

Facebook speed trap group tells French court their trial is hypocritical

Lawyer for 15 accused of helping motorists dodge fines says group are no 'internet terrorists' and no law has been broken



Rémy Josseume defends members of a Facebook speed trap group in Rodez, France. Photograph: Eric Cabanis/Agence France-Presse/Getty

Members of a [Facebook](#) group that tipped off motorists about speed traps in southern France slammed the "hypocritical" nature of the case against them as their trial opened.

The case, the first of its kind in France, targets 15 suspects, including the group's co-founder.

"Here are the internet terrorists," their lawyer Rémy Josseume sarcastically told the court in the southern town of Rodez on Tuesday. "It is hypocritical to put these people on trial while there are many products that inform drivers where radars are positioned and they are legal."

The suspects face charges of helping motorists and motorcyclists avoid speeding fines. Eight of them also face charges of insulting police officers by referring to them on the site by unflattering bird names.

The Facebook group, called "Which Tells You Where The Police Are In (the southern French department of) Aveyron", was created in 2012 and has more than 10,000 members. A message on its site says: "Alert this group if you are in a car and you see a blue (police) van, a radar or police on motorcycles in the Aveyron. It won't take you more than 30 seconds and you will be a hero for people who read your message."

Yves Delperie, prosecuting, recently said he wanted to "reprimand people who seek to break the law". But the defendants' lawyer argued that the suspects had not breached the law in any way.

He Josseume said that while radar detectors were banned and carried a fine of €1,500 (£1,200) as well as a suspension of six points from a French driving licence, the Facebook site could not be termed as illegal.

Mathieu Chane, who co-founded the group, said the trial was hypocritical and that the judges "want to make an example of us and create a precedent".

But road safety groups said sites like his were dangerous. "Speed kills and the fact that one is trying to thwart radar controls puts the lives of motorists and others in danger," said Bernard Stasiowski, the head of a local road safety group. "Such social networks must be stopped and everyone must respect speed limits."

- This article was amended on 9 September 2014 to correct an error in the original report by Agence France-Presse that referred to Aveyron as a town.

