

URGENT ACTION

TUNISIAN ACTIVIST ACQUITTED OF ALL CHARGES

On 19 September 2019, a court in Tunis acquitted 18-year-old activist Maissa al-Oueslati of all charges after facing trumped-up charges that could have resulted in her imprisonment for up to 4 years. On 4 September 2019, the police arbitrarily detained Maissa al-Oueslati and her 16-year-old brother, for filming a protester threatening to set himself on fire in front of a police station. They were interrogated without a lawyer, in a blatant violation of Tunisian law and international human rights law.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

On 19 September 2019, a court in Tunis acquitted 18-year-old activist Maissa al-Oueslati of all charges after facing trumped-up charges that could have resulted in her imprisoned for up to 4 years. Her brother who is facing similar charges of “insulting a public official” and “refusing to comply to orders” will appear in court on October 30 2019 for a separate hearing. During her hearing, a team of five human rights lawyers made the case for the arbitrary nature of her detention and the several procedural breaches made throughout the process including interrogating her without the presence of a lawyer.

Maissa and her 16-year-old brother were both arbitrarily detained on 4 September 2019. A police officer snatched Maissa’s phone and twisted her arm while she was filming his colleagues beat up a protester who had threatened to set himself on fire. Her younger brother rushed towards her and begged the officer to let her go. The police officer pushed the teenage boy on the ground and proceeded to handcuff Maissa al-Oueslati and her brother. In the police station in Jbal El Jloud, police officers interrogated the two siblings without the presence of a lawyer or a parent, as required by Tunisian law for minors. Later that night, Maissa al-Oueslati and her brother were transferred to Bouchoucha detention centre in another part of Tunis where they spent the night.

Maissa’s case received the support of several human rights organizations in Tunisia and abroad. Her case was a strong reminder of the continuity of impunity for police forces in the country. To date, no investigation has been opened to hold the police officers suspected to be responsible for the abuses to account. Following this successful result, Maissa spoke to Amnesty International: “all my respect and love for standing by me”. “I never imagined I would get this much support” She was overwhelmed with the amount of support she had received from activists, many of whom are Amnesty International’s members who showed up at the court the day of the hearing and held signs with supporting messages outside the courthouse. She admits never having imagined to be arrested, but this incident made her determined to continue to carry out her activism for positive change in Tunisia.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Maissa al-Oueslati (her/she)

THIS IS THE SECOND AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 125/19

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde30/1060/2019/en/>

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