

# URGENT ACTION

## FEMINIST AND LGBTI RIGHTS 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 on social media a photograph of herself wearing a T-shirt bearing the slogan “Allah is lesbian.” Moroccan police arrested Ibtissame Lachgar on 10 August 2025 and a prosecutor ordered her pre-trial detention pending investigation on accusations of “intentional insult to Islam or sacred symbols.” On 3 September 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” via publications, including online. She was sentenced to two and a half years’ imprisonment and a fine of 50,000 dirhams (approximately 5500 USD). On 8 October 2025, the Rabat Court of Appeal upheld the conviction and sentence.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

**Head of Government Aziz Akhannouch**  
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Your Excellency,

*I write to you to express my grave concern over the unjust imprisonment of feminist activist Ibtissame Lachgar who has been in arbitrary detention since 10 August 2025 simply for exercising her right to freedom of expression.*

*On 3 September 2025, the Rabat First-Instance Court found Lachgar guilty under Article 267-5 of the Moroccan Penal Code, which criminalizes “intentional insult to Islam or sacred symbols” via publications, including online. She was sentenced to two and a half years’ imprisonment and a fine of 50,000 dirhams (approximately 5500 USD). On 8 October 2025, the Rabat Court of Appeal upheld the conviction and sentence.*

*She was arrested, placed in detention and prosecuted after she posted a photo of herself on social media wearing a black T-shirt reading “Allah is lesbian.” In the accompanying caption, she wrote critical remarks about Islam and other religions. This contents of this post, which some individuals may find offensive, is protected expression under international human rights law which allows for the prohibition of expression only in very limited circumstances such as when it amounts to incitement to violence. This prosecution and conviction are contrary to Morocco’s obligations under human rights law.*

*Lachgar is a cancer survivor and faces serious health complications, including a risk of losing the use of her left arm if she does not receive the urgent healthcare needed. Nonetheless, authorities denied multiple requests for her provisional release on medical grounds.*

*The charges, conviction, and ongoing detention of Ibtissame Lachgar violate her right to freedom of expression, protected under international human rights law. Her imprisonment for peacefully expressing her views constitutes an arbitrary restriction on dissent and feminist and LGBTI rights activism.*

***I urge you to immediately release Ibtissame Lachgar, quash her sentence and conviction which stem solely from her exercise of the right to freedom of expression. Pending her release, authorities must provide her with adequate healthcare that she urgently requires.***

*Yours sincerely,*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 31 July 2025, Ibtissame Lachgar posted on X a photo wearing a black T-shirt reading “Allah is lesbian.” In the accompanying caption, she wrote critical remarks about Islam and other religions, describing them as systems that reinforce patriarchal and misogynistic structures. Shortly after the post went viral, Lachgar reported receiving death threats, rape threats, and harassment. An online campaign against her amplified calls for her arrest.

On 10 August 2025, police arrested Ibtissame Lachgar in Rabat, a prosecutor announced that she was placed in police custody for investigation. She was then charged by the Rabat First Instance Court with “causing harm to Islam” and was placed under pre-trial detention. Her lawyers sought her provisional release pending trial, but the authorities refused and kept her detained.

On 3 September 2025, the Rabat First-Instance Court found her guilty under Article 267-5 of the Penal Code, which criminalizes “intentional insult to Islam or sacred symbols” via publications, including online. She was sentenced to two and a half years’ imprisonment and a fine of 50,000 dirhams (approximately 5500 USD). On 8 October 2025, the Rabat Court of Appeal upheld the conviction and sentence.

Lachgar’s conviction is part of a broader pattern in which Article 267-5 is used to criminalise peaceful criticism of religion. Such broad provisions that criminalize peaceful speech and the prosecutions that ensue from them are incompatible with Morocco’s obligations under international human rights law, namely Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

The United Nations Human Rights Committee [stated](#) that, except in very limited circumstances, “prohibitions of displays of lack of respect for a religion or other belief system, including blasphemy laws, are incompatible with the Covenant.”

Lachgar is a bone cancer survivor and faces serious medical complications, including a risk of losing the use of her left arm. She is in urgent need of a surgery that is not available in Morocco. Lachgar used to live in France and was undergoing treatment there until her arrest during her visit to Morocco in August. Authorities have denied multiple requests for provisional release on medical grounds, despite doctors’ reports documenting 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 the prison administration claims to be “protective custody.” They claim that Lachgar could be targeted by other prisoners who might consider the reason for her conviction to be offensive. The lawyer also confirmed to Amnesty international that Ibtissame and her defense team did not request protection measures.

She is held in a cell by herself; she is not allowed to interact with any of the other prisoners and cannot go out to the yard at the same time as the others. Her lawyer told Amnesty that Lachgar is suffering from this isolation mentally and physically as she needs assistance with chores because of her health condition.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Arabic, French and English

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 12 June 2026

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PRONOUN:** Ibtissame Lachgar (She/Her)