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## The case of Mohamed Bouazizi

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<http://www.statebrief.com/briefblog/2011/04/20/mohammed-bouazizi-historical-figure/> and other net sources



### **Mohamed Bouazizi, March 29, 1984 to January 4, 2011: Pain, liberté, dignité!**

*A Tunisian fruit and vegetable vendor whose suicide set off violent protests over unemployment across the North Africa nations has died. Mohamed Bouazizi, 26, sold produce illegally in Sidi Bouziz because he could not find a job. Last month he doused himself in petrol and set himself alight when police confiscated his produce because he did not have the necessary permit. (BBC <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12120228>)*

### **The fruit vendor who unleashed a revolution**

Twenty-six years old, unmarried, and the main provider for a fatherless family of eight, Bouazizi suffered from the common practice of local authorities to harass him and confiscate his small wheelbarrow of produce. Samia Bouazizi, Mohamed's sister, told that her brother was the breadwinner of the family and sold fruits and vegetables on a cart that he moved around the largely rural town.

"My brother is 26 years old and did not succeed in getting the high school diploma, so he took up selling fruits and vegetables in order to make some money for himself and the family." Bouazizi had the amount of money necessary to get a formal licence to sell fruit and vegetables in the streets. But to get the licence, besides the formal amount he should be able to bribe some officials, and this sum was not within his reach. Sometimes a police patrol checked him and took away the produce from the wheel cart or confiscated the balance. On December 17, he left home and went about his small business, selling fruits and vegetables when a municipality agent, a woman, put pressure on him on the grounds that he did not have a licence, then helping themselves to his fruits. As Bouazizi's sister told: "Our uncle, who was at the scene, stepped in and calmed the situation. Unfortunately, the woman came back later and insisted on a fine. The standoff degenerated and she confiscated the weighing

scales, took a basket of apples from Mohamed's wheel cart, slapped him in the face and threw away the fruits and vegetables he was selling."

Mohamed Bouazizi did not accept the public humiliation and went to the local governorate building to report the incident. However, he was barred from entering and nobody wanted to listen to his plight. Bouazizi wept and pleaded. "Why are you doing this to me? I'm a simple person, and I just want to work." He was told that everyone is in meetings: "Go home and forget it."

After he was rebuffed by the local council who refused to listen to his complaints, in front of the local government building Mohamed Bouazizi doused himself with a flammable liquid at 11:30 a.m., applied a match, and burst into flames.

Attempts to rescue him with a non-working fire extinguisher failed. A call to the police, got no response. Finally, after an hour and a half, an ambulance arrived.

Bouazizi passed away on January 4. His act of despair has become a symbol for the overthrow of two tyrants (in Tunisia, Egypt) and for the movements of social unrest and civil wars (in Libya, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain). The Internet made him a historical figure.

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