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## **Tunisia: Imprisoned FEMEN activists should be released**

Yesterday's prison sentences against three activists from FEMEN, an international women's movement known for staging topless protests, in Tunisia are an unacceptable restriction on freedom of expression, Amnesty International said today.

The women, two French nationals, Marguerite Stern and Pauline Hillier, and one German, Josephine Markmann, were arrested on 29 May as they protested bare-chested in front of the Tunis Court building, demanding the release of a Tunisian FEMEN activist arrested days earlier.

They were convicted of public indecency, undermining public morals, and making noise disturbing peace, and sentenced to four months and one day in prison. The three women intend to appeal their conviction.

"Imprisoning people for expression is inherently disproportionate," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Deputy Middle East and North Africa Programme Director at Amnesty International.

International human rights law allows limitations to the right to freedom of expression, but only for a legitimate aim and through the least restrictive means possible.

"Even if some may consider the three women's protest offensive or counter-productive, this cannot justify placing them behind bars," Hadj Sahraoui said.

"If the Tunisian authorities are serious about respecting their international human rights obligations, they should release the three women."