

Algeria punishes violence against women in new law



7,500 cases of violence against women were reported in 2015 [AFP]

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A new Algerian law came into effect this week punishing violence against women and sexual harassment, in a victory for feminist groups that had fought for years for the legislation.

The law, which came into effect on Monday, had been blocked by the Senate for eight months amid resistance from [conservative Muslims](#) who view it as interference in family affairs.

It's the fruit of a long struggle by [feminist organisations](#) in the North African country that have been fighting against a spike in attacks against women in recent years.

The article has the potential to be extremely robust in handing down heavy penalties for acts of domestic violence and also for harassment of women in the streets. It is aimed specifically at "the spouse."

If a domestic attack prevents the woman from working for over 15 days, the perpetrator faces two to five years in prison.

If a woman is [mutilated](#), or the violence causes loss of eyesight or a limb, or any sort of permanent damage, the law says the attackers could face from 10 to 20 years' incarceration.

Officials say the 7,500 cases of violence against women reported in 2015 represent only 20 percent of the real number, since women prefer to stay silent rather than bring shame to their family.

Last year, Morocco [introduced a bill](#) that criminalises sexual harassment against women.

The draft law makes sexual harassment punishable with a prison sentence of between one to six months and a fine of 2,000 to 10,000 Moroccan dirhams (\$203 - \$1,015).

The penalty doubles if the perpetrator is a work colleague or responsible for maintaining order and security.