

24 December 2021

Tunisia – Meriem Breibri sentenced to 4 months imprisonment for documenting police violence

On 21 December, woman human rights defender and blogger, **Meriem Breibri**, was sentenced by the Court of First Instance of Sfax, southeast of Tunis, to four months' imprisonment and a fine of 500 dinars.

Meriem Breibri is a woman human rights defender and blogger working on civil rights in society and documenting violations of human rights. She has participated in many youth-led protests against laws that stifle freedoms of expression.

On 21 December, the woman human rights defender was sentenced by the Court of First Instance of Sfax, southeast of Tunis, to four months' imprisonment and a fine of 500 dinars. The charge came in relation to a video she had reposted on her Facebook page in October 2020. The video documented a security officer in the city of Nabeul assaulting a civilian. The woman human rights defender reposted the video and criticised the use of violence by some members of the security force against civilians when exercising their duties. The verdict was based on Article 86 of the Telecommunication Code, which stipulates the punishment of imprisonment of one to two years and a fine of 100 to 1000 Tunisian dinars (approximately 30 to 300 euros) to "whoever knowingly harms third parties or disrupts their peace through public telecommunications networks."

Meriem Breibri had stated the invalidity of the case brought against her as proper judicial procedures were not followed. The woman human rights defender was also not given her case file that detailed the evidence, notes and charges brought against her. The woman human rights defender has been harassed by security officers and members of their union due to the case and has had threats levied against her. On 22 December, the lawyer of the woman human rights defender had started an appeal process against the conviction.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the ongoing harassment of Meriem Breibri and the charges recently brought against her, as it believes that she is being targeted solely as a result of her peaceful and legitimate human rights activities. Front Line Defenders is also concerned about the recent trend by Tunisian authorities to convict defenders under Article 86 who document and share criticisms of violations committed by security officers.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Tunisia to:

1. Quash the conviction against Meriem Breibri which is not consistent with international human rights law and appears to be motivated by her legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Tunisia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions [including judicial harassment].