



A Step Forward for Women in Tunisia

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Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI

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Tunisia Lifts Ban on Muslim Women Marrying Non-Muslims

Euromed Feminist Initiative congratulates activists, women's rights and civil society organizations in Tunisia for their remarkable efforts in the abolishment of the marriage restriction decree that was put in place in 1973. Whereas it was announced by a spokeswoman for President Beji Caid Essebsi that Tunisia has abolished the ban on Muslim women marrying non-Muslims. She made the announcement and congratulated women "Congratulations to the women of Tunisia for the enshrinement of the right to the freedom to choose one's spouse." presidency spokeswoman Saida Garrach wrote on Facebook.

The announcement came a month after President Beji Caid Essebsi demanded the government to scrap the marriage restriction decree dating back to 1973. He said in a speech last month, during celebrations of the National Women's Day, that the marriage law was "an obstacle to the freedom of choice of the spouse".

Before scrapping the marriage restriction law, a non-Muslim man who wanted to marry a Tunisian Muslim woman had to convert to Islam and provide a certificate as a proof.

Activists, civil rights and women's rights groups in Tunisia have long campaigned for the abolition of the 1973 law and an alliance of 60 Tunisian human rights groups has signed a statement calling the authorities to revoke the decree that bans Muslim women from marrying non-Muslims, saying it undermines "a fundamental human right: which is the right to choose a spouse".

The repeal of the marriage restriction decree follows recent amendments to the Tunisian law such as the adoption of a new law for the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, including domestic violence and the abolition of a clause allowing rapists to escape any punishment if they married their victims.

Tunisia has the most progressive laws in terms of women's rights in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region. Furthermore, it has the highest representation of women in Parliament compared to other Arab countries with 75 women MPs out of the overall 217 members.

Euromed Feminist Initiative advocates for gender equality and women's universal human rights as inseparable from democracy building and citizenship, for political solutions to all conflicts, and for the right of peoples to self-determination.

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