeys via Casablanca and Tangiers if they want to visit relatives that live 10 or 15 miles away from their home. While some

stand at the border and use megaphones to catch up on family news, others put themselves in the hands of people smugglers to get across the border.

Three journalists and ten of their colleagues spent five days learning about journalistic ethics and diversity during a course run by the MDI.

They were asked to research and write features their after two days of intensive work in the classroom, discussing the foundations of ethical behaviour for journalists – accuracy, impartiality, integrity, privacy and the public interest – and how ethics can be put into practice in a busy newsroom. Throughout the course, they were presented with ethical dilemmas that forced them to sharpen up their skills and make fast decisions about how they could behave ethically and responsibly.



The training also helped the participants develop their understanding of diversity in Morocco and improve their professional skills so that all sections of society have the chance to be heard and contribute to public debate. In addition to extensive discussion and debate, they heard from a panel of civil society activists about how they think the media's portrayal of minority groups could be made more accurate.

The course run by MDI is part of a two-year programme aimed at supporting the Moroccan media to become more inclusive, responsible and independent. The project "Media Evolution: Towards an Inclusive, Responsible & Independent Media in Morocco" is supported by the European Union Delegation and UK and Swiss Embassies in Rabat.

After two long days in the classroom, the journalists pitched ideas for features they wanted to write. In addition to the feature about life on the borders, the participants wrote about girls who'd been sexually abused at a local orphanage, how Malians who have fled the conflict in their country are treated when they come to Oujda, and why the law in Morocco is so hard on divorced women.

On the final day of the course, the trainers – Dr Abdelauahab Errami, a well-known journalism academic from ISIC in Rabat, and Richard Cookson, a British print and TV journalist – discussed how the articles could be strengthened, and encouraged the participants think about how they could incorporate some of their new skills into their day-to-day work.

When finished, the features will be available on MDI's website.