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Feminism Attack!

Anarcha-Feminism in Tunisia

Monde Libertaire

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Tunisia, with a strong feminist movement for over a hundred years, is often considered the most advanced in terms of women's rights among countries of the Muslim world. Since 1957, the *Personal Status Code* recognizes the rights of women, such as abortion, contraception and the right to education. Although the Tunisian feminist movements have allowed for these advances, the status of women, as in many places on the globe, is still far from anarchist ideals. Nothing new under the sun of male domination: women are still seen as mothers and wives before citizens. After a few days in, it is easy to see how the judgment of others and fear of compromising a reputation may hinder the engagement and activism of women. There are currently at least three feminist collectives in Tunisia:

Democratic Women, a group consisting of bourgeois who gather themselves without political purpose or claims, Femen, recognized in Tunisia for their struggle (their actions, however, do not induce unanimous approval), and Feminism Attack, a self-managed and self-funded collective movement, whose members have an average age of about 20 years. It is inspired by anarchist ideas to search for radical solutions to social and

political problems, and the dangers that threaten the position of women in society.

The movement aims to establish a self-management culture and believes in the obligation of the revolt of women against all kinds of exploitation. It challenges all aspects of the status of women in patriarchal society: abolition of stereotypes based on sex, abolition of dehumanization and objectification of women, complete elimination of violence against women (rape, domestic violence, female genital mutilation, forced sterilization, indecent assault, sexual harassment).

We met Aika and members of Feminism Attack, and conducted this interview with them.

Monde Libertaire: Where does Feminism Attack situate itself and what are your political leanings?

Feminism Attack: We are currently situated in Tunis and our political outlook is quite mixed.

ML: Can you tell us how, when and why did you create this group?

FA: We were a group of women who shared many ideas and we came to take the same actions, but as individuals: hence the desire to build the movement in late 2011. This decision was taken due to our awareness of the status of women in Tunisia, which is, contrary to appearances, at the limits of acceptability. Especially since the so-called *acquis* have been threatened by the rise to power of the Islamist party. And the so-called feminist movements that already exist have not really served the cause we advocate, they do not represent the true Tunisian women, but rather a pseudo-bourgeois image serving the system.

ML: Who are the activists of Feminism Attack?

FA: We are still a small group of pupils and students, we belong to the middle class. The age range is between 18 and 24 years. We have not yet recruited male activists, although we do not see any problem in it.

ML: What is your activism and what are your preferred actions?

FA: At the moment, we do not really have any preferred actions, we do a bit of everything... but it's more a lack of resources and opportunities than anything else. We expect, of course, to expand our field of activity and the way we do it in the near future.

ML: How do you organize yourselves, how often do you meet each other, what equipment and means of communication do you have?

FA: We are organized around general meetings in which all group decisions are made. The frequency depends on the need of the moment. We don't have fixed premises, we meet in cafes or public spaces... which is not very convenient since we already had the police pressure, and we are even controlled by civilians. For the moment we don't have any materials and that is why our actions are limited to the extent that we can autofinance and only by our own money. We communicate with all the means at our disposal (Facebook, phone, etc.).

ML: What are the different feminist groups in Tunisia? Your relationship with them? What do you think of Femen?

FA: The best known is the Tunisian Association of Women Democrats, there are others, but they are not widely known or very active on the political scene. We really have no relationship with them, since we do not end up with the same principles, and our working methods are different. Otherwise, we have already expressed our position vis-à-vis Femen, we even published a detailed section on our Facebook page.

ML: Can the political agenda of Feminism Attack in Tunisia combine with other movements? With which ones and in what form?

FA: We are close enough to the movements: Blech 7es, Disobedience and Alerta (note: Vegan/Green Anarchism). We organize actions together: cultural events, film screenings, concerts, etc.

ML: Regarding the latest popular uprisings in Tunisia, and even today, where in this dynamic could you inscribe yourself?

FA: We inscribe ourselves in any popular uprising which is the cause of the people, which is against the system, and most importantly, which is not organized by political parties, which do not serve their own agendas and do not intend to achieve power.

ML: How are Feminism Attack's initiatives perceived by Tunisians and other revolutionaries ?

FA: Our actions do not have a great popular echo in general; Tunisians are limited to information supplied ready by the media, and apart from one or two arrests followed by sloppy and disinformative articles, we do not receive full media coverage. We do not complain really because our goal is not... chasing after glory.

ML: What are the most pressing constraints on the activists of Feminism Attack?

FA: The system and the police generally.

ML: Are cities, in your opinion, more conducive to feminist actions?

FA: In the city, the work is easier, because there is some awareness of the people, the people are more open and women more emancipated, which is contrary to the countryside, where sometimes people are literally cut off from the world. But we plan to work in rural areas as soon as we have the opportunity; we also have several projects in this regard.

ML: What are the repressive actions exerted on feminist anarchists? Are there any precautions to take?

FA: The dangers are almost the same for anyone who goes "against the current": tear gas , batons, police violence, arrests , imprisonment, threats, etc. We have taken no real care because it would limit us tremendously in terms of actions.

ML: In addition to traditional repressive forces, what are your most formidable opponents or political enemies?

FA: The extreme political parties, which are all in the service of the same system, either directly or indirectly.

ML: Finally, what is your outlook?

FA: We expect to fight for our cause much longer and, more importantly, if our actions are successful and they serve this struggle, we can achieve real change and participate in creating a certain awareness of the people.