

Published: 24 February 2016

Countries: Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Mali, Mauritania



Maimouna Saleck had been fascinated by journalists since her childhood because they give a voice to people to explain their problems in hope that someone may listen and help. But due to lack of opportunities and journalism schools in her native Mauritania, Maimouna's passion for knowledge led her only to becoming a librarian, until she got a chance to be trained as a journalist by Dune Voices in 2015. Such was her commitment to her new career, that within a year she had won the prestigious Anna Lindh Mediterranean Journalist Award 2016, for her story on the [infiltration of Islamic extremists in traditional religious schools 'mahadhras' in Mauritania](#)

“To me, the Anna Lindh Award is an equivalent of a degree in journalism. Here in Mauritania only a selected few benefited from higher education at journalism schools outside of the country. My real journalistic training started with the Dune Voices team. Dune Voices editors helped me investigate and find evidence for a sensitive and taboo topic such as the one I wrote about and was awarded for. Dune Voices and MDI moulded me into a journalist,” Maimouna explained after collecting her award at a ceremony in Amman, Jordan, on 18 February 2016,

hosted by HRH Princess Rym Ali.

The princess defined the Anna Lindh Foundation's Journalist Award as "a central initiative in recognising and supporting the courage of those journalists who are working to present an alternative narrative to the Mediterranean region today". Other award winners included Al Jazeera journalist India Stoughton.

Maimouna joined Dune Voices when this feature agency and multimedia platform was set up by the Media Diversity Institute (MDI) to gather, train, and mentor local journalists committed to report on people and marginalised communities in the Sahara. MDI's Executive Director, Milica Pesic, stated, "I am particularly pleased when awards such as the Anna Lindh Foundation Award go to women journalists. Reporting on marginalised groups in the region can be demanding and it takes great courage and commitment to do what Maimouna and the other 60 Dune Voices reporters do almost every day."

Dune Voices specialises in providing reliable, in depth, well investigated feature stories covering topics such as conflict, security, women, youth, ethnic and religious minorities, as well many other issues, giving a voice to marginalised groups and ordinary people inhabiting the Sahara region, and often forgotten by the mainstream media. The stories are regularly republished and rebroadcast by media outlets throughout the region, as well as by international outlets such as

[Africa 24](#)

, Radio France Internationale (RFI) and

[World Weekly](#)

, who like most media organisations do not have the resources to gather information from the heart of the Sahara.

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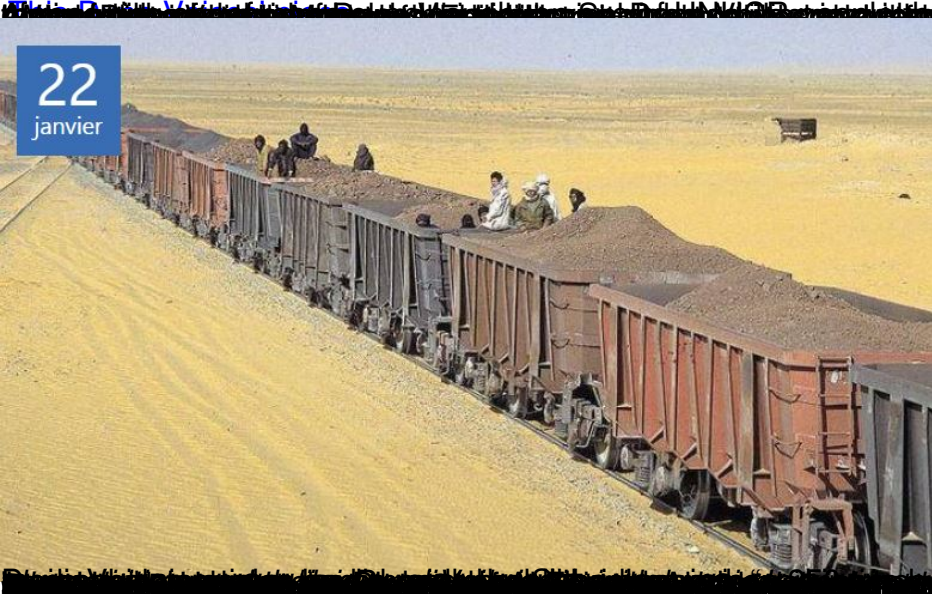


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