

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Amnesty International USA

**16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence:
Let's Challenge Militarism and End Violence Against Women!**

(November 25 - December 10 2014)

Maghreb:

End sexual violence against women and protect victims of assault!

Political leaders in Northwest Africa must make the safety and health of women and girls a priority and protect victims of sexual violence against continued exploitation by their abusers!



On 22 January 2014, the Moroccan parliament unanimously voted to amend Article 475 of the Penal Code, which in practice allowed a rapist to escape prosecution by marrying his victim if she was under 18. The amendment is a significant step forward for the rights of women and girls in Morocco and Western Sahara and a victory for women's rights campaigners as well as Amnesty International, who have been lobbying tirelessly to amend the discriminatory article.

Yet similar provisions still exist in Algeria and Tunisia. Article 326 of the Algerian Penal Code and Article 227 of the Tunisian Penal Code can also be used to **exempt alleged rapists from prosecution by marrying their victim, if the victim is under 18**, although Tunisia may abolish such provisions as part of a new framework law on violence against women. In Morocco's Penal Code, **the severity of punishments for rape still remains dependant on whether rape survivors were virgins or not**. The principles underlying such laws are deeply flawed and put women and girl's so-called "honour" and "shame" at the centre rather than the rights of sexual violence survivors.

In all three countries, the crime of rape is either not defined or the definition falls short of international standards, and rape refers primarily to an attack against "morality" or "decency". **Marital rape is also not recognized as an offence**. Consensual sexual relations between adults are criminalized. As well as being a violation of the rights to privacy and freedom of expression, this has the effect of deterring rape survivors from filing complaints for fear of themselves being prosecuted if their allegation of rape is not believed. All three countries have yet to adopt a comprehensive law to address violence against women and girls in consultation with women's rights organisations who can bring invaluable experience and expertise in combating gender-based violence.

The Algerian, **Moroccan and Tunisian authorities must also provide survivors of sexual violence with effective legal remedies as well as effective social and medical services**, including access to emergency contraception and to safe and legal abortions. Law enforcement officials should be trained to respond to survivors in a sensitive, confidential and non-discriminatory manner.

Take Action Now!

The authorities must challenge discriminatory attitudes and prejudices against survivors of sexual violence by showing that alternative attitudes, solidarity and support exist. You can **take action online** to call on Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian lawmakers to repeal these harmful laws and end discrimination against survivors of sexual violence. Send a message that the time for excuses and delays is over. Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian authorities must immediately meet their human rights obligations by adopting comprehensive laws and policies that protect women and girls against sexual violence. Click [here](#) or visit <http://ow.ly/DfNSV> today to take action!

Act in Solidarity:

We want to show survivors of sexual violence, and the organizations that assist them, that Amnesty International activists in the region and throughout the world are standing in solidarity with them and are calling on the authorities to amend harmful laws, ensure accountability and provide support services that are responsive to their needs and rights.

Take pictures holding placards with solidarity messages (see below for suggested messaging). Pictures will be used to create posters that will be shared with support centres for women and girls who are victims of violence in Algeria, Morocco and Western Sahara and Tunisia.

Please upload pictures to our dedicated My Body My Rights Tumblr page: <http://mb-mr.tumblr.com/>

Suggested messages with their Arabic translation:

I stand in solidarity with women survivors of sexual violence in the Maghreb

فأناقف متضامنين مع الناجيات من العنف الجنسي في المغرب العربي

Your strength and bravery are inspirational

قوتكن وشجاعتهن مصدر إلهام لنا

Protect survivors of sexual violence not rapists

وفروا الحماية للناجيات من العنف الجنسي لا للمغتصبين

Questions? Please email us at whr@aiusa.org!

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