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First UA: MDE 29/0564/2025 Index: 103/25 Morocco and Western Sahara of December 12, 2025

MOROCCO

FEMINIST ACTIVIST IMPRISONED FOR PEACEFUL EXPRESSION

Moroccan feminist and LGBTI rights defender, Ibtissame “Betty” Lachgar, is serving a 30-month prison sentence after being convicted of “*causing harm to Islam*” for posting a photograph of herself wearing a T-shirt with the slogan “*Allah is lesbian.*”

Moroccan police arrested Lachgar on August 10, 2025, and a prosecutor ordered her pre-trial detention during an investigation into accusations of “*intentional insult to Islam or sacred symbols.*”

On September 3, 2025, the Rabat First-Instance Court found her guilty under Article 267-5 of the Moroccan Penal Code, which criminalizes “*intentional insult to Islam or sacred symbols*” through publications, including online. She was sentenced to 30 months in prison and a fine of 50,000 dirhams (approximately 7,500 CAD). On October 8, 2025, the Rabat Court of Appeal upheld the conviction and sentence.

Write to the Head of Government urging him to:

- Immediately release Ibtissame Lachgar.
- Quash her conviction and sentence, which stem solely from her peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression
- Pending her release, ensure she has access to the adequate and urgent health care she requires.

Write to:

Head of Government Aziz Akhannouch
Palais Royal Touarga, Rabat 10070,
Morocco Fax: +212 53 7771010
X (Twitter): @ChefGov_m
Salutation: Your Excellency,

And copy:

Her Excellency Souriya Otmani
Ambassador
Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco
38 Range Road
Ottawa, ON K1N 8J4
Tel: (613) 236-7391, -7392, -7913, 6064 Fax: (613) 236-6164
Email: sifamaot@maec.gov.ma

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On July 31, 2025, Ibtissame Lachgar posted a photo on X of herself wearing a black T-shirt reading “*Allah is lesbian*.” In the caption, she criticized Islam and other religions, describing them as systems that reinforce patriarchal and misogynistic structures.

After the post went viral, Lachgar reported receiving death threats, rape threats and sustained online harassment. An online campaign calling for her arrest quickly gained traction.

On August 10, 2025, police arrested Ibtissame Lachgar in Rabat. A prosecutor announced that she had been placed in police custody for investigation.

She was charged with “*causing harm to Islam*” and placed in pre-trial detention by the Rabat First-Instance Court. Her lawyers requested her provisional release pending trial, but the authorities denied the request and kept her in detention.

On September 3, 2025, the Rabat First-Instance Court found Lachgar guilty under Article 267-5 of the Penal Code, which criminalizes “*intentional insult to Islam or sacred symbols*” through publications, including online. She was sentenced to two and a half years in prison and a fine of 50,000 dirhams (approximately 7,500 CAD).

On October 8, 2025, the Rabat Court of Appeal upheld both the conviction and the sentence.

Lachgar’s case reflects a broader pattern in which Article 267-5 is used to criminalize peaceful criticism of religion. Such laws and prosecutions are incompatible with Morocco’s obligations under international human rights law, including Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. [The UN Human Rights Committee](#) has stated that, except in very limited circumstances, blasphemy laws are incompatible with the Covenant.

Ibtissame Lachgar is a bone cancer survivor and faces serious medical complications, including the risk of losing the use of her left arm. She urgently requires surgery that is not available in Morocco. Prior to her arrest, she was living in France and receiving medical treatment there. Authorities have denied multiple requests for provisional release on medical grounds, despite doctors’ reports detailing the severity of her condition.

Lachgar is currently detained in El Arjat Prison, near Rabat. Her lawyer confirmed to Amnesty International that she has been held in solitary confinement since her detention, under what prison authorities describe as “protective custody.” They claim she could be targeted by other prisoners due to the reason for her conviction. Her lawyer also confirmed that neither Lachgar nor her defence team requested such measures.

She is held alone, cannot interact with other prisoners and is not allowed access to the yard at the same time as others. According to her lawyer, this isolation is harming her mental and physical health, particularly as she requires assistance with daily tasks due to her medical condition.

Please take action as soon as possible until June 12, 2026. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.