

Arbia SELMI

Doctoral student in sociology at EHESS (CMH, CMB, IRMC)

Under the direction of Sophie Pochic (CNRS Research Director and Professor at EHESS)

Between openness and patriarchy: gender pay discrimination in Tunisia Post-revolutionary.

"Theoretically and legally, we have equal pay in Tunisia, but in reality we are not equal to men! For the same job, we don't receive the same salary and we pay more tax than men" (Linda, 55, teacher, trade unionist and regional equality officer). Tunisia is considered a pioneer country in the Arab world in terms of women's rights [Chekir 2016], as its new constitution drafted in 2014 after the Revolution states in its articles 21 and 46¹ that citizens are "equal without discrimination". However, women continue underrepresented in professions traditionally occupied by men. In similar positions, they are still paid less than men with a 14% gap in 2019; even though their level of education is equal or higher than that of men in the same professions [Mkada 2019]. Also, maternity leave does not correspond to international standards [CREDIF 2016] and Tunisian women do all the (unpaid) domestic work. And they only get half of the inheritance [Mahfoudh 2014]. All these problems have been the concern of Tunisian women trade unionists in the Tunisian General Labour Union since the 1980s. They have been fighting for equality in their union, in the workplace and in society in general. In this paper, we will draw on a long-term ethnographic investigation of women's mobilisations for equality and parity within the UGTT (2011-2020). We try to show how the female presence in the Tunisian trade union has influenced the struggle for rights, better working conditions and better wages for women in Tunisia.

Within the Tunisian General Labour Union, women trade unionists are still far from having their place, they have suffered for decades from a "glass ceiling", it remains a purely male organisation, which makes the task of women activists difficult, they cannot advance their rights, always the cause of women is postponed for a later date. For this reason they have formed two Tunisian feminist associations to fight for equality (ATFD and AFTURD). These women are mainly fighting for women's rights in Tunisia, for the improvement of working conditions, for equal pay, for an equal constitution, and for a better future for Tunisian women.

Through this study, I have tried to show the role played by Tunisian women trade unionists in the acquisition of new rights for women in Tunisia, equality in the 2014 constitution, the law against violence against women in 2018. Despite their exclusion from the trade union environment, they are fighting for gender equality in the professional, trade union and societal environment through associations. What has led to the persistence of inequalities in the professional sphere is the fact that the cause of women is not of interest to trade unions; equal

¹ 1 La constitution de la République Tunisienne .2015, special issue, " Journal officiel de la République Tunisienne ",pp 30.

pay therefore remains a subject rejected by public and trade union debates. However, Tunisian women continue to suffer from salary inequalities in different areas; this is in addition to the burden of domestic work and leads to tax and inheritance inequalities. These last facts constitute a possible avenue for research.