

Two teenage girls to face trial on homosexuality charges - Author Leïla Slimani urges Moroccans to rebel against 'medieval' laws

Tuesday 8 November 2016, by [AFP](#), [SLIMANI Leïla](#) (Date first published: 4 November 2016).

Prize-winning novelist describes arrest of two teenage girls who were caught kissing as 'humiliation and abuse of power'.

Moroccans must rebel against the country's "medieval laws", the winner of France's top literary prize has declared, following the arrest of two teenage girls who were caught kissing.

Leïla Slimani, who this week became the first Moroccan woman to win the prestigious Prix Goncourt for her novel *Chanson Douce* (*Sweet Song*), lambasted her homeland's human rights record and the way women are treated.

A joint statement from about 20 human rights groups said the girls, aged 16 and 17, were badly beaten by their families after being filmed by a neighbour with a mobile phone kissing on the roof of a house in Marrakesh last week.

The statement said the pair, identified only by their first names, Sanaa and Hajar, were denied food for three days by the police who then forced one of them to sign a statement before releasing them on Thursday.

"The humiliation of citizens, the way they are kept down, encourages a political system based on disdain, humiliation and the abuse of power," Slimani told France Inter radio.

"I think it is time people took this in hand and rebelled. The laws in Morocco are completely medieval, completely disconnected from reality ... they ban sex outside marriage, homosexuality and adultery," said the 35-year-old, whose award-winning novel is based on a real-life case of a nanny in the US accused of killing two children she was looking after.

The Moroccan Association of Human Rights has appointed a lawyer to defend the girls who, if convicted, could be imprisoned for between six months and three years. "We shouldn't be hypocrites. Moroccans have sex lives outside marriage, and it's good that there are homosexuals," the author said.

Slimani, who raised eyebrows at home with her debut novel last year about a female nymphomaniac, said the oppression women suffered had nothing to do with religion.

"Lots of imams and enlightened theologians will explain that to you ... It is a question of human rights, sexual rights, the right to dignity and in particular the dignity of women's bodies."

Slimani said a woman should not just be regarded as “a mother, nor a sister, nor a wife, but as a woman, an individual with their own rights”.

Torn between religious conservatism and opening up to the west, the overwhelmingly Muslim north African country has been the centre of a series controversies over moral issues in recent years.

Agence France-Presse in Paris

* The Guardian. Friday 4 November 2016 17.26 GMT Last modified on Friday 4 November 2016 17.39 GMT:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/04/author-leila-slimani-moroccans-rebel-against-medieval-laws-human-rights>

Moroccan teenage girls to face trial on homosexuality charges

Calls for pair, aged 16 and 17, to be released following their detention in Marrakech last week after allegedly kissing and hugging.

Authorities in Morocco have pressed charges of homosexuality against two teenage girls allegedly caught kissing and will put them on trial this week, a human rights group has said.

Police detained the pair, only identified as 16-year-old Sanaa and 17-year-old Hajar, in Marrakech last Thursday, said Omar Arbib, an activist at the Moroccan Association of Human Rights.

“They were caught kissing and hugging on the roof of a house in Hay Mohammadi district,” said Arbib.

Someone photographed them, sent the picture to the family who informed the police and the two girls were arrested on the same day, he said.

They appeared before prosecutors and were due in court on Friday to face charges of “licentious or unnatural acts with an individual of the same sex” under article 489 of the penal code.

The Moroccan Association of Human Rights has appointed a lawyer to defend the girls who if convicted face terms of imprisonment of between six months and three years.

But Arbib called for the release of the pair and for the law they are accused of breaking to be abolished.

Agence France-Presse in Rabat

* The Guardian. Wednesday 2 November 2016 19.24 GMT Last modified on Wednesday 2 November 2016 19.55 GMT:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/02/moroccan-teenage-girls-to-face-trial-on-homosexuality-charges>

