

## AU Riley Lecturer to describe women's key role in Arab Spring uprisings

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Renowned Tunisian Professor Hdia Ouertani-Khadar will deliver Alfred University's 17th annual Women's Studies Riley Lecture on women, the social media, and the Arab at 5:30 p.m., April 2, in AU's Knight Club, Powell Campus Center. The program is open to the public free of charge. Ouertani-Khadar's talk, titled "North African Women: Arab Spring, Tunisian Revolution Activists and Women's Rights Warriors," will answer the question of how North African women and social media ignited and drove the Tunisian Revolution and Arab Spring while simultaneously advancing women's rights. She will present the accounts of courageous Arab Spring female activists, such as university student Khaoula Rashidi, who recently won Tunisia's highest national honor for climbing up her Tunisian university's flagpole, tearing down an extremist Islamic group's black flag, and replacing it with the Tunisian flag. Rashidi's actions helped revitalize the ongoing Tunisian Revolution. "I admire her (Ouertani-Khadar) greatly for her scholarship, feminism and support of the Arab Spring, and I can't wait to introduce her to the Alfred community," said Zakia Robana, assistant professor of French who is active AU's Women's Studies Program. It is Robana who invited Ouertani-Khadar to campus. Robana notes that social media also continue to play a major role in organizing the Arab Spring and promoting it abroad. "Throughout the Arab World citizens have used their cell phones to organize demonstrations without governments knowing," Robana said. "They have also used Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook to help themselves and the entire world gain an insider's view of what's going on." Ouertani-Khadar, head of the department of French literature and civilization at the University of Tunis' School of Humanities and Social Sciences, has taught at Yale University and the Sorbonne and is well-known for her North African women's history and poetry publications. The lecture, sponsored by the Alfred University College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, and Women's Studies, will be followed by a free, catered reception. AU's Elizabeth Hallenbeck Riley and Charles P. Riley Lectureship in Women's Studies is presented annually. Charles Riley and Elizabeth Hallenbeck Riley were AU graduates, Charles in 1935 and Elizabeth in 1936. Their daughters, Pamela Riley Osborn '62, Patricia A. Riley '65, and Melissa Riley have generously sponsored the lecture series in memory of their parents.