

Support Committee for Ibtissame Lachgar

Rabat, August 27, 2025



**Incarcerated in Salé Prison, Morocco
since August 10, 2025**

Rabat Court Ruling: 2.5-Year Sentence for feminist activist Ibtissame “Betty” Lachgar Over T-Shirt Slogan



On Sunday, August 10, 2025, at around 5:30 p.m., Moroccan feminist activist and clinical psychologist Ibtissame "Betty" Lachgar was arrested at her home in Rabat by a dozen officers from the National Brigade of the Judicial Police (BNPJ). Her arrest came after a photo of her wearing a T-shirt deemed blasphemous was posted on social media.

A well-known feminist slogan

Betty has always used her T-shirts to get her ideas across. First published in 2022 on her own social media, the photo with this black T-shirt with the inscription "Allah is lesbian" - which Ibtissame never wore in Morocco -, fits into a particular context: the death sentence and execution of two lesbian women in Iran. She also wore the T-shirt during her participation in the feminist event Women Create in London in May 2025. In reaction to a comment denouncing the censorship of critical speech in France, she responded with a post to explain that religion is instrumentalized by the patriarchal system there.



“I fight for equal rights for women around the world, regardless of skin color, religion, or borders.”

"Allah is lesbian" is a misappropriation of the famous anti-racist feminist slogan "I saw God. She is black, communist, and lesbian" (Anne-Marie Fauret, *Les Gouines rouges*, 1971). A derivative slogan, "I met God, she's black," was found on t-shirts during the #BlackLivesMatter movement in the United States, following the tragic death of young Trayvon Martin in 2012. Variations including people with reduced mobility and living with disabilities are also seen in many demonstrations around the world: "I saw God. She is black, communist, lesbian, and in a wheelchair." The slogan is intended to be inclusive of discriminated minorities. In Morocco, Ibtissame Lachgar has been campaigning for LGBT rights for many years. She established the International Day Against Homophobia in Morocco on May 17. Article 489 of the Penal Code punishes homosexuality with sentences ranging from 6 months to 3 years in prison, as well as fines of 120 to 1,200 dirhams.

An army of god's defenders

The photo, taken out of context, was republished on the social network X at the end of July 2025 by @jafkech, a "patriotic" internet user, as noted by the media outlet le 360, accompanied by a text calling for her arrest by the General Directorate of National Security (DGSN). The post has since been deleted, but the internet user later welcomed her arrest. Thousands of others, many of them associated with the Moorish nationalist movement, reported the activist by tagging the DGSN account on X, and reporting her on e-blagh, the DGSN's platform for reporting illegal content on the internet.

After a few days of cyberbullying, Ibtissame Lachgar reposted the photo on X alongside a text describing Islam, "like any religious ideology," as "fascist, phallocratic, and misogynistic." "The ban on blasphemy only applies to followers of the religion in question. Believers cannot forbid anything to others—because others don't understand it. As an atheist, this concept is completely indifferent to me. And pack up your proselytizing!" she said in another post.

A few hours before her arrest, on August 10, she published, also on X: "Allah is lesbian. This sentence has earned me for 3 days thousands of sexist insults, rape and death threats, calls for murder, stoning, etc. 99% come from men. Proud of their misogynistic violence based on a religious reference."

Still on August 10, at 2:49 p.m., two hours before the activist's arrest, former Moroccan Justice Minister El Mostapha Ramid, affiliated with the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD), reacted strongly to the post by activist Ibtissame Lachgar, calling it a "premeditated act" and "an intentional offense to divinity." In a post on his Facebook page, Ramid stated that he was not in favor of excessive censorship or the hunt for verbal errors, but that "when it comes to attacking the sacred symbols of religion, and when it is done deliberately and in a planned manner, no tolerance is possible." He emphasized that "Morocco has laws and institutions to protect its fundamental values" and recalled the provisions of Article 267-5 of the Penal Code, which punishes attacks on religious constants enshrined in the Constitution. According to him, the words and gestures attributed to Ibtissame Lachgar "do not reflect a simple opinion or ideological divergence, but an intentional insult to God, which requires legal action."

A few hours after her arrest, the public prosecutor at the Rabat Court of First Instance issued a statement on the night of August 10, announcing the opening of an investigation and the activist's detention, decided "in accordance with the law," for "offending God and the Islamic religion." The prosecutor's office specified that "appropriate legal measures will be taken in light of the results of the investigation." According to Article 267-5 of the Penal Code, anyone who attacks the Islamic religion, the monarchical regime, or the territorial integrity of the Kingdom is liable to a sentence of six months to two years in prison and a fine of 20,000 to 200,000 dirhams. When the offense is committed publicly, the penalty can reach three to five years in prison and a doubled fine. In the event of acts committed via electronic or media means, the penalty may be increased to five years in prison and a fine of 500,000 dirhams.

The trial of Ibtissame Lachgar opened at the Rabat Court of First Instance on Tuesday, August 12, after 48 hours in custody at the National Brigade of the Judicial Police (BNPJ) in Casablanca. It will be postponed until August 27 at the request of the defense. The activist's lawyer, Naïma Elguellaf, requested her provisional release, a request rejected by the court. Ibtissame Lachgar is currently being held in Al Arjate prison, in the Rabat region. Cyberbullies, however, are still at large, and calls for murder are multiplying with impunity on the web, while a few internet users point out that "lesbian" is not an insult, and that God does not need lawyers 2.0.



Voices are raised

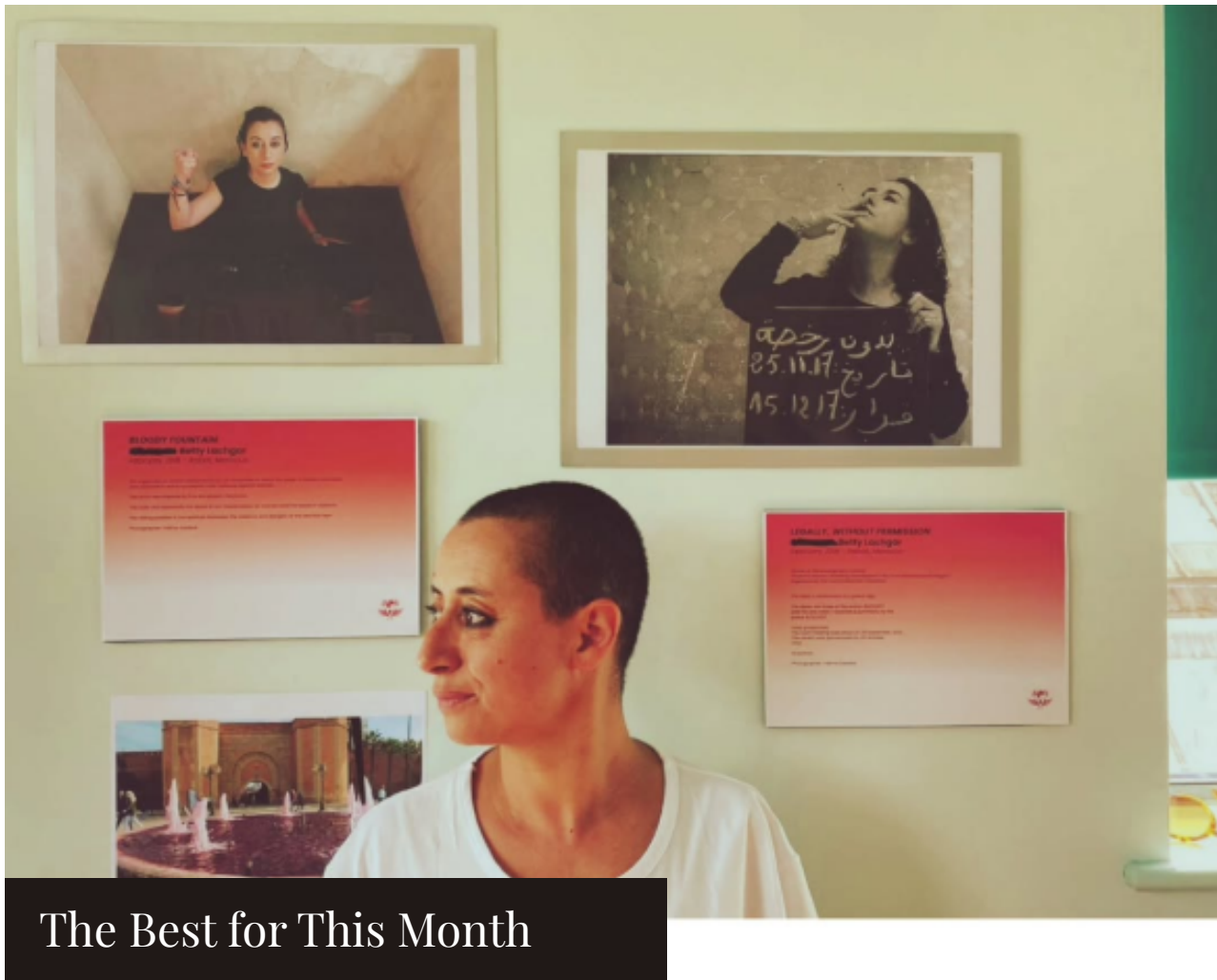
In the name

freedom of expression

Public support was initially timid in the early days, as it was difficult to speak out on the red line of religion. One of the first was Abderrahim Jamaï, a lawyer and former president of the Rabat Bar Association, in a response to former Justice Minister El Mostapha Ramid on August 11. In this open letter, titled "I am neither a judge nor a guide... Was I an instigator?", Jamaï accused Ramid of "stoking the embers of hatred" and transforming public space into a "street court." He urged him to let justice take its course, denouncing a tendency to "criminalize divergent opinions" by instrumentalizing religion and politics.

The Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH), Rabat branch, expressed in a statement released on August 15 its "deep concern" at the activist's arrest for what "falls under freedom of expression and opinion." "This arrest is unjustified and arbitrary, and violates all legal texts, in particular Morocco's international commitments in the area of human rights," the statement continued. "This arrest is in line with the actions of the supporters of hatred, the dissemination of hatred and the enemies of the human rights system, notably the 'fatwa' of the former Minister of Justice who, going beyond his current position, called for his arrest, thus encroaching on the prerogatives of the Public Prosecutor's Office."

On August 15, a demonstration of support took place in Paris demanding the activist's release, at the initiative of the International Feminist Front (FFI). Marie-Noëlle Bas, president of the FFI, told TelQuel: "Betty is very well-known in France. She has many friends there, and we have done a lot with her." She announced "a sit-in in front of the Moroccan Tourist Office in Paris until her trial."



An activist career and national debates

Born on August 5, 1975 in Rabat, daughter of a trade union activist, Ibtissame Lachgar is a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist specializing in victimology and criminology (graduated in 2000 from the University of Paris V), but above all a feminist and human rights activist known for her actions of civil disobedience and her radical positions on individual freedoms.

Living between Rabat and Paris, she is an activist within two collectives: the Alternative Movement for Individual Liberties (MALI, which means "what's different about me?" in dialectal Arabic) in Morocco since 2009, and the Collective for the Abolition of Pornography and Prostitution (CAPP) in France since 2020.



In 2009, she founded the Alternative Movement for Individual Liberties (MALI) with journalist Zineb El Rhazoui, a secular and universalist organization that has since campaigned for respect for human rights, the rights of women, LGBT people, freedom of conscience and worship, the abolition of the death penalty, and the decriminalization of abortion and sexual relations outside of marriage in Morocco.

In Morocco, the MALI movement has made itself known through spectacular actions aimed at challenging and opening debate on social issues, particularly laws:



2009

a picnic organized in the middle of Ramadan in Mohammedia to demand the right not to fast during the holy month, denouncing Article 222 of the Penal Code which stipulates that "whoever, notoriously known for his belonging to the Muslim religion, openly breaks the fast in a public place during Ramadan, without a reason admitted by this religion, is punished by imprisonment of one to six months and a fine of 200 to 500 dirhams." A shock action that will cause a stir, and highlight this law dating from the colonial era which hinders individual freedoms. Since then, the question of the repeal of Article 222 has been regularly raised.



2011

Ibtissame Lachgar became one of the figures of the February 20 movement, in the wake of the Arab Spring, demanding democracy, respect for human rights, social justice, the independence of justice and an end to corruption.



2012

2In collaboration with the Dutch pro-choice association Women on Waves, which offers non-surgical (medical) abortion services to women in countries with restrictive abortion laws, Ibtissame Betty Lachgar is taking a highly publicized action by welcoming the association's ship off the Moroccan coast, before launching a listening and support platform in Morocco for women wishing to have a medical abortion and thus avoid any unsafe abortion, in a country where between 600 and 800 clandestine abortions are performed per day. It is also a way of emphasizing women's right to control their own bodies. The Moroccan Penal Code criminalizes abortion except when a doctor or surgeon considers that the mother's health is in danger, and with the spouse's authorization (Article 453). For any abortion or attempted abortion outside this framework, it provides for imprisonment and a fine for any woman who knowingly attempts or has had an abortion (Article 454), as well as for anyone who promotes or performs an abortion outside this framework (Articles 449-452). Anyone who performs or attempts to perform an abortion is also liable to a ban on practicing their profession (Articles 451, 452, 456-458). Speeches or writings that incite abortion are also punishable by prison sentences (Article 455). Ibtissame Lachgar had publicly announced in 2012 that she had had an abortion, exposing herself to the risk of prosecution. A national debate was launched and, in March 2015, King Mohammed VI took up the issue, ordering a bill on the reform of the legislation governing abortion in Morocco.



2013

A "kiss-in" of around forty people is organized in front of the Parliament of Rabat to support teenagers prosecuted in Nador for "indecent exposure" after posting a photo of their kiss on Facebook. The images of the kiss-in, violently disrupted by an individual present at the scene, will go around the world.



2017

2017: On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the M.A.L.I. movement colored fountains in downtown Rabat blood red. The goal: to raise public awareness about male violence and denounce the situation of women and girls in Morocco. The authorities opened an investigation for damage to public property, but Ibtissame Lachgar ultimately escaped prosecution. "This performance was a symbolic way to remind Moroccans that millions of women are victims of violence in all its forms. But apparently, that's less of an issue than the damage to the fountains," the activist lamented at the time.



2018

In France, Ibtissame Lachgar joined the Collectif abolition porno-prostitution (CAPP), which campaigns for the eradication of "all forms of commodification of human beings (which mainly affect women and children): prostitution, porn-prostitution, surrogacy" by fighting "the sexist, racist, colonialist and capitalist system which allows and encourages this commodification."



2019

In a symbolic action, MALI is renaming the streets of Rabat with plaques dedicated to "famous but invisible" women, to give back a place to women who are excluded from public space, confined to the domestic sphere.

2022

MALI has published its "Macabre Dictionary of Virginity Tests," an illustrated booklet developed in partnership with the Dubai advertising agency TBWA/RAAD, which denounces this practice, based on a myth without medical basis: virginity, and used as a means of evaluating and oppressing women.

During the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, MALI renewed its collaboration with TBWA/RAAD Dubai for the Refs for Change campaign: every time a female referee blew the whistle, MALI tweeted in real time to highlight women from around the world who have paved the way and succeeded in different male-dominated fields.

2023

MALI is launching a web campaign in English and Arabic targeting problematic articles in the Family Code to raise awareness of women's rights. Inequality in inheritance, dowries, repudiation... all articles are criticized.

2024

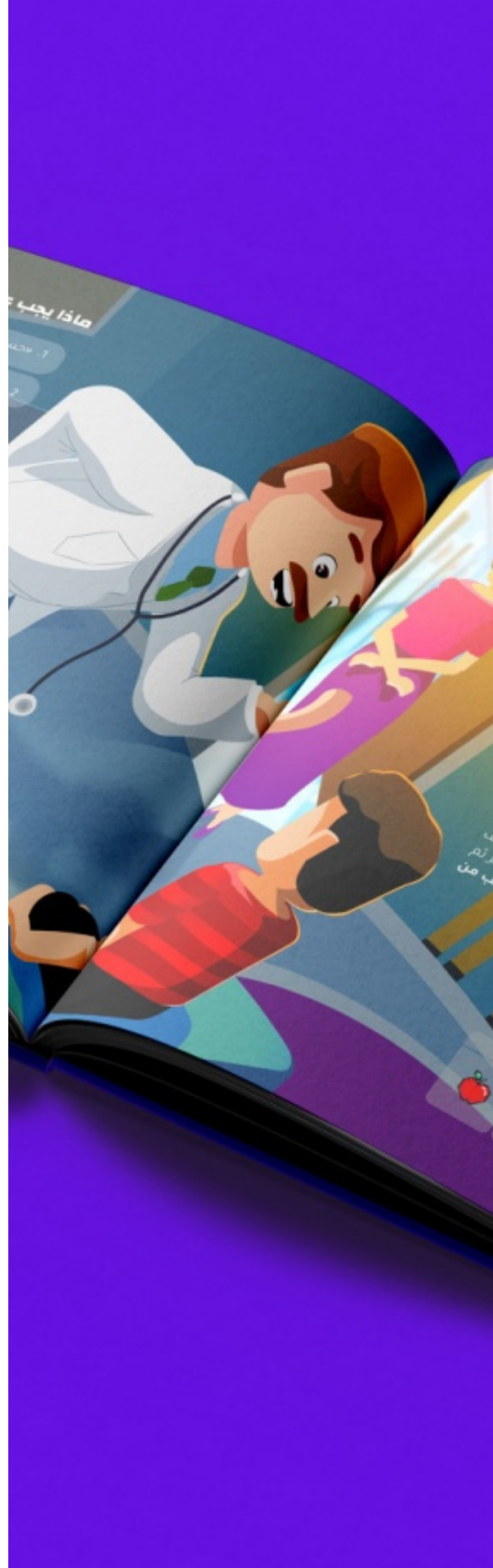
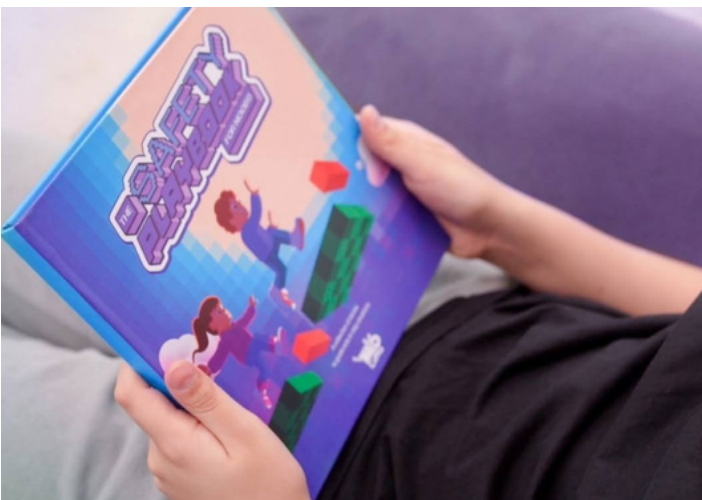
Ibtissame Lachgar wins an award at the ACT Champion of Good in Cannes, France.



2025:

Advertising agency Cheil Dubai and MALI are launching the "My Body is Safe" campaign, aimed at teaching children how to recognize the first signs of sexual violence and how to react. Developed in the form of a fun manual and a video game, the campaign aims to "address this sensitive issue without disturbing children's sense of security and innocence," using a tailored approach designed by child psychologists. M.A.L.I Safety for Noobs

Ibtissame Lachgar is regularly invited to give lectures in various countries. She is expected in Brighton in October for the international feminist event FILIA.



EVEN BEFORE BEING JUDGED, SHE SEES HER HEALTH AND DIGNITY THREATENED.



A survivor of Ewing's sarcoma, a bone cancer diagnosed in her 20s, Ibtissame Lachgar has since lived with a disability and wears a prosthesis on her left arm. Recent medical reports warn that without proper intervention, she risks losing her arm.

Her detention conditions make this situation even more alarming. Placed in total isolation, including during walks, she is subjected to a particularly harsh regime that further weakens her condition. Such deprivation of contact and social stimulation inevitably leads to serious psychological consequences. Beyond the specialized medical monitoring essential to her condition, she needs appropriate psychological support, as recommended for people with chronic and disabling illnesses. Denying her this care jeopardizes not only her physical but also her mental health.

All detainees must be treated with humanity and respect for their dignity. In this case, the lack of access to healthcare and the conditions of isolation raise serious concerns about compliance with this fundamental obligation.



Betty Lachgar's bail has been denied for the second time and her hearing has now been postponed until September 3, 2025. The activist's trial was initially scheduled for August 27, 2025, before the Rabat Court of First Instance.

A petition, already signed by more than 3,700 people, is circulating online, while the hashtag #FreeBetty continues to mobilize to demand her release.

Betty's health and dignity cannot wait. Every message, every share, every statement helps break the isolation and amplify the call for justice.

**Support committee contact: FreeBettyMaroc@pm.me
Ibtissame Lachgar and MALI social networks: Instagram, Facebook, X**



On September 3, 2025, after several postponements of the hearing and the repeated refusal of her provisional release, the Rabat Court of First Instance delivered its verdict: Ibtissame “Betty” Lachgar was sentenced to 30 months in prison and a fine of 50,000 dirhams for “attacking Islam.” This judgment comes in a climate marked by a massive harassment campaign unleashed online, then amplified by political positions. The defense immediately announced its intention to appeal, recalling the alarming state of health of Betty, a survivor of a rare cancer and threatened with losing her arm due to lack of adequate care in detention.

Useful resources:

- [In Morocco, an LGBTQI activist arrested for “attacking the Islamic religion”](#)
- [Ibtissame Betty Lachgar: “Anger is part of my personality and my activism” – Telquel.ma](#)
- [Betty Lachgar case: AMDH warns of an “attack on freedom of expression and opinion” – Telquel.ma](#)
- [Betty Lachgar Affair: New Round of Clash Between Ramid and Jamaï – Telquel.ma](#)
- [“#FreeBetty”: Birth of a movement to support the imprisoned activist – Telquel.ma](#)
- [Communiqué from the PCF \(French Communist Party\).](#)
- [Communique from Hounna \(Moroccan feminist collective\).](#)
- [Gold](#)
- [Editorial 360: Blasphemy or opinion](#)
- [Declaration de Mr Assid](#)
- <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20250903-maroc-la-militante-ibtissame-lachgar-condamn%C3%A9e-%C3%A0-trente-mois-de-prison-ferme-pour-atteinte-%C3%A0-l-islam>
- <https://information.tv5monde.com/terriennes/apr-es-avoir-lutte-pour-la-liberte-de-tous-cest-elle-qui-se-retrouve-privee-de-liberte-betty-lachgar-condamnee-deux-ans-et-demi-de-prison-2789930>

