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Identity Theft = 3 Years Behind Bars

Morocco doesn't take kindly to jokes

Earlier this month, I **covered** the joke that Fouad Mourtada had played by creating a Facebook profile and claiming he was King Mohammed VI's brother, Prince Moulay Rachid. He was swiftly arrested and the jury didn't take its time before coming up with a sentence. And it was a harsh one at that: 3 years in jail. The charge brought against the engineer was that of "Villainous practices." Despite the wave of protests that rose from the Moroccan Internet community, the sentence will be carried on. Those interested can sign a petition for his release, but frankly I don't think it will make any difference, judging by the course of action so far. That's the problem with countries in which basic human rights are ignored and the only difference is just how many, from land to land. The penalty, besides the three years to be taken from his life, also included a \$1,000 fine, only to add fuel to the fire. If the crime he committed was so grave, I think the sum of money should have been bigger. Not that I would want him to pay more, but it's downright outrageous to sentence a man to jail for something deemed as unacceptable and ask for a modest amount of money. The original announcement, when Fouad Mourtada was arrested, claimed that, besides creating the profile, he had spoken in his 'alias' stead. Apparently, the court's decision had nothing to do with the fact that the Royal Family's members are not allowed to keep personal blogs or any kind of web pages, although that would have been a serious charge too. Facebook had no comment on the matter at the time, but the only thing the social network could have done more to prevent similar situations from happening is to require retinal scans or some other equivalent positive identification measures.