

Advocacy dossier

Arroi Baraket

أروى بركات

At liberty **Tunisia**

Journalist convicted and fined after a police officer physically attacked her during a traffic stop, threw himself on her while punching her, and seized her phone as she filmed. She faced charges of assaulting the officer who assaulted her.

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The case at a glance

Journalist convicted and fined after a police officer physically attacked her during a traffic stop, threw himself on her while punching her, and seized her phone as she filmed. She faced charges of assaulting the officer who assaulted her.

Status **At liberty**	Country **Tunisia**
Sentence	Fine of 200 Tunisian dinars (approximately 60 euros) and an indemnity payment to the police officer of 1,300 Tunisian dinars (approximately 394 euros).
Charges	Assault and extreme violence against a public official (convicted, 18 January 2023) Contempt of a public official in the performance of his duties (the officer's original complaint)

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Drop all charges against Arroi Baraket related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights.

02 End the judicial harassment of Arroi Baraket and guarantee a fair process meanwhile.

03 Guarantee that Arroi Baraket faces no arrest, travel restriction or other reprisal for peaceful human rights work.

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Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

Gender based violence Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 35 Convention against Torture, Article 1

Judicial harassment UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12

Physical assault International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 7, 9

Press freedom violation International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19

Unfair trial International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

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How the case unfolded

17 September 2021

Physical assault

Police officer attacks journalist during traffic stop

A police officer stopped her car shortly after curfew, physically attacked her, punched her repeatedly, seized her phone while she was filming, and insulted her with sexist slurs. That night, she learned he had filed a complaint against her for contempt of a public official.

21 September 2021

Hearing

Testimony before general prosecutor

She testified before the general prosecutor at the Tribunal of First Instance in Bab Bnet, Tunis. The prosecutor identified procedural irregularities and ordered proceedings recommenced at an impartial venue in Bardo.

22 September 2021

Complaint filed by the person

Files complaint against police officer

She filed a complaint with the public prosecutor against the police officer who assaulted her. More than a year later, the prosecutor dropped her complaint.

28 September 2021

Hearing

Summoned before general prosecutor again

She was summoned to appear before the general prosecutor at the Tribunal of First Instance in Tunis.

22 October 2021

Hearing

Hearing scheduled

Her hearing was scheduled for this date following the September proceedings.

21 October 2022

Hearing

Hearing postponed to 28 October

Her appearance before the judge was postponed at the request of her defence team, who sought time to analyze a new report submitted by the police officer's lawyer.

28 December 2022

Hearing

Hearing postponed again

Another scheduled hearing was postponed. The case was rescheduled for 18 January 2023.

18 January 2023

Conviction

Convicted of assault and extreme violence

The Court of First Instance of Tunis found her guilty of assault and extreme violence against a public official. The police officer who attacked her was also convicted of abuse of power and received the same sentence.

18 January 2023

Conviction

Fined and ordered to pay indemnity

She was ordered to pay a fine of 200 Tunisian dinars and an indemnity to the police officer of 1,300 Tunisian dinars. Her defence team announced plans to appeal.

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The full story

Background and Work

Arroi Baraket is a journalist and gender-equality advocate based in Tunisia. She serves as Communications Officer for Minority Rights Group in Tunisia, where her work centers on social justice and the rights of marginalized communities. Since 2011, she has documented the activities of social movements across the country, providing vital coverage of dissent and civic mobilization during periods of political upheaval.

Between December 2020 and September 2021, she reported extensively on anti-government protests that swept Tunisia. Her journalism illuminated the demands and struggles of protesters at a time when state repression was intensifying and independent reporting was increasingly risky.

The Attack

On 17 September 2021, Arroi Baraket was returning home in a car with two friends when a police patrol stopped them shortly after the start of curfew, a COVID-19 measure then in force. After the group was issued a fine, she observed that other cars in the street were not being stopped. She began to film the street with her phone.

A police officer immediately opened her car door, threw himself on her, and began punching her repeatedly while attempting to seize her phone. She assured him she was filming the street, not the police. He ignored her and continued the assault until he succeeded in taking the phone. When she told him she was a journalist and had the right to film in public spaces, he responded with sexist slurs.

She requested her phone back so she could contact a lawyer and file a complaint. The officer refused, telling her she would only receive her phone at the police station. He continued to insult her with misogynistic remarks and threatened her, bragging about his membership in the police union and claiming it would absolve him of responsibility if she attempted to take action. In the presence of other officers, he filmed her while she insisted on her rights. Eventually, one of her friends was able to contact a lawyer on her behalf.

Legal Proceedings

That same night, when Arroi Baraket went to the police station to file a complaint against the officer, she discovered he had already filed a complaint against her, accusing her of contempt of a public official in the performance of his duties.

On 21 September 2021, she testified before the general prosecutor at the Tribunal of First Instance in Bab Bnet, Tunis. The chief prosecutor identified procedural irregularities and ordered that proceedings be recommenced at an impartial venue, the national guard facility in Bardo, to ensure an impartial investigation. On 28 September 2021, she was summoned to appear again before the general prosecutor at the Tribunal of First Instance in Tunis. Her hearing was scheduled for 22 October 2021.

On 22 September 2021, Arroi Baraket filed her own complaint with the public prosecutor against the police officer who assaulted her. More than a year later, the prosecutor dropped her complaint without explanation.

Her case was postponed repeatedly over the following year. On 21 October 2022, her appearance before the judge was postponed to 28 October 2022 at the request of her defence team, who sought time to analyze a new report submitted by the officer's lawyer. The hearing scheduled for 28 December 2022 was also postponed.

Verdict and Sentence

On 18 January 2023, after more than a year of delays, Arroi Baraket appeared before the Court of First Instance of Tunis. The court found her guilty of assault and extreme violence against a public official. She was ordered to pay a fine of 200 Tunisian dinars (approximately 60 euros) and an indemnity to the police officer of 1,300 Tunisian dinars (approximately 394 euros).

The police officer involved was also found guilty of abuse of power while on duty and received the same sentence. Her defence team announced plans to appeal, arguing that she should not receive the same sentence as the officer who attacked her.

Context and Implications

The case against Arroi Baraket is part of a broader pattern of judicial harassment targeting journalists and human rights defenders in Tunisia. The inversion of victim and perpetrator, in which a woman assaulted by a police officer is prosecuted for assaulting him, reflects systemic failures in accountability and the rule of law. Gender-based violence by state actors, combined with the weaponization of criminal complaints against women who resist, has become a tool of intimidation.

The dismissal of her complaint against the officer, combined with the court's decision to impose identical sentences on both parties, sends a chilling message to those who document state abuses or assert their rights in the face of authority. The case underscores the precarious position of women journalists in Tunisia, who face both gender-based violence and judicial retaliation when they refuse to remain silent.

Latest updates on this case Scan the code or visit: https://humena.org/defenders/arroi-baraket/

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