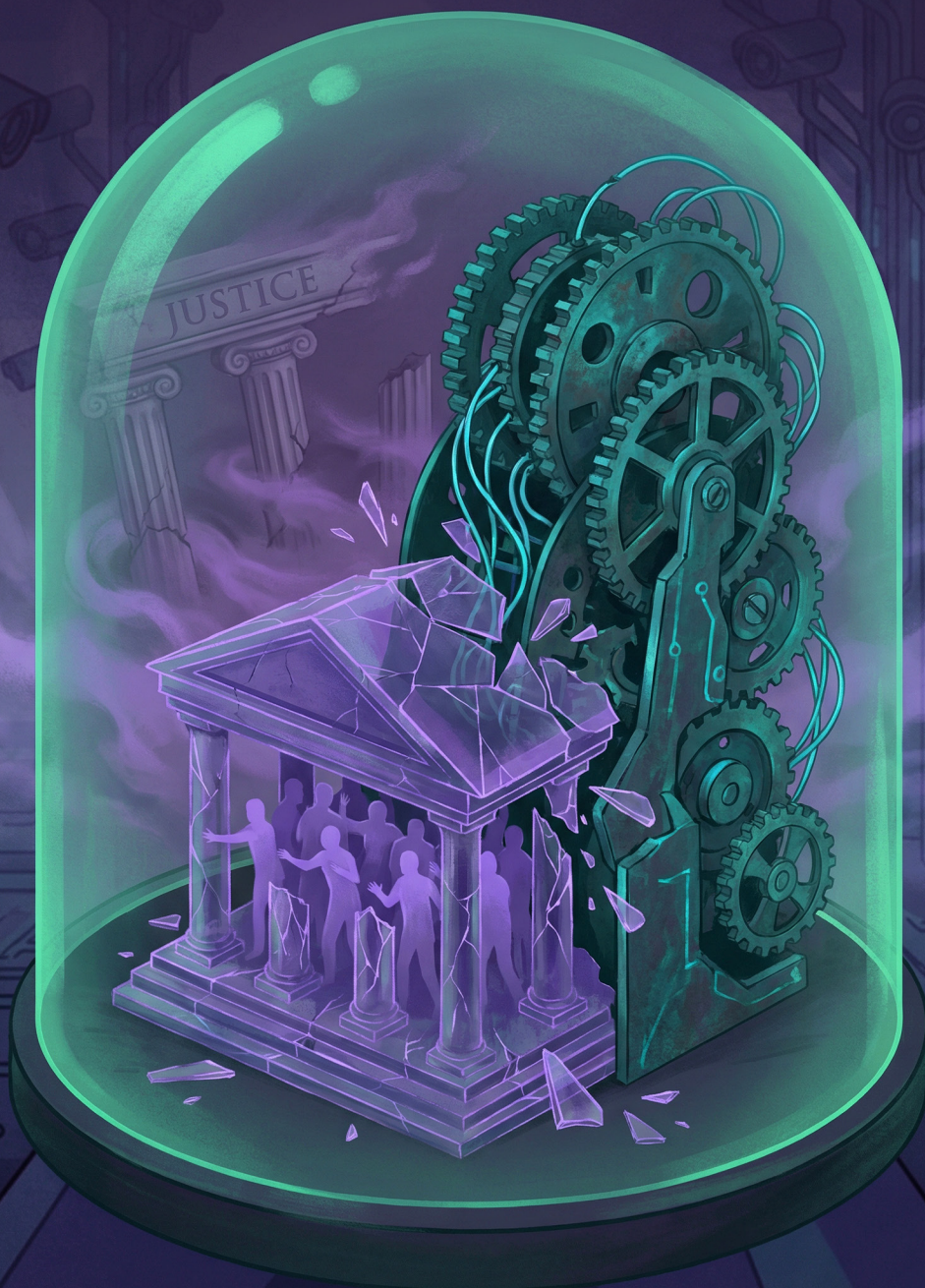


Civic Space: From a Space of Freedoms to a Sphere of Prosecution

A Report on Major Human Rights Violations Affecting Civic Space in Tunisia



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Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms

www.intersection.uno

info@intersection.uno



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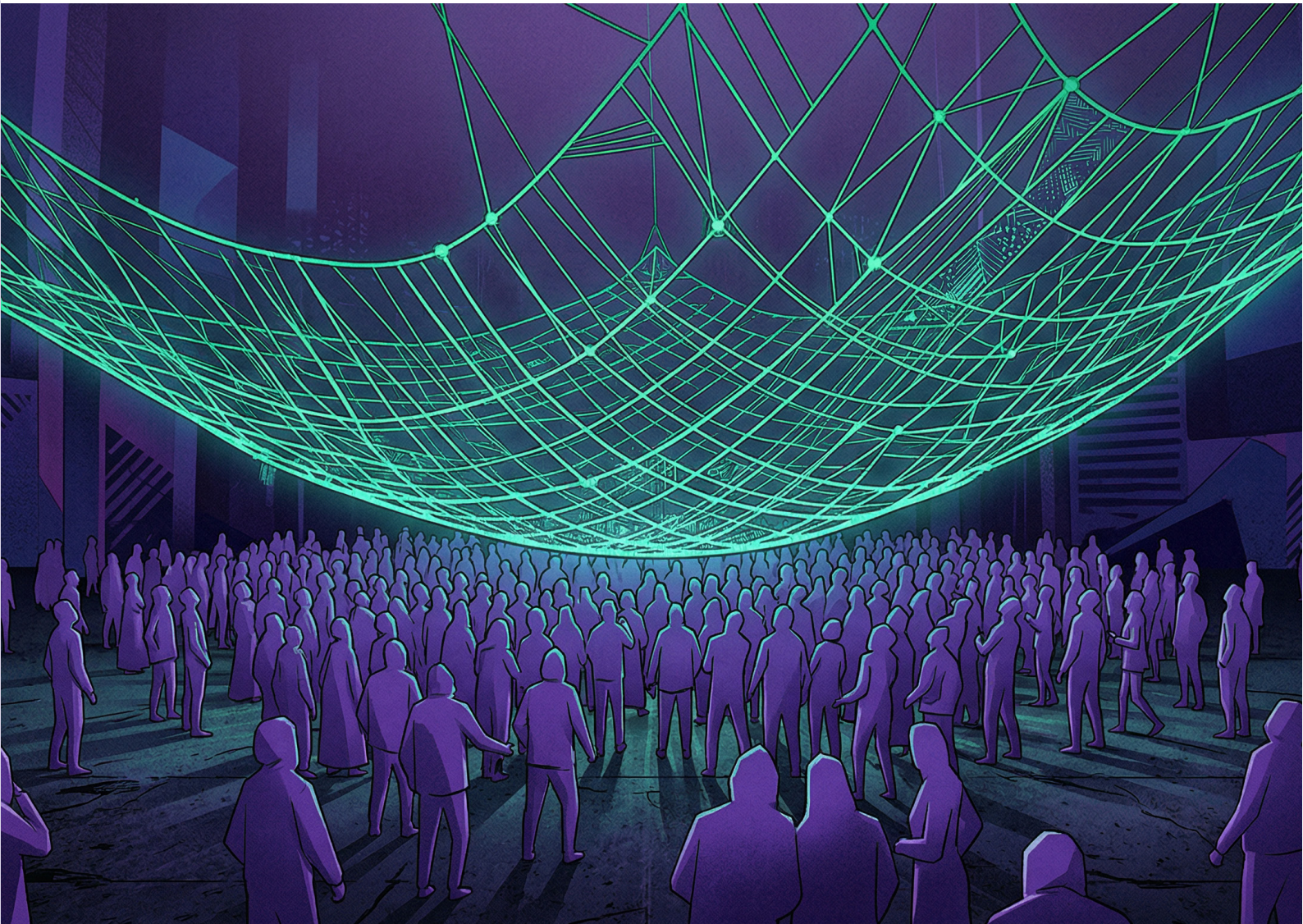
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Executive Summary

This report examines the violations, restrictions, and legal and judicial proceedings carried out by the Tunisian authorities against civic space during the period from February 2025 to the end of March 2026. These measures took place within the context of an escalating pattern of restrictions and violations affecting civil society actors, who were accused of treason and collaboration with foreign entities. This campaign has led to the disruption of civic space activities, as well as security prosecutions and arrests targeting activists on the basis of their civic, political, and social engagement, as well as their digital expression.

The report provides an in-depth analysis of the broader context of the escalating restrictions on civic space. As an analytical report, it documents patterns of violations and examines their consequences. It reviews 37 documented cases of violations, including 23 cases related to civil society work, 9 cases concerning political activity, 3 cases related to social work, and 2 cases involving digital expression. These prosecutions relied on a range of criminal charges, including money laundering, forming a criminal association, financial suspicions, receiving foreign funding, and Decree Law No 54 of 2022. These charges broadly intersect with the discourse of treason and conspiracy adopted by authorities in their official statements.

Throughout the period covered by this report, Tunisian civic space experienced exclusionary and repressive policies that took multiple forms. These included the detention of activists, repeated extensions of custody periods, searches and security raids targeting association premises, suspension of activities and closure of offices, and financial investigations and audits aimed at disrupting civil society actors and narrowing their operating space. It should be noted that the cases presented in this report do not constitute an exhaustive list of all recorded violations. Rather, they serve as indicative examples of a systematic and recurring pattern that signals a continued regression in the guarantees of freedom of civic, political, and trade union activity in Tunisia.



Introduction

Since the 2011 revolution, Tunisia has been regarded as an exceptional model within its regional environment. It became a space for a unique experience in building a robust system of rights and freedoms, reflected in the 2014 Constitution, which enshrined a range of fundamental guarantees for freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. However, this trajectory experienced a sharp turning point following the measures of 25 July, 2021 when successive political developments led to a comprehensive restructuring of the institutional landscape. This process culminated in the 2022 Constitution, which established a highly centralized presidential system and reshaped the balance of power between the authorities, referred to as functions, in a context marked by a noticeable decline in oversight and checks and balances.

Within this evolving context, the relationship between the State and civic space began to take on a fundamentally different character compared to previous years. In the context of this report, civic space refers to the public sphere in which collective life is shaped outside the formal authority of the

State ,and which enables individuals and groups to exercise their fundamental rights to expression ,association ,peaceful assembly ,and participation in public affairs .Civic space is inherently complex and encompasses multiple and interconnected components ,including civil society organizations in their various forms ,such as associations and human rights ,humanitarian, and development organizations ;political actors including parties and citizen initiatives ;trade unions and professional organizations ;as well as individuals active in public life through media ,social media platforms ,and other channels of expression.

This civic space is grounded in a set of interrelated rights and freedoms that constitute the conditions for its existence and sustainability .These include freedom of opinion and expression ,freedom of association and political participation ,freedom of peaceful assembly ,the right of access to information, and fair trial guarantees that protect activists from arbitrary prosecution. Collectively ,these rights form what the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights refers to as an enabling environment for civil society ,meaning the minimum conditions required for civic actors to effectively perform their role in monitoring public authority ,strengthening democratic participation ,and safeguarding public freedoms .In this context, restrictions on civic space cannot be viewed merely as isolated violations of individual rights ,but rather as an interference with an integrated system that affects the very core of democratic governance .Weakening civil society and limiting independent action outside State structures does not only silence dissenting voices ,but also undermines pluralism and weakens accountability mechanisms ,thereby reducing society's capacity to resist the gradual emergence of more authoritarian forms of governance.

From March 2025 to February ,2026 documented information reveals a systematic pattern of restrictions affecting various components of civic, political ,and trade union activity ,alongside a notable increase in the use of security and judicial approaches in dealing with activities that are constitutionally and legally protected .These restrictions did not emerge suddenly but are the result of accumulated developments that produced a legislative and political environment conducive to expanding limitations. Among the most significant of these developments is Decree Law No54 . of 2022 on cybercrime ,which has been widely used to prosecute activists, journalists ,and political actors on the basis of their digital expression.

This period also witnessed the consolidation of official discourse portraying civic and opposition activity as a threat to national security or as an extension of foreign agendas ,reviving the logic of internal enemies to justify restrictions on public freedoms .This discourse materialized in judicial prosecutions,

administrative measures ,and field level interventions targeting associations, organizations ,political parties ,trade unions ,and individuals ,reflecting a selective and at times arbitrary application of the existing legal framework.

The forms of these violations are diverse and interconnected .They are not limited to explicit judicial or security measures ,but also extend to administrative tools such as the suspension of associations ,refusal of authorizations ,and obstruction of activities .These are accompanied by symbolic and media based forms of defamation and incitement aimed at undermining the legitimacy of civic and political actors in the public sphere. Taken together ,these developments reveal a complex approach to managing civic space ,characterized not by reliance on a single instrument ,but by the coordinated use of multiple and overlapping forms of pressure.

This report seeks to document and analyze these violations in a comprehensive and systematic manner during the period from March 2025 to February,2026 through classification according to their judicial ,security ,and administrative nature .The report goes beyond documentation to examine the deeper patterns shaping the shrinking of civic space by tracking the repetition of practices and their consolidation as quasi systematic mechanisms ,linking documented violations to their political and legislative context ,and analyzing their impact on the sustainability of civic ,political ,and trade union activity ,as well as on meaningful civic participation .The report also draws on relevant national and international frameworks to assess the extent to which observed practices align with Tunisia’s human rights obligations and to contribute to a solid analytical foundation for advocacy efforts aimed at safeguarding and protecting civic space.

The report concludes with a set of targeted recommendations addressed to political authorities and national and international stakeholders ,urging the State to fulfill its human rights obligations and strengthen compliance with international human rights standards .These recommendations focus on the need to ensure a safe and pluralistic civic space that enables civil ,political, trade union ,and digital actors to operate freely and without intimidation, prosecution ,or undue restrictions.

Methodology

Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms prepared this report using a documentation and analytical methodology covering the period from February 2025 to the end of March 2026. The report aims to identify patterns of restrictions, judicial harassment, and violations targeting civic space in its various components, including associations, organizations, activists, political actors, and trade unionists, in connection with their engagement in public affairs.

The research team relied on multiple sources, including 12» 12 in person and remote interviews with lawyers, experts, and families of detainees, in addition to testimonies from civil society actors. The report also draws on the analysis of official statements, media coverage, and reports issued by national and international organizations.

The report provides an overview of the broader context of the escalating restrictions on civic space. It documents 37 cases of violations affecting civic space, including 23 cases related to civil society work and 9 cases targeting political activity. The report also identifies three cases involving social work and two cases related to digital expression.

Despite these efforts, the research team encountered several field challenges, most notably limited access to information and a climate of fear that prevented many victims from disclosing their identities. Additional challenges included difficulties in conducting interviews. In response, strict confidentiality measures were adopted, including withholding certain names and using pseudonyms to protect individuals.

The cases presented in this report do not constitute an exhaustive account of all violations. Rather, they reflect recurring patterns of restrictions and arbitrary practices that cast a shadow over the future of civic space in Tunisia.



Civic Space in Tunisia: From Democratic Expansion to Political Contraction

Civic space is a central concept within the human rights framework .It refers to the sphere in which individuals and groups are able to exercise their fundamental rights as guaranteed under international law ,particularly freedom of expression ,peaceful assembly ,and freedom of association. Articles 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 established the legal framework governing these rights ,while the reports of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association have contributed to deepening the practical understanding of this concept and adapting it to different societal and human rights contexts worldwide .Prominent international organizations¹ also rely on objective indicators to assess and classify civic space globally, making the concept both an analytical and monitoring tool².

1 CIVICUS, Compendium of International Legal Instruments and other Inter-Governmental Commitments Concerning Core Civil Society Rights, January 2014, 1, accessed March 23, 2026, https://www.civicus.org/images/stories/Compendium_International_Legal%20Instruments_Et_Al_2014.pdf.

2 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Guidance Note on Protection and Promotion of Civic Space, 1, accessed March 23, 2026, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/CivicSpace/UN_Guidance_Note.

States play a central role in shaping the legal and institutional frameworks within which individuals exercise their rights to expression, assembly, and association, and engage in dialogue among themselves and with authorities on issues affecting their lives, ranging from the quality of basic services to improving institutional performance and ensuring respect for fundamental freedoms. Civic space is not limited to an abstract legal framework. Rather, it is embodied in a network of actors and institutions that includes civil society organizations such as human rights, development, and environmental associations, labor unions and professional organizations as collective organizing spaces, independent media as a cornerstone of information and press freedom, and social movements and activist groups that often emerge informally in response to specific issues. It also includes individuals acting in their personal capacity, whether through digital platforms or through direct advocacy and protest activities. Together, these components form an operational ecosystem that goes beyond institutional existence to active participation in public life.

Civic space plays multiple roles in shaping public policy and ensuring accountability. In terms of oversight, civil society organizations document violations and monitor the performance of public institutions, providing essential information for democratic accountability. In terms of advocacy, these actors influence legislation and policies through dialogue with decision makers and by providing technical and rights based recommendations supported by evidence.

Social mobilization is another core function, reflected in shaping public opinion and organizing collective pressure around issues of public concern. Independent media also plays an essential informational and oversight role by ensuring transparency, reporting freely, providing access to information, and enabling citizens to express their views.

Civic space is intrinsically linked to democratic governance. It is not possible to speak of meaningful democracy in the absence of a free and active civil society. Civic space serves as a channel that allows citizens to participate in public affairs beyond electoral cycles and provides human rights protection mechanisms with the field based information necessary for oversight and accountability. It also acts as an institutional safeguard against concentration of power and abuse of authority, while strengthening a culture of accountability through the normalization of constructive criticism and information sharing. The openness of civic space is measured by the ability of these actors to operate freely and independently, without undue interference or restrictions

by authorities .Civic space is also influenced by political ,legislative ,and security related factors ,including regulatory laws ,administrative practices, and public discourse ,making it a sensitive indicator of the state of public freedoms and the rule of law within any society.

Tunisiaprovidesanotableexampleofthisdynamic.Following,2011thecountry experienced an exceptional foundational phase marked by unprecedented expansion in civil society activity within a protective constitutional and legal framework ³.This contributed to the drafting of the 2014 Constitution, supported the work of independent constitutional bodies ,and positioned Tunisia as a regional reference in civic participation .However ,this trajectory remained subject to fluctuations influenced by political developments and changing contexts.

Since ,2021 successive political developments have directly affected the legal and institutional framework governing civic space ,producing a new context in which legislative restrictions intersect with human rights violations and institutional pressure on civil society actors across sectors .These developments have reshaped public space in Tunisia and contributed to a climate characterized by increasing closure and growing distance between the State and civic space actors .In some cases ,civic activity has been framed as illegitimate ,its influence diminished ,and its very existence challenged. These developments call for a closer examination of their manifestations and their impact on the various actors operating within civic space.

Civil Society Challenges After 25 July 2021:

3 Tunisia, Decree Law No. 88 of 2011 dated 24 September 2011 on the organization of associations, accessed 23 March 2026.

<https://legislation-securite.tn/ar/latest-laws%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%B3%D9%88%D9%85%-D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%AF%-88-D9%84%D8%B3%D9%86%D8%A9-2011%-D9%85%D8%A4%D8%B1%D8%AE%-D9%81%D9%8A-%24D8%B3%D8%A8%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%A8%D8%B1-2011-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%82/>

Between Acquired Freedoms and Emerging Restrictions

Civic space in Tunisia has undergone profound transformations since the outbreak of the 14 January 2011 revolution. This moment marked a turning point in the country's history, leading to the fall of the Ben Ali regime and paving the way for a fundamental shift in the relationship between the State and society. In the post-revolution context, restrictions on freedom of association were lifted, resulting in an unprecedented increase in the number of associations, rising from a few thousand before the revolution to more than 20,000 within a few years⁴. This opening was further strengthened by the adoption of Decree Law No 88 of 2011, widely considered one of the most progressive legal frameworks in the region, as it established freedom of association through notification rather than authorization and guaranteed independence from State control.

Civil society also played a central role in shaping the emerging democratic landscape and consolidating its foundations. During the 2011 elections for the National Constituent Assembly, prominent organizations such as the Tunisian League for Human Rights and the ATIDE Association engaged in monitoring the electoral process and contributing to safeguarding its integrity, in functional complementarity with the organizational role of the Independent High Authority for Elections⁵.

However, this momentum soon encountered significant challenges. Between 2012 and 2013, Tunisia entered a period of sharp political polarization that reached its peak with the assassinations of opposition figures Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi. These events brought the country to the brink of a serious constitutional and security crisis. At this critical juncture, the National Dialogue Quartet played a historic mediation role. The Quartet, composed of the Tunisian General Labour Union, the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts, the Tunisian League for Human Rights, and the National Bar Association, contributed to preserving the transitional process and preventing the country from sliding into violence. This role led to the Quartet being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015⁶. These

4 Website of the Center for Information, Training, Studies and Documentation on Associations, March 13, 2026, last access date March 18, 2026.
http://www.ifeda.org.tn/ar/index.php?lang=ar&id_page5=

5 Final Report on the Tunisian National Constituent, 23 October 2026.
https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/tunisia-final-election-report_021712-v2.pdf

6 Al Jazeera, The Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet Wins the Nobel Peace Prize, 11

efforts culminated in the adoption of the 2014 Constitution ,which enshrined in Articles 31 and 35 freedom of association ,freedom of expression ,and peaceful assembly ,and represented at the time an advanced constitutional reference at the regional level.

Between 2014 and ,2019 civic space continued to play a central role across various fields ,from election monitoring to human rights advocacy and influencing public policy .Civil society also played an important role in the transitional justice process ,particularly through engagement with the Truth and Dignity Commission ,despite political obstacles that hindered its work ⁷.Civil society organizations also expanded their involvement in local development and governance following the adoption of the Local Authorities Code in ,2018 which strengthened decentralization and created new opportunities for civic participation at the local level .However ,this trajectory was not without challenges .From 2018 onward ,indicators of increasing restrictions began to emerge ,including organized smear campaigns, difficulties in accessing funding ,and growing official discourse questioning the independence and credibility of civil society organizations⁸.

Between 2020 and ,2021 the political and institutional crisis intensified as a result of several interconnected factors ,including the impact of the COVID 19pandemic ,worsening economic and social conditions ,and institutional paralysis .These developments significantly affected civic space and its ability to function effectively .These transformations reached a turning point on25 July ,2021 when President Kais Saied announced exceptional measures, including the suspension of parliament and dismissal of the government .This marked a major shift in the political landscape and raised serious concerns about the future of freedoms and civic space.

Following these measures ,civic space in Tunisia entered a new phase characterized by increasing and cumulative restrictions .This trajectory was reinforced by Presidential Decree No ,117 .which granted the President broad exceptional powers ,followed by the dissolution of parliament in March2022

October 2015, accessed 18 March 2026.<https://www.aljazeera.net/encyclopedia/2015/10/11/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%8A-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3>

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Truth and Dignity Commission, Final Comprehensive Report: <http://www.ivd.tn/rapport/>

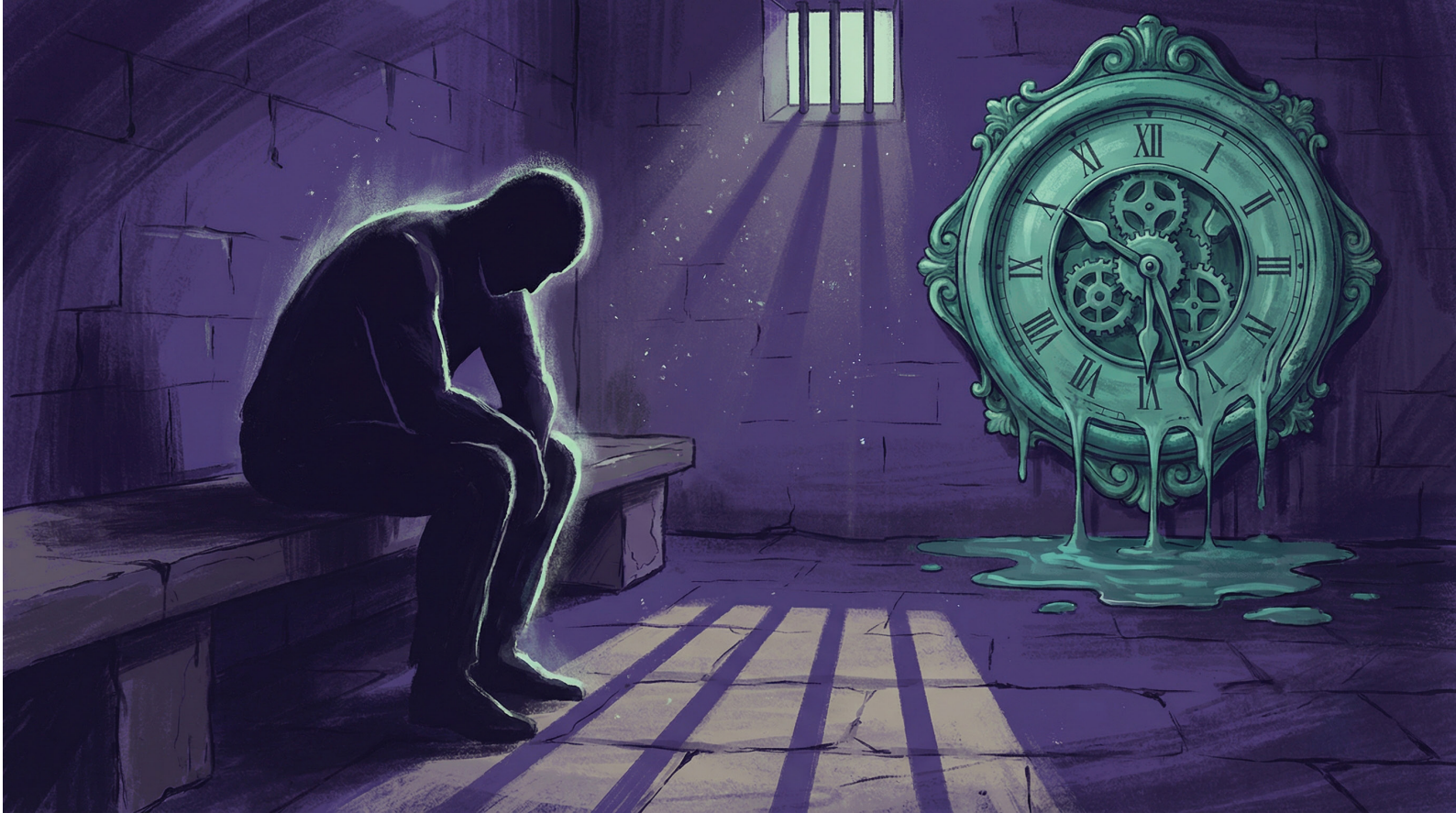
8 Human Rights Watch, World Report 2019: Tunisia, last accessed 18 March 2026. <https://www.hrw.org/ar/world-report/country-chapters/tunisia0->

and the adoption of the 2022 Constitution .The new constitutional framework established a centralized presidential system and reshaped the separation of powers in a manner that strengthened executive authority and reduced oversight and accountability mechanisms⁹.

Within this context ,civil society organizations faced a notable escalation in targeting .Official discourse increasingly accused associations of foreign allegiance and financial corruption ,accompanied by a wave of judicial prosecutions targeting activists ,civil society actors ,journalists ,and political opponents .These developments were coupled with the extensive use of controversial legal provisions .Civic space also faced structural challenges related to shrinking opportunities for public engagement ,including restrictions on peaceful protest ,limitations on access to public spaces ,and increased security and administrative oversight of civil society activities.

Despite these cumulative challenges ,civil society actors have continued to demonstrate resilience and adaptation .Civil society organizations pursued advocacy ,documentation ,and coalition building efforts in an attempt to preserve what remains of independent civic space .Nevertheless ,these developments indicate that civic space in Tunisia ,following the measures of 25 July ,2021 has shifted from a period of relative openness after the revolution to a new phase characterized by growing structural constraints and a redefinition of the relationship between the State and society on more restrictive grounds .It is within this evolving context that this report seeks to document the manifestations of these developments during the period from March 2025 to February.2026

9 Amnesty International, Tunisia: Adoption of a New Constitution Should Not Entrench the Undermining of Human Rights, 19 August 2022, last accessed 18 March 2026.
<https://www.amnesty.org/ar/documents/mde30/5925/2022/ar/>



Monitoring Attacks on Civic Space and Their Distribution by Type of Activity

Systematic Restrictions on the Right to Association and Civic Action

During ,2025 civil society organizations experienced a notable increase in violations targeting civil society actors .Following two waves of arrests that led to the detention of eight activists in ,2024 Tunisian authorities continued their restrictive approach toward civic work ,notably through the prolongation of judicial proceedings and the continued detention of those concerned .In addition ,a new approach emerged during the second half of ,2025 consisting of the suspension of the activities of a significant number of national and international organizations and associations .These developments were accompanied by continued restrictions on activities ,as well as ongoing security investigations and judicial proceedings targeting civil society actors.

Prolonged Judicial Proceedings as a Tool to Restrict Civic Space

Cases involving civil society actors brought before the courts have been marked by systematic extensions of judicial timelines .Hearings have been repeatedly postponed without clear procedural justification ,while periods of pre trial detention have extended beyond legally prescribed limits .This pattern has increasingly become ,in itself ,a form of pre trial punishment.



Case of Saadia Mosbah and Staff of the Mnementy Association

The case of Saadia Mosbah ,president of the Mnementy Association ,who has been detained since 6 May ,2024 illustrates this pattern .She was charged with illicit enrichment ,forming a criminal association ,money laundering ,and failure to maintain proper accounting records .On 13 March ,2025 the court appointed expert submitted a report to the investigating judge ,who subsequently extended her detention for an additional four months ¹⁰.In May ,2025 the remaining defendants who were released pending trial were summoned to review the expert report.

10 Interview with Zied Rouine, Project Manager at Mnementy Association, 28 January 2026.

On 4 July ,2025 the investigating judge issued a decision closing the investigation. Several charges ,including money laundering and forming a criminal association against Saadia Mosbah ,were dismissed ,leaving only allegations related to illicit enrichment and failure to maintain accounting records .All charges against the other defendants associated with the organization were also dismissed .The Public Prosecutor appealed the decision to close the investigation ,pending further developments .However ,on 15 July ,2025 the Indictment Chamber issued a decision returning the case to the initial stage and reinstating the same charges¹¹.

On 22 December ,2025 the first hearing in the Mnemty Association case was held before Criminal Chamber No 44 .of the Court of First Instance of Tunis .The court decided to postpone the hearing to 26 February 2026 due to the Court of Cassation not having ruled on the appeal filed by the defense against the decision of the Indictment Chamber .The court also rejected the request for the release of Saadia Mosbah .¹²On 19 March ,2026 Saadia Mosbah was sentenced to eight years in prison and fined 100,000 Tunisian dinars¹³.

11 Interview with Zied Rouine, Project Manager at Mnemty Association, 22 January 2026.

12 Telephone call with Ms. Hela Ben Salem, lawyer for Mnemty Association, 23 December 2025.

13 Mosaique FM, Eight years in prison and a fine of 100,000 dinars for the President of Mnemty Association, 19 March 2026, last accessed 23 March 2026.

<https://www.mosaiquefm.net/ar/%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9/1509599/8-%D8%B3%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B3%D8%AC%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%88%D8%AE%D8%B7%D9%8A%D8%A9%D8%A8%D9%80100%D8%A3%D9%84%D9%81-%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%A9%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%8A>



Tunisian Council for Refugees

The arrest of Mustapha Djemali ,Executive Director of the Tunisian Council for Refugees ,and Abderrazak Kilani ,Project Director of the organization ,dates back to May .2024 They were charged with forming a criminal association, as well as organizing ,facilitating ,assisting ,mediating ,or arranging ,by any means and even without compensation ,the entry of persons into Tunisian territory ,and providing accommodation for them.¹⁴

On 11 March ,2025 a request for release was submitted ,accompanied by a full withdrawal of all charges ,based on the final expert report issued on4 March ,2025 which did not establish the existence of any criminal offense. Despite this ,the request was rejected without any justification .On 25 March ,2025the defendants appeared before the investigating judge .However ,the hearing was marked by its extreme brevity ,as each defendant was heard for approximately two to three minutes ,despite the seriousness and importance of the procedure in the course of the case .As one of the defendants was leaving ,the investigating judge reportedly stated“ :You brought Black people into our country illegally ,and you provided them with food and shelter. Tunisia’s history and laws will pay the price for that”.¹⁵

14 Amnesty International, 2025, Tunisia: Two Human Rights Defenders Arbitrarily Detained, 5 May, last accessed 1 February 2026.

<https://www.amnesty.org/ar/mde30-9312-2025-ar/>

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Support Committee for Mustapha Djemali ,2025 ,Report on the Situation of Mustapha Djemali ,p. 11 ,6May.

The confrontation hearing between Mustapha Djemali and Abderrazak Krimi, scheduled for 25 March ,2025 was postponed to 2 April .2025 Since then, questioning was limited to several former accountants of the organization and the financial director ,with requests for sworn statements confirming the absence of any personal or professional relationship between former employees and the court appointed expert responsible for auditing the organization's accounts.¹⁶

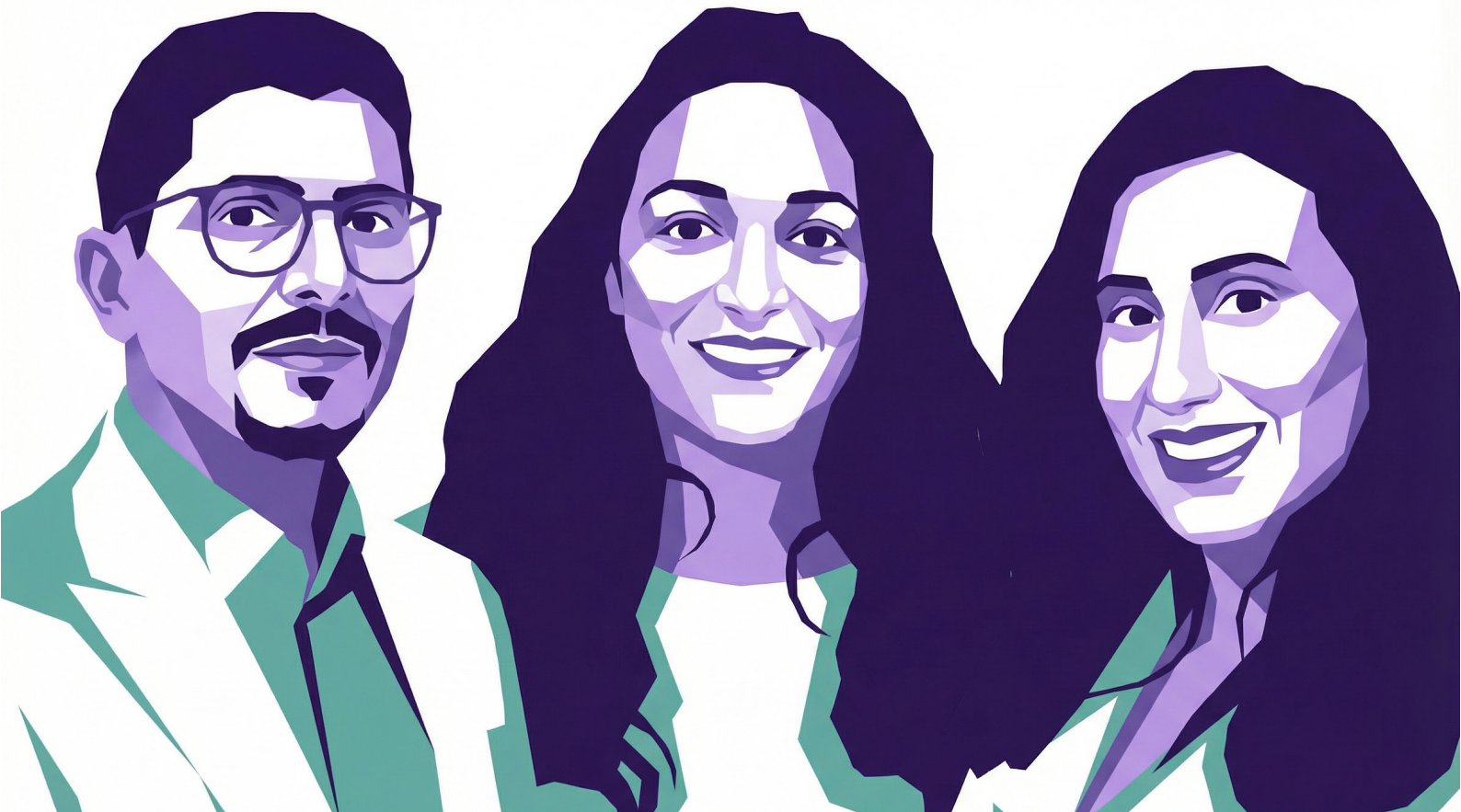
On 3 April ,2025 Mustapha Djemali and Abderrazak Krimi appeared before the investigating judge without prior notification to their lawyers .On 6 May ,2025the investigating judge decided to close the investigation .Mustapha Djemali was informed of the decision while still in detention .The decision was appealed ,and the case was referred back to the Indictment Chamber for reconsideration.

After 17 months of detention ,the first hearing of their trial was held on 16October 2025 before the Court of First Instance of Tunis .The hearing was later postponed to 24 November .2025 On the evening of Monday25 , November ,2025 Mustapha Djemali ,President of the Tunisian Council for Refugees ,and Abderrazak Krimi ,Project Director of the association ,were released .This followed a ruling issued by the Criminal Chamber of the Court of First Instance of Tunis sentencing them to two years in prison ,with the remaining sentence suspended after deducting the period already served in detention¹⁷.

16 Rapport_sur_la_Situation_de_Mustapha_Djemali.

17 Mosaique FM, Release of Mustapha Djemali and Abderrazak Krimi, 24 November 2025, last accessed 2 February 2026.

<https://www.mosaiquefm.net/ar/%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%-D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9/1482535/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AC%-D8%B9%D9%86%-D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B7%D9%81%D9%89%-D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%-D9%88%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%82%-D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%8A>



Terre d'Asile Tunisie

The Terre d'Asile Tunisie case dates back to May ,2024 when Sherifa Riahi, Mohamed Jouou ,and Ayadh Bouslami were arrested ,along with Mohamed Iqbal Khaled and Iman Werdani ,former employees of the Municipality of Sousse .They were charged with money laundering ,fraud ,assault against persons and property ,and financial support to irregular migrants ,pursuant to Articles 38 to 43 of Law No 40 .of 1975 relating to passports and travel documents .Additional charges included abuse of official position to obtain undue benefits for oneself or others ,or to harm the administration ,pursuant to Article 96 of the Tunisian Penal Code¹⁸.

The judicial proceedings were marked by several serious human rights violations ,particularly concerning the right to a fair trial .The detention of Sherifa Riahi became a significant humanitarian test for the Tunisian authorities ,as a mother was imprisoned and separated from her newborn child .On 17 March ,2025 Riahi addressed a letter from prison calling on

18 Amnesty International, 2025, Urgent Action: Human Rights Defenders Arbitrarily Detained, 20 May, last accessed 2 February 2026.
<https://www.amnesty.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2025/05/MDE3093932025ARABIC.pdf>

judicial authorities to expedite cassation procedures and schedule a hearing at the earliest opportunity ,particularly following the dismissal of the money laundering charges .She wrote“ :I never regretted my work in the humanitarian field .It is unjust to convict individuals because of their commitment to humanitarian work ”.She further stated“ :My imprisonment itself was not the worst experience ;the worst was being deprived of direct visits with my children ,one of whom is one year old and the other three ,as they were not allowed to visit me directly accompanied by a family member¹⁹”.

The case remained pending following the cassation of the decision of the Indictment Chamber .Sherifa Riahi had previously been classified among detainees not permitted direct visits .However ,following the dismissal of the money laundering charges ,this classification was lifted ,allowing her ,under the law ,to benefit from direct visits with her children once every fifteen days.

On 8 October ,2025 the Court of Cassation rejected the appeals submitted by the defense against the decision of the Indictment Chamber and upheld the contested decision .²⁰On 15 December ,2025 the first hearing in the case was held before the Criminal Chamber specialized in financial corruption cases at the Court of First Instance of Tunis .The hearing was postponed to 5 January ,2026 and all requests for release submitted on behalf of the detainees were rejected²¹.

At the hearing held on 5 January ,2026 the court issued a judgment sentencing Sherifa Riahi ,Mohamed Jouou ,Ayadh Bouslami ,Mohamed Iqbal Khaled, and Iman Werdani to two years in prison ,with the sentence suspended .The court also dismissed the charges against the remaining defendants who had been referred while released pending trial²².

19 Kashf, 2025, Sherifa Riahi from Detention: “My Imprisonment Was Not the Worst Experience, Being Deprived of My Children Was”, 24 March, last accessed 19 March 2025.
<https://kashfmedia.com%/2025/03/24/D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%81%D8%A9%-D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AD%D9%8A-%D9%85%D9%86%-D8%B3%D8%AC%D9%86%-D8%A5%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A7-%D9%81%D9%87%D8%A7%-D9%84%D9%85%-D9%8A%D9%83%D9%86-%D8%B3%D8%AC/>

20 Telephone call with Ms. Hayet Jazar, 8 October 2025.

21 Babnet, Postponement of the Trial of Defendants in the Terre d’Asile Tunisie Case and Rejection of All Release Requests, 15 December 2025, last accessed 11 February 2026.
<https://www.babnet.net/cadredetail.320283-asp>

22 France 24, Tunisia: Sherifa Riahi and Activists from Terre d’Asile Organization Released After 20 Months of Detention, 15 January 2026, last accessed 13 February 2026.
<https://www.france24.com/ar%/D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%AC%/D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AC-20260115/%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%-D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%81%D8%->

Children of the Moon Association

The case of Abdallah Saïd dates back to 12 November ,2024 when he was summoned by phone ,along with the Secretary General and the Treasurer of the association .They were questioned and placed in custody on the same day by the National Unit for Investigating Complex Crimes in El Gorjani ,without being informed of precise or clear charges ²³.The case file was later referred to the Public Prosecutor at the Court of First Instance of Medenine ,who alleged suspicions of a terrorist nature .As a result ,the case was transferred to the Judicial Counter Terrorism Pole on 17 November.2024

However ,on 26 November ,2024 the Judicial Counter Terrorism Pole determined that there were no terrorist related suspicions and returned the case to the ordinary judiciary .Despite the dismissal of the most serious criminal classification ,a judicial investigation was opened on charges related to money laundering ,embezzlement of funds ,and undermining the external security of the State .Following this ,Abdallah Saïd was placed in pre trial detention ,while the remaining defendants were released pending trial, including the Secretary General and the Treasurer of the association²⁴.

Since that date ,Abdallah Saïd has remained in detention without any final judicial decision .He is also facing concerning health conditions and detention circumstances that do not meet minimum humanitarian standards .In addition ,he has been deprived of his pension ,which has led to a deterioration

[B1%D8%A7%D8%AC%-D8%B9%D9%86%-D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%81%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AD%D9%8A%-D9%88%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%-D9%85%D9%86-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%85%D8%A9%-D8%A3%D8%B1%D8%B6%-D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%88%D8%A1%-D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF-20-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A7%-D9%85%D9%86%-D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%AC%D9%86](https://legal-agenda.com/%d8%a7%d8%b9%d8%aa%d9%82%d8%a7%d9%84-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b7%d8%a8%d9%8a%d8%a8-%d8%b9%d8%a8%d8%af-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%84%d9%87-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d8%b9%d9%8a%d8%af-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%84%d8%b7%d8%a9-%d8%aa/)

23 Legal Agenda, 2024, Arrest of Dr. Abdallah Saïd: Authorities Reward Humanitarian Work with Imprisonment, 4 December 2024, last accessed 13 February 2026.

<https://legal-agenda.com/%d8%a7%d8%b9%d8%aa%d9%82%d8%a7%d9%84-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b7%d8%a8%d9%8a%d8%a8-%d8%b9%d8%a8%d8%af-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%84%d9%87-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d8%b9%d9%8a%d8%af-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%84%d8%b7%d8%a9-%d8%aa/>

24 Tunisie Telegraph, 2024, Judicial Counter Terrorism Pole Decision Concerning the President of Children of the Moon Association, 29 November, last accessed 25 January 2025.

<https://tunisie-telegraph.com/a-la-une/%D9%87%D8%B0%D8%A7%-D9%85%D8%A7-%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%B1%D9%87%-D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%A8%-D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A%-D9%84%D9%85%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%AD%D8%A9%-D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B1/>

in the social and economic situation of his family.²⁵

On 3 February ,2026 Abdallah Saïd appeared before the Court of First Instance of Medenine .The court decided to postpone the trial to 21 April 2026and rejected his request for release.²⁶

The Association for the Promotion of the Right to Difference (Association Tunisienne pour la Promotion du Droit à la Différence (ATPDD))

The case of the Association for the Promotion of the Right to Difference dates back to 9 December ,2024 when Salwa Ghrissa ,the Executive Director of the association ,was summoned to the Sub Directorate for Economic and Financial Investigations in El Gorjani .She was questioned and subsequently released .On 10 December ,2024 she returned to complete the investigative procedures ,at which point she was placed in custody for 48 hours and transferred to the Bouchoucha detention center²⁷.

On 12 December ,2024 she was brought before the Public Prosecutor at the Court of First Instance of Bizerte ,who ordered the opening of a judicial investigation assigned to the First Investigating Judge of the First Office. Following her interrogation ,a detention warrant was issued ,and she was placed in detention at the Manouba Women's Civil Prison .She faced multiple charges primarily related to money laundering ,violations of foreign exchange regulations ,data falsification ,and violations of the associations law .These charges were based on Organic Law No 26 .of 2015 on counter terrorism and anti money laundering ,the Foreign Exchange and External Trade Code,

25 Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms, 30 January 2026, last accessed 16 February 2026.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p1/At3SagcAr/>

26 Ultra Tunisia, Release Request Denied for Abdallah Saïd and Trial Postponed Amid Broad Human Rights Solidarity, 5 February 2026, last accessed 16 February 2026.

<https://ultratunisia.ultrasawt.com/%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%B6%-D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AC%-D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF%-D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%AF%-D9%88%D8%AA%D8%A3%D8%AC%D9%8A%D9%84%-D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%83%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%87-%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%B7%-D8%AA%D8%B6%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%86%-D8%A-D%D9%82%D9%88%D9%82%D9%8A%-D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B9/D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%-D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3/D9%85%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B9/D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB8%C%D8%B1>

27 Interview with Mr. Anas Kaddoussi, lawyer for the victim of the violation, 5 March 2026.

Decree Law No 54 .of ,2022 and Decree Law No 88 .of .2011 The case remained under investigation without significant progress ,particularly after the transfer of the First Investigating Judge ,which resulted in a vacancy in the investigative office and the absence of a replacement judge assigned to the case²⁸.

On 9 June ,2025 Salwa Ghrissa was transferred from the Manouba Women's Civil Prison to the Court of First Instance of Bizerte to appear before an acting investigating judge .During the hearing ,she was informed of a decision extending her pre trial detention for an additional four months, while the investigation continued without substantial developments .On 7 October ,2025 the investigating judge issued another decision extending her detention for an additional four months ,bringing her total detention period to more than ten consecutive months without a decision on the merits of the case or a referral to the Indictment Chamber or trial²⁹.

On 28 January ,2026 the investigation was closed and Ghrissa was referred to the Indictment Chamber on 3 February .2026 The chamber subsequently referred her to the Criminal Chamber ,pending the scheduling of a hearing on the merits of the case ,which was set for 5 March³⁰.2026

28 Interview with Mr. Anas Kaddoussi, lawyer for the victim of the violation, 5 March 2026.

29 Telephone call with Mr. Anas Kaddoussi, 5 March 2026..

30 Telephone call with Mr. Anas Kaddoussi, 5 March 2026.



Suspension of Civil Society Associations

During the last quarter of ,2025 a systematic campaign by the political authorities emerged through decisions suspending the activities of several associations ,on the grounds of alleged violations of Decree Law No 88 .of 2011regulating associations.

Aswat Nissa Association

On 14 August ,2025 a bailiff contacted the legal representative of Aswat Nissa Association by phone to inform her of the suspension of the association's activities for one month ,following a decision issued on 4 August .2025 The suspension was based on alleged violations of Articles ,41 ,40 ,39 ,3 and44 of Decree Law No 88 .of.2011

It is worth noting that the first warning had been sent in July 2024 by the General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Government to the association's original headquarters as specified in its bylaws .However ,the association had changed its headquarters several times and had notified the Presidency of the Government of its new address ,which was also registered in the National Register of Enterprises³¹.

31 Interview with Ms. Hela Ben Salem, lawyer for the association, 18 December 2025.

On 10 December ,2025 the court reserved the case for deliberation and scheduled the pronouncement of judgment for 31 December .2025 At the hearing held on 31 December ,2025 the court rejected the request to revoke the authorization and upheld the suspension decision³².

Mnemty Association

On 9 October ,2025 Mnemty Association received a notification issued by order on petition providing for the suspension of its activities for one month. The notification was delivered to the residence of its President ,Saadia Mosbah ,who had been detained since May.2024

The association was unable to challenge the decision ,as most official documents and invoices ,including the association's official stamp ,had been seized by judicial authorities in connection with the case against its President .The association also did not receive any prior notification or warning requesting the submission of documents or reports allegedly in violation of Decree Law No 88 .of³³.2011

Tunisian Association of Democratic Women

On 24 October ,2025 the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women received a notification ordering the suspension of its activities for one month ,on the grounds of alleged administrative violations of Articles ,46 ,45 ,44 ,3 and48 of Decree Law No 88 .of 2011 regulating associations.

The association was requested to provide a set of registers and supporting documents related to its activities ,despite the fact that the administrative authority had already issued a similar request on 8 November ,2024 to which the association responded by committing to submit all required documentation .Accordingly ,on 5 December ,2024 the association formally contacted the relevant administration and submitted most of the documents related to the content of the notification.

The first hearing was held on 19 November ,2025 during which the case was postponed to 24 December .2025 At that hearing ,the case was again postponed pending a response from the General State Litigation Authority, despite the association's lawyers having already submitted their written

32 Telephone call with Ms. Hela Ben Salem, 03 January 2026.

33 Telephone call with Zied Rouine, Project Manager at Mnemty Association, 9 November 2025.

pleadings .The State representative requested additional time to review and respond ,and a new hearing was scheduled for 21 January.2026

At the hearing of 21 January ,2026 the case was postponed once more to 18February .2026 During the 18 February 2026 hearing ,pleadings were concluded and the court reserved the case for judgment ,scheduling the delivery of the decision for 4 March³⁴.2026

Feminist Association in Sidi Bouzid

On 20 December, 2024 a feminist association in the governorate of Sidi Bouzid³⁵ received a notice from the General Directorate of Associations requesting the submission of a number of documents related to its financial transactions. According to the association's president ,Mofida ,³⁶all requested documents were sent ,supported by a bailiff's report confirming both the dispatch and the content of the correspondence.

However ,in June ,2025 the association discovered incidentally that a decision dated 25 January 2025 had been issued suspending its activities for one month ,without any formal notification through legally recognized channels .Following this discovery ,the association's president visited the Directorate of Associations to seek clarification .She was informed that the correspondence sent in December 2024 had not been opened and that the envelope remained in the same condition as when it had been received.

The association's president also reported repeated security related harassment linked to the association's activities .According to her ,security officers or the local delegate intervened during every activity organized by the association ,affecting the conduct of its events and restricting its freedom to operate³⁷.

34 Telephone call with Ms. Hela Ben Salem, 20 February 2026.

35 The name of the association has been withheld at its request for protection purposes.

36 Pseudonym used to protect the individual subject to legal proceedings.

37 Interview with the President of the association, 16 December 2025.

International Commission of Jurists

On 10 October ,2026 the International Commission of Jurists received a notification issued by order on petition suspending the organization's activities for one month ,based on alleged non compliance with Decree Law No 88 .of 2011 regulating associations ,without specifying the nature of the alleged violations or identifying any concrete acts justifying the measure.

The notification process was also marked by clear procedural irregularities. The decision was not formally served in accordance with legal requirements, but rather found placed under the door of the organization's premises .There were also inconsistencies in the dates ,as the suspension decision was signed on 3 October ,2025 raising serious concerns regarding the validity and procedural integrity of the measure.

In response ,the organization filed an appeal before the administrative court seeking annulment of the suspension decision .The hearing was postponed twice at the request of the General State Litigation Authority .Ultimately ,the court rejected the application seeking annulment ,thereby upholding the decision to suspend the organization's activities for one month.³⁸

Al Khatt Association

Since late ,2024 Al Khatt Association ,which manages the Inkyfada website, has been subjected to a series of banking restrictions ,including the obstruction of its financial transactions and limitations on access to banking services .These measures directly affected the continuity of its activities.

These practices intensified during the second half of .2025 In October ,2025the association received a notification ordering the suspension of its activities for thirty days ,on the grounds of alleged violations of Decree Law No 88 .of 2011 regulating associations .The notification did not provide precise clarification regarding the nature of the alleged violations or specify the material facts forming the basis of the decision³⁹.

38 Interview with the International Commission of Jurists, 7 January 2026.

39 Al Jazeera website, Tunisian Human Rights Defenders Sound the Alarm Following Suspension of 17 Organizations, 12 November 2025, last accessed 23 February 2026.

<https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2025/11/12/D8%AD%D9%82%D9%88%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%88%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%AE%D8%A9%D9%81%D8%B2%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%82>

Nawaat Journalists Association

On 31 October ,2025 the Nawaat Journalists Association received a notification issued by order on petition suspending its activities for one month .In an official statement ,the association announced its compliance with the decision while simultaneously initiating legal appeal procedures to challenge it ⁴⁰.The association also explained that on 26 November2024 it had received a notice from the General Secretariat of the Government requesting the submission of several documents .The association stated that it complied with this request and submitted most of the required documents on 25 December .2024 However ,the association indicated that it did not receive any subsequent official correspondence at its headquarters regarding the status of the file .Instead ,its legal representative later discovered that a decision had been issued on 18 December 2024 without formal notification, during what the association described as a» marathon of investigations and interrogations «to which its team had been subjected at the Gorjani barracks during the previous year⁴¹.

The association considered the suspension decision to be» a ready made political decision aimed at silencing its leading voice in media resistance against systems of mediocrity and authoritarianism «,according to its official statement⁴²

40 Nawaat. Statement: “Nawaat Will Not Be Silenced.” 31 October 2025. Accessed 10 March 2025.

<https://nawaat.org%/2025/10/31/D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86%-D9%84%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%AC%D9%91%D9%81%-D8%A3%D9%82%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%A9%-D9%88%D9%84%D9%86-%D9%8A%D9%8F%D8%AE%D9%85%D8%AF%-D8%B5%D9%88%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%A7/>

41 Nawaat. Statement: “Nawaat Will Not Be Silenced.” 31 October 2025. Accessed 10 March 2025.

<https://nawaat.org%/2025/10/31/D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86%-D9%84%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%AC%D9%91%D9%81%-D8%A3%D9%82%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%A9%-D9%88%D9%84%D9%86-%D9%8A%D9%8F%D8%AE%D9%85%D8%AF%-D8%B5%D9%88%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%A7/>

42 Nawaat. Statement: “Nawaat Will Not Be Silenced.” 31 October 2025. Accessed 10 March 2025.

<https://nawaat.org%/2025/10/31/D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86%-D9%84%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%AC%D9%91%D9%81%-D8%A3%D9%82%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%A9%-D9%88%D9%84%D9%86->

Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights

On 27 October ,2025 the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights received an official notification informing it of the suspension of its activities for one month .The notification used standardized wording nearly identical to that sent to several other associations during the same period ,without providing detailed information on the alleged violations or specifying concrete facts justifying the measure⁴³.

It is worth noting that since April ,2025 the Forum had been subjected to a series of tax and financial audits ,within a context of ongoing oversight that preceded the suspension decision .A hearing was held on 5 December,2025 during which the case was postponed to 26 December .2025 At the hearing of 26 December ,2025 the case was again postponed to 9 January.2026 During this final session ,the court issued a decision rejecting the request⁴⁴

Patrimoine pour l'Économie Solidaire (APES)

Since early January ,2025 Patrimoine pour l'Économie Solidaire) APES(received a series of notices issued by the General Secretariat of the Government ,requesting the completion of administrative documents related to the association's activities and management .The association indicated that it complied with these notices and submitted most of the requested documents in accordance with legal requirements ,sending them through the Tunisian postal service with proof of dispatch.⁴⁵

However ,on 17 July ,2025 the association was surprised to receive a notification suspending its activities for one month ,on the grounds of failure to respond to the aforementioned notices ,despite its confirmation that the required procedures had been completed within the specified deadlines.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p17/Y9SSR5Gh/>

43 Facebook post by Alaa Talbi, Director of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p17/Y9SSR5Gh/>

44 Interview with Ramadan Ben Omar, spokesperson for the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights.

45 Interview with Maher Omrani, Project Manager at Patrimoine pour l'Économie Solidaire (APES), 23 December 2025.

Following this ,Patrimoine pour l'Économie Solidaire) APES (filed a legal appeal challenging the suspension decision ,and a hearing was scheduled for 21 November 2025 to consider the case.⁴⁶

Tunisian Wildlife Association) ATVS(

On 3 November ,2025 the Tunisian Wildlife Association) ATVS ,(an organization dedicated to awareness raising ,conservation ,and documentation of biodiversity in Tunisia ,issued a statement announcing that on 8 October 2025 it had received a formal notice based on a court order on petition ,ordering the suspension of its activities for one month ⁴⁷.In the same statement ,the association affirmed that all required procedures had been followed and that all requested documents and records had been duly submitted within the prescribed deadlines ,in accordance with the legal framework governing associations⁴⁸.

Bara'a Association for the Protection of Children at Risk

On 18 November ,2025 the Bara'a Association for the Protection of Children at Risk announced that it had received a notification suspending its activities for one month .The association indicated that the decision would affect all programs and services provided to children and their families .The association explained that during the suspension period it would be unable to provide interventions aimed at children in need of protection .It also noted that the implementation of field projects and planned awareness workshops would be frozen ,potentially negatively affecting beneficiaries of its services⁴⁹.
The association reaffirmed its commitment to respecting the law and following

46 Interview with Maher Omrani, Project Manager at Patrimoine pour l'Économie Solidaire (APES), 23 December 2025.

47 Official Facebook page of the Tunisian Wildlife Association (ATVS), statement, 3 November 2025, last accessed 5 March 2025.
<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid&1171030991796183=set=a585205970378691>.

48 Official Facebook page of the Tunisian Wildlife Association (ATVS), statement, 3 November 2025, last accessed 5 March 2025.
<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid&1171030991796183=set=a585205970378691>.

49 Facebook page of the Bara'a Association for the Protection of At Risk Children, 18 November 2025, last accessed 18 February 2026.
https://www.facebook.com/AssociationBara2a/posts?1158515003091388/ref=embed_post

legal procedures .It considered the decision part of a series of repeated and unjustified measures targeting several civil society organizations ,despite the essential role these organizations play in protecting rights and supporting the rule of law ,according to its official statement⁵⁰.

The association also stated that it would pursue all available legal avenues to challenge the suspension decision ,in order to ensure the continuity of its services and safeguard the rights of children whose safety and protection depend on these interventions⁵¹.

Nakhla Association

On 5 November ,2025 Nakhla Association received a notification issued by order on petition suspending its activities for one month ,effective from the date of notification .The association announced its commitment to implementing the suspension decision while simultaneously initiating legal appeal procedures ,in accordance with the legislative framework governing associations .It also confirmed that it had complied with all legal and administrative requirements set out in Decree Law No 88 .of ,2011 issued on 24September ,2011 and stated that it would address the points raised in the notification transparently and in cooperation with the relevant authorities⁵².

The association also reaffirmed its commitment to its environmental and social mission ,expressing its intention to resume its activities at the earliest opportunity ,in line with its vision of building a sustainable local community that values volunteer engagement as a key driver of development .It further indicated that it relies on the support of its partners and members ,considering this period an opportunity to strengthen trust and reaffirm its commitment to the principles guiding its work in serving the public interest⁵³.

50 Facebook page of the Bara'a Association for the Protection of At Risk Children, 18 November 2025, last accessed 18 February 2026.
https://www.facebook.com/AssociationBara2a/posts?1158515003091388/ref=embed_post

51 Facebook page of the Bara'a Association for the Protection of At Risk Children, 18 November 2025, last accessed 18 February 2026.
https://www.facebook.com/AssociationBara2a/posts?1158515003091388/ref=embed_post

52 Kapitalis Tunisia News, Suspension of Nakhla Association's Activities, 5 November 2025, last accessed 18 February 2026.
<https://kapitalis.com/anbaa-tounes%/2025/11/05/D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%82%-D9%86%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B7-%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9%-D9%86%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A9/>

53 Kapitalis Tunisia News, Suspension of Nakhla Association's Activities, 5 November 2025, last accessed 18 February 2026.
<https://kapitalis.com/anbaa-tounes%/2025/11/05/D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%82%-D9%86%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B7->

CHAHED Observatory for Election Observation and Support for Democratic Transitions

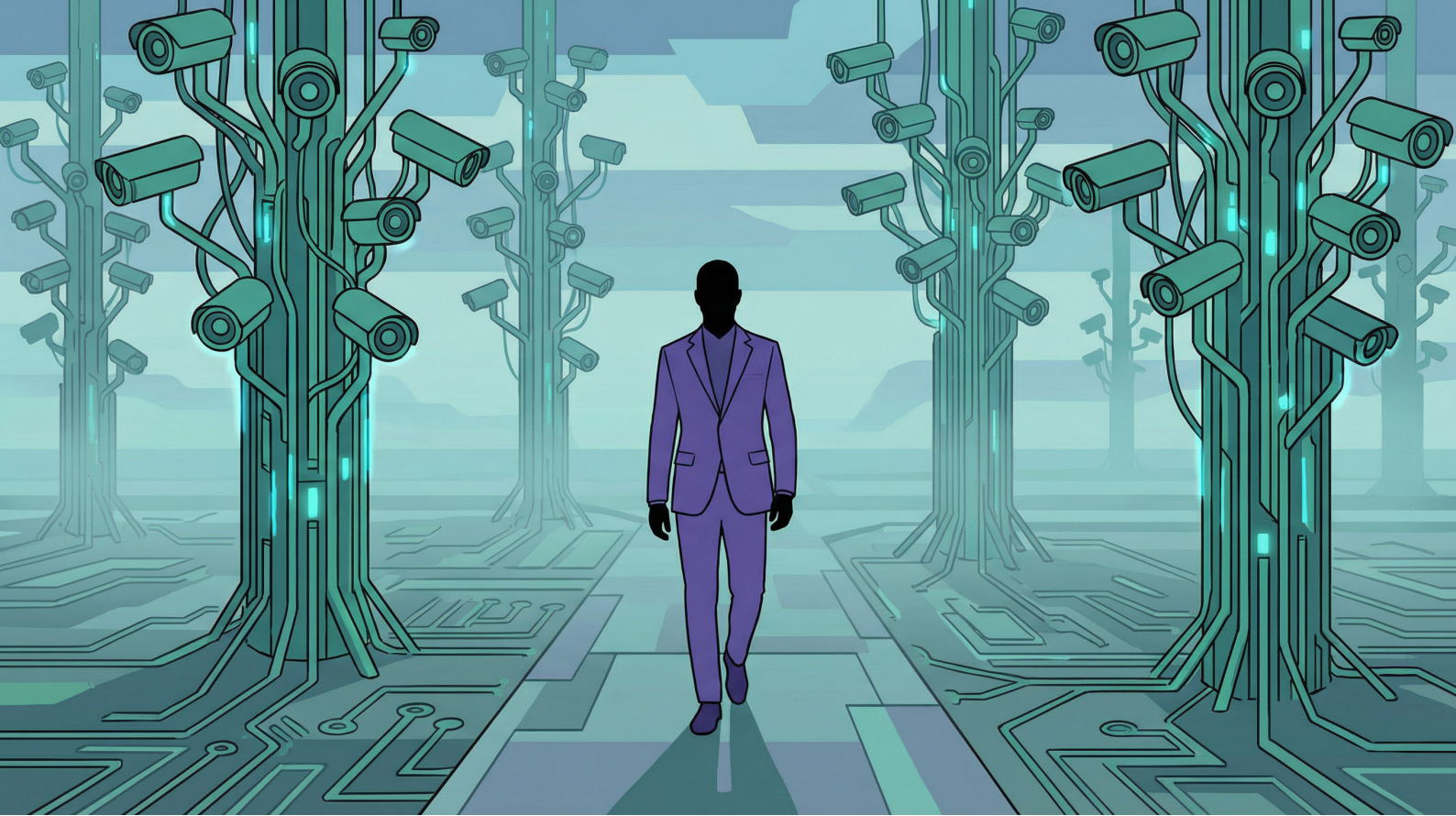
On 31 October ,2025 the CHAHED Observatory for Election Observation and Support for Democratic Transitions received a notification ordering the suspension of its activities for thirty days ,from 1 to 30 November,2025 pursuant to an order issued by the Court of First Instance of Tunis.

The Observatory filed an urgent appeal against the order ,requesting its annulment and reconsideration .It also indicated that the case remained pending before the court at the time of issuing its statement ,reflecting the continuation of legal proceedings to safeguard the Observatory’s activities and protect its rights⁵⁴.

[%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9-D9%86%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A9/](https://www.facebook.com/observatoire.chahed/posts/%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%BA%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3-D9%81%D9%8A%-01-D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%B3%D9%85%D8%A8%D8%B1-2025%EF%B8%8F%D8%AA%D9%8F%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9-D9%85%D8%B1%D8%B5%D8%AF-%D8%B4%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%AF-D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%A8%D8%A9-D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA-D9%88%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%85-D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%91%D9%84/1262703995894900/)

54 Statement by the CHAHED Observatory for Election Observation and Support for Democratic Transitions, 1 December 2025, last accessed 22 January 2026.

<https://www.facebook.com/observatoire.chahed/posts/%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%BA%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3-D9%81%D9%8A%-01-D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%B3%D9%85%D8%A8%D8%B1-2025%EF%B8%8F%D8%AA%D9%8F%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9-D9%85%D8%B1%D8%B5%D8%AF-%D8%B4%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%AF-D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%A8%D8%A9-D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA-D9%88%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%85-D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%91%D9%84/1262703995894900/>



Security and Judicial Prosecutions as Tools of Restriction

In a context marked by increasing restrictions on civil space in Tunisia, security and judicial proceedings have been repeatedly used against civil society organizations active in the fields of human rights and public affairs. The documented cases below reveal a systematic pattern combining financial investigations ,administrative restrictions ,and limitations on activities, indicating a clear shrinking of the space available for independent civil society work.

Legal Agenda Association

In late August, 2025 Olfa Lamoum ,President of the Legal Agenda Association, received a summons to appear before the Financial Crimes Investigation Unit at the National Guard barracks in Aouina .The summons followed a complaint filed by the Independent High Authority for Elections ,alleging that the association had received foreign funding with the aim of influencing the electoral process.

The association's treasurer was also summoned and submitted a set of legal and financial documents demonstrating that no special or exceptional funding had been received outside the declared legal framework and applicable regulations.

However, according to the association, the investigation did not remain limited to the financial aspects that formed the basis of the complaint. Part of the inquiry focused on the content of research and articles published on the Legal Agenda website, raising concerns about the scope of criminal investigations and their potential impact on freedom of expression and publication⁵⁵.

Blédi Association

Since late 2024, Blédi Association in the Kasserine region has been subjected to a series of restrictions and oversight measures, primarily involving a financial audit conducted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Unit in Tunis. The association also faced the freezing of its bank accounts on several occasions, directly affecting its ability to continue its activities⁵⁶. Following nearly a year of continued investigations and restrictive measures, the association's governing board began considering steps toward dissolving the organization, citing what it described as the practical impossibility of continuing its work under the imposed constraints.⁵⁷

In July 2025, another association active in the field of economic and social rights was subjected to similar restrictions, including judicial and legal proceedings, in the context of increasing oversight measures and prosecutions targeting several civil society organizations working in this area⁵⁸.

Boubli Project

Boubli is a digital content project producing critical commentary on authority and public policies in Tunisia. It is implemented by the Tunisian Association for the Development of Electronic Culture. During 2024, the project faced its first challenges with Tunisian authorities following the application of Decree Law No 54 of 2022 relating to crimes connected to information and communication systems, after the publication of content on social media platforms.

By the end of the same year, representatives of the project were summoned by

55 Legal Agenda, Civil Society Confronting Authoritarianism, Issue 34, Fall 2025, p. 9, last accessed 22 January 2026.

https://legal-agenda.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Legal-Agenda_TN_34_FILE_Web.1-pdf

56 Interview with Tarek Mohammedi, Blédi Association, 12 January 2026.

57 Interview with Tarek Mohammedi, Blédi Association, 12 January 2026.

58 The name of the association has been withheld at their request.

the intelligence unit ,followed by further intervention by security authorities in the Bab Bhar district in January .2025 On 5 March ,2025 the Governor of Tunis issued a decision ordering the closure of the project’s premises and the suspension of its activities.

The Tunisian Association for the Development of Electronic Culture ,which oversees the Boubli project ,was accused of several offenses ,including devil worship ,terrorism ,attacks on religious sanctities ,and foreign funding. However ,some of these accusations remained unclear in terms of legal basis and supporting facts ,raising concerns related to the principle of legality of crimes and penalties ,as well as the right to defense .Following the administrative closure decision ,an urgent appeal was filed before the administrative court seeking suspension of the decision ,on the grounds of procedural and substantive irregularities⁵⁹.

59 Interview with Mehdi Henana, Executive Director of the association, and Hani Henana, co founder of the association, 28 October 2025.



Prevention of a Symbolic Mock Trial Activity

The prevention of a human rights activity announced by a group of civil society organizations, led by the Tunisian League for Human Rights, on 10 April, 2025 reflects continued executive interference in peaceful associative work.

The activity consisted of a symbolic mock trial related to what is known as the conspiracy against state security case. It aimed to clarify fair trial standards to the public and highlight procedural and legal shortcomings in the relevant judicial file. Although the event was scheduled to take place in a private venue, the Rio in Tunis, security authorities did not provide any legal justification for preventing it. This reflects an overreach of legal authority and constitutes a violation of freedom of association and peaceful assembly.

In this context, Bassam Trifi, President of the Tunisian League for Human Rights, described the decision as a new episode in attacks against peaceful civil society action. He emphasized the human rights, legal, and cultural nature of the activity, which in principle does not require prior authorization from administrative or security authorities.

This ban can be considered a clear indicator of continued executive restrictions on civil space and represents a typical case of excluding civil society from public debate on human rights, particularly when sensitive issues of public concern are involved⁶⁰.

60 Ultra Tunisia, "Conspiracy" Case: Bassem Trifi: We Were Prevented from Organizing a Symbolic Mock Trial Activity, 10 April 2025, last accessed 18 March 2026.



Violations Targeting Political Activity

Restrictions on civic space in Tunisia have not been limited to the associative sector alone ,but have extended to the political sphere ,which constitutes an equally essential pillar within the system of civil and political rights guaranteed under international law .The use of the judiciary as a tool to pursue political actors ,lawyers ,and activists has emerged as a defining feature of this tightening environment.

Forms of legitimate political activity ,including opposition ,grievance submission ,and public commentary on judicial matters ,have increasingly been recharacterized as crimes affecting state security .This reclassification has contributed to the systematic narrowing of the opposition space and the shrinking of independent voices ,resulting in a broader climate of intimidation and restriction on political participation.

<https://ultratunisia.ultrasawt.com/%D9%82%D8%B6%D9%8A%D8%A9%-D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%A2%D9%85%D8%B1%-D8%A8%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%85%D9%8F%D9%86%D8%B9%D9%86%D8%A7%-D9%85%D9%86-%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%8A%D9%85%-D9%86%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B7-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%AB%D9%84%-D9%81%D9%8A%-D9%85%D8%A-D%D8%A7%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A9%-D8%B5%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9%-D8%B1%D9%85%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%A9%/D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%/D8%B3%DB8%C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9%/D8%A7%D9%94%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1>

Following the issuance of the first instance judgments ,the convicted individuals filed appeals before the Tunis Court of Appeal .The case was reconsidered during the autumn of ,2025 marked by repeated adjournments and lengthy pleadings from the defense ,which argued procedural violations and lack of sufficient material evidence .Meanwhile ,the Public Prosecutor maintained that the acts attributed to the defendants were serious and constituted threats to state security⁶³.

On 28 November ,2025 the Court of Appeal issued its final rulings ,upholding some sentences and modifying others through increases or reductions .The sentence against some defendants ,including Jawhar Ben Mbarek ,was increased ,while sentences for others ,such as Ahmed Nejib Chebbi ,were reduced .The court also dismissed charges in certain cases⁶⁴.

The second file of the» conspiracy against state security «case began in September ,2023 when the Public Prosecutor issued international arrest warrants against a number of political and security figures ,including former heads of government and prominent public figures .The charges related to forming an agreement to conspire against internal state security ,as well as alleged threats to national security through the use of social media and incitement ,in addition to accusations related to money laundering and terrorism financing.

By the end of ,2024 the Public Prosecutor referred the case to the Criminal Chamber specialized in terrorism cases at the Court of First Instance of Tunis .After repeated postponements ,first instance hearings officially began on 2 May .2025 This phase generated considerable debate regarding respect

[8A%D9%82/](#)

63 Legal Agenda, “The ‘Conspiracy Against State Security’ Case: Who Is Conspiring Against Whom?”, 25 July 2025, last accessed 24 March 2026.

<https://legal-agenda.com/%D9%82%D8%B6%D9%8A%D8%A9%-D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%A2%D9%85%D8%B1%-D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89%-D8%A3%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9%-D9%85%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D8%A2%D9%85%D8%B1%-D8%B9%D9%84/>

64 Jawhara FM, “By Name: Details of the Appellate Judgments in the ‘Conspiracy Against State Security’ Case,” 28 November 2025, last accessed 24 March 2026.

https://www.jawharafm.net/ar/article/%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%A1%-D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AD%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%85%-D8%A7%D-9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A6%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%91%D8%A9%-D9%81%D9%8A%-D9%82%D8%B6%D9%8A%D9%91%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%A2%D9%85%D8%B1%-D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%86%-D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9/105/285189?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQKNjYyODU2ODM3OQABHua1Ypkwgi-HQ437x2GBI3MbjyhUSuwy-jZOqqmuZYFLpZpq5ocSFokpHjCr_aem_sHHoc44MzrGksohLBlD-yQ

for fair trial guarantees ,particularly the right of defendants to be physically present in court .Some hearings were conducted remotely ,prompting objections from lawyers and defendants who considered this a violation of defenserights⁶⁵.

On 8 July ,2025 the Court of First Instance of Tunis issued prison sentences against several defendants ranging from 12 to 35 years ,based on the legal characterization of the charges⁶⁶.

On 3 February ,2026 the Tunis Court of Appeal issued its final rulings ,largely confirming the convictions of several prominent defendants .The sentence against Rached Ghannouchi was increased to 20 years in prison instead of 14years .The court also upheld 35 year prison sentences against Youssef Chahed and Nadia Akacha ,in addition to similar sentences issued in absentia against other political and security officials .Meanwhile ,the court reduced the sentence of the Mayor of Ezzahra from 12 years to three years⁶⁷.

65 Amnesty International, Tunisia: Mass Convictions in the “Conspiracy 2” Case Deepen the Rule of Law Crisis, 28 June 2025, last accessed 24 March 2026.

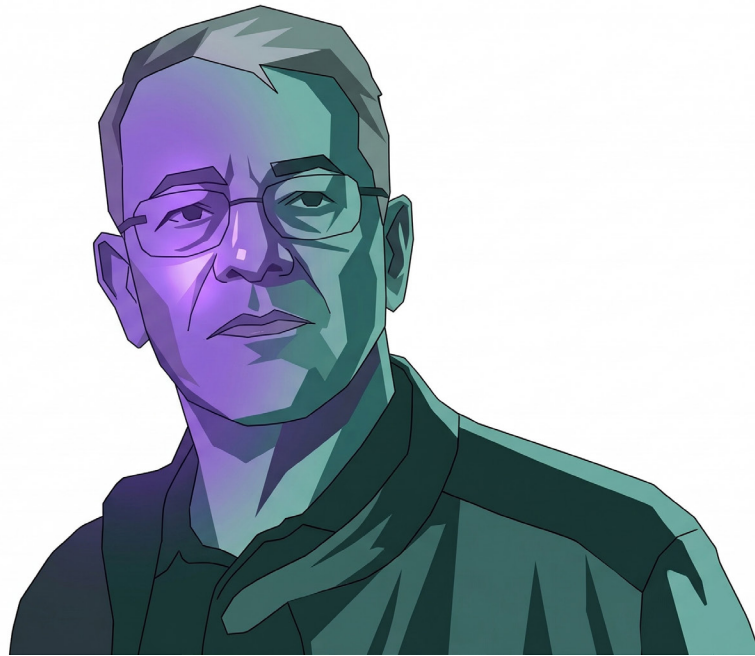
<https://www.amnesty.org/ar/latest/news/2025/07/tunisia-mass-convictions-in-conspiracy-case-2-deepen-rule-of-law-crisis/>

66 Bab Net, “Sentences Ranging Between 12 and 14 Years for Detainees in the ‘Conspiracy 2’ Case and 35 Years for Defendants Tried in Absentia,” 8 July 2025, last accessed 21 February 2026.

<https://www.babnet.net/rttdetail.311408-asp>

67 Mosaique FM, “Conspiracy 2 Case: Prison Sentences Ranging Between 12 and 35 Years,” 8 July 2025, last accessed 24 March 2026.

<https://www.mosaiquefm.net/ar/%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9/1436292/%D9%82%D8%B6%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%A2%D9%85%D8%B1-2%-D8%A3%D8%AD%D-9%83%D8%A7%D9%85%-D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%AC%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%88%D8%AD%-D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86-12-%D9%8835%-D8%B3%D9%86%D8%A9>



Use of Counter Terrorism Legislation to Undermine the Right to Defense :The Case of Ahmed Souab

The case of lawyer and former administrative judge Ahmed Souab represents a striking example of the use of judicial mechanisms to pursue human rights actors and silence critical voices .Two days after making public statements outside the Palace of Justice in which he criticized what he described as legal violations and pressure on the judiciary in the” conspiracy “case ,ten officers from the Counter Terrorism Unit raided his home on 21 April,2025 confiscated his mobile phone ,and escorted him to the unit’s headquarters in Bouchoucha .The close temporal link between his statements and arrest suggests a punitive approach targeting critics of the legal system before targeting them as individuals .On the same day ,and within hours of his arrest ,the investigating judge at the Judicial Counter Terrorism Pole ordered his detention for 48 hours ,while preventing his lawyers from meeting him or accessing the case file before the investigating officers throughout the detention period⁶⁸.

His detention was based on Organic Law No 26 .of 2015 dated 7 August2015 on counter terrorism and anti money laundering .He was charged with several offenses ,including forming an agreement with the intent to commit terrorist crimes ,providing electronic means and platforms ,and possessing documents and images allegedly linked to organizations classified as terrorist groups such as ISIS and Al Qaeda .Additional charges were brought under Articles 13new 13 ,bis ,71 ,40 ,37 ,34 ,32 ,30 ,and 78 of the same law ,as well as

68 Human Rights Watch, Tunisia: Prominent Lawyer Ahmed Souab Arbitrarily Detained, 10 February 2026, last accessed 24 March 2026.

<https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2026/02/10/tunisia-prominent-lawyer-arbitrarily-detained>

Articles 32 and 222 of the Penal Code ,Article 86 of the Telecommunications Code ,and Article 24 of Decree Law No 54 .of ⁶⁹.2022 His arrest followed his appearance on 19 April 2025 outside the Palace of Justice ,where he delivered statements criticizing what he described as legal irregularities in the so called” conspiracy “case and referred to pressure exerted on the judiciary.

According to statements made by his family during a press conference ,he was taken the same day to his office on Avenue de la Liberté in Tunis ,in the presence of the investigating judge and the head of the Tunis Regional Bar Association .His office was searched and electronic devices were seized. After reviewing email correspondence between him and a colleague in a professional context ,the investigating judge ordered a return to his residence and the seizure of all devices found there⁷⁰.

Later that evening ,his home was searched for a second time by 15 officers from the Counter Terrorism Unit using three four wheel drive vehicles .Ten officers remained outside while five conducted the search and seized additional devices .His son was also taken to the Bouchoucha headquarters under the pretext of signing a report ,where he was questioned for several hours about a demonstration organized in support of his father and its objectives, before being released .On Wednesday 23 ,April ,2025 Ahmed Souab was brought before the Judicial Counter Terrorism Pole for questioning .Due to the large number of requests submitted by lawyers ,attendance was limited to four lawyers only ,a measure considered unprecedented and detrimental to the right to defense .In response ,the President of the Tunis Regional Bar Association announced a boycott of the proceedings ,and lawyers withdrew from the investigation session⁷¹.

On the same day ,the investigating judge issued a detention warrant against Ahmed Souab ,and he was transferred to Mornaguia Civil Prison ,with Monday 28April 2025 set as the date for further interrogation ,according to the defenseteam⁷².

69 Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms, Faces of Freedom: Ahmed Souab, 24 April 2025, last accessed 24 March 2026.

<https://intersection.uno/freedom-faces%/D8%A3%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF-%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%A8/>

70 Zitouna TV, Press Conference of the Defense Committee for Former Judge and Lawyer Ahmed Souab, 23 April 2025, last accessed 24 March 2026.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHKGIRrpKE0>

71 Zitouna TV, Press Conference of the Defense Committee for Former Judge and Lawyer Ahmed Souab, 23 April 2025, last accessed 24 March 2026.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHKGIRrpKE0>

72 Al Jazeera, Tunisian Judge Orders Imprisonment of Opposition Lawyer Ahmed Souab, 23

He was later sentenced at first instance to five years in prison .The sentence was reduced at the appellate stage to two years imprisonment with suspended execution ,and he was released on 23 February⁷³.2026



Targeting Women Active in Political Life

Restrictions on civic space in Tunisia during the period covered by this report did not affect men alone .Rather ,the reporting period revealed a systematic pattern of targeting women active in public life in a deliberate ,harsher ,and more severe manner .This trend materialized through judicial prosecutions and multi-layered violations targeting activists ,journalists ,and political figures ,highlighting a troubling reality in which women’s presence in public space is itself treated as a threat that must be contained.

April 2025, last accessed 24 March 2026.

<https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2025/4/23/D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B6-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%8A%-D9%8A%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%-D8%A8%D8%B3%D8%AC%D9%86%-D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A>

73 Mosaique FM, Court of Appeal Issues Its Ruling in the Ahmed Souab Case, 23 February 2026, last accessed 24 March 2026.

<https://www.mosaiquefm.net/ar/D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%-D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9/1504029%/D9%85%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A9%-D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A6%D9%86%D8%A-7%D9%81%-D8%AA%-D8%B5%D8%AF%D8%B1%-D8%A3%D8%AD%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87%D8%A7%-D9%81%D9%8A%-D9%82%D8%B6%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF%-D8%B5%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%A8>

The case of lawyer and leader of the Free Destourian Party ,Abir Moussi, encapsulates this pattern in its various dimensions .She was arrested on 3 October 2023 following peaceful political activity and charged with serious offenses ,including attempting to change the form of the state and incitement to violence ,in addition to six cases brought under Decree Law No .54 .Violations extended beyond judicial prosecution to include detention conditions undermining fair trial guarantees ,including repeated denial of access to her lawyers and family members ,as well as transfers without clear justification .Her media presence was also used as fuel for organized smear campaigns and targeted harassment across digital platforms .She was initially sentenced to 12 years in prison ,later reduced on appeal to 10 years, while Mariem Sassi was sentenced to one year in prison⁷⁴.

This case is not isolated .Rather ,it forms part of a broader pattern reflected in the appellate rulings in the” conspiracy against state security “cases, which illustrate the systematic use of intimidation as a tool to weaken women activists and send a clear message that their presence in public affairs is unwelcome and their voices are unacceptable .Activist Chaima Issa faced not only judicial prosecution but also abduction ,physical dragging, and coordinated online harassment .Feminist activist Bochra Belhaj Hmida and other women were also issued harsh in absentia sentences ,further demonstrating the use of the judiciary as a mechanism of pressure and exclusion⁷⁵.

A similar pattern emerged in the” Instalingo “case ,where journalist Chadha Haj Mubarak faced prosecution and intimidation solely for exercising her right to expression and civic participation .After proceedings that lasted more than two years ,prison sentences ranging from five to twenty seven years were issued against journalists and activists ,including Shahrzed Akacha, reinforcing the conclusion that repression is not isolated but systemic in nature⁷⁶.

74 Mosaique FM, 10 Years’ Imprisonment for Abir Moussi on Three Charges, 13 March 2026, last accessed 24 March 2026.

<https://www.mosaiquefm.net/ar/%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%-D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9/1508898/10%-D8%B3%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B3%D8%AC%D9%86%D8%A7%-D9%81%D9%8A%-D8%AD%D9%82-%D8%B9%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%B1%-D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A%-D8%AB%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AB%-D8%AA%D9%87%D9%85>

75 Bab Net, Chaima Issa Arrested to Enforce Final Judgment Issued Against Her in the Conspiracy Case (Judicial Source), 29 December 2025, last accessed 24 March 2026.

<https://www.babnet.net/cadredetail.319451-asp>

76 Mosaique FM, Instalingo Case: First-Instance Judgments Upheld and Chadha Haj Mubarak Released, 14 January 2026, last accessed 24 March 2026.

<https://www.mosaiquefm.net/ar/%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%-D9%88%D>



Young Doctors' Union Activity: Indirect Restrictions on Protest Movements

The year 2025 witnessed a notable escalation in social mobilization in Tunisia, within a broader wave of sectoral protests affecting key areas such as health, education, and the public sector, in addition to movements led by unemployed groups. In this context, the public health sector emerged as one of the most tense environments, as young doctors engaged in a series of protest actions expressing their rejection of deteriorating professional and living conditions, as well as what they described as the absence of serious official responses to their demands.

This protest dynamic began with a nationwide strike on 21 April, 2025, which affected hospital services and academic activities in medical faculties and public hospitals, according to national media coverage. The Tunisian Organization of Young Doctors indicated that this action followed stalled negotiations with the Ministry of Health and the continuation of what it described as a policy of "delay" in addressing outstanding issues, particularly those related to improving working conditions, remuneration, and ensuring minimum occupational safety standards within healthcare institutions⁷⁷.

77 Tunisian National Radio, "Today: The Organization of Young Doctors Carries Out a National Strike," 21 April 2025, last accessed 22 March 2026.
<https://www.radionationale.tn/article68060/accc655b264e7f50877%/D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%85%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%85%D8%A9-D8%A7%D9%84%D>

Escalation continued on 2 May 2025 with another nationwide strike and a protest march that began at the Faculty of Medicine in Tunis and proceeded toward the Ministry of Health ,with participation estimated at around12,000 youngdoctors .Protesters raised slogans calling for salary increases ,improved working conditions ,and urgent measures to save the public health sector, which they described as undergoing ongoing structural deterioration⁷⁸.

In mid June ,2025 the organization announced a five day continuous strike from 13 to 18 June ,covering hospitals and medical faculties ,with the exception of emergency departments .The strike was accompanied by sit ins at the Faculty of Medicine in Tunis and a comprehensive boycott of internship placement selection .This mobilization took place amid growing tensions, with statements from the organization’s vice president reporting field level incidents ,including the prevention of the organization’s president from entering a nursing institute to communicate with resident doctors ,which the organization considered a violation of trade union freedoms⁷⁹.

At the beginning of July ,2025 approximately 7,000 resident and intern doctors joined a comprehensive strike across healthcare institutions .The mobilization centered on what the organization described as legitimate

[8%A3%D8%B7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86%-D8%AA%D9%86%D9%81%D8%B0%-D8%A5%D8%B6%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%-D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A7?utm_source=chatgpt.com](https://ultratunisia.ultrasawt.com/%D8%A5%D8%B6%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B-4%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%B7%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A9-%D9%88%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B9%D8%A9/%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A4%D8%AF%D8%A8/%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B9/%D8%A7%D9%94%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1)

78 Ultra Tunisia, “A New National Strike by Young Doctors: Outstanding Demands and Broad Support,” 2 May 2025, last accessed 22 March 2026.

<https://ultratunisia.ultrasawt.com/%D8%A5%D8%B6%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B-4%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%B7%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A9-%D9%88%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B9%D8%A9/%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A4%D8%AF%D8%A8/%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B9/%D8%A7%D9%94%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1>

79 Mosaique FM, “Young Doctors Announce a Five Day Strike: ‘No Response to Our Demands’,” 3 June 2025, last accessed 22 March 2026.

<https://www.mosaiquefm.net/ar/%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D8%B4%D9%88-%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1/1421521/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4-%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A5%D8%B6%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%-D9%84%D9%805%-D8%A3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%84%D8%A7%-D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%88%D8%A8-%D9%85%D8%B9-%D9%85%D8%B7%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7>

professional demands ,particularly salary improvements ,clearer career pathways ,and adequate training conditions within academic and hospital structures⁸⁰.

As negotiations between the organization and the Ministries of Health and Higher Education ,as well as the Medical Council ,continued to stall ,the organization announced on 19 November 2025 a one day general strike affecting work and academic activities across all medical faculties and healthcare institutions .The strike coincided with a protest march in front of the Assembly of People’s Representatives .This action was considered the culmination of a gradual escalation process ,during which the organization held authorities responsible for the failure to implement previous agreements and the lack of responsiveness to their demands⁸¹.

These mobilizations ,according to available media sources and trade union statements ,reflect deep tensions within the public health sector and highlight broader structural challenges related to the management of healthcare human resources and the capacity of public policies to respond to professional demands in a complex economic and social context.

General Union of Tunisian Students: Restrictions and Violations Targeting Student Union Activity

Student mobilizations constitute a form of exercising the right to peaceful assembly guaranteed by law and represent a legitimate means for students to express demands aimed at improving their academic ,social ,and living conditions .During the 2025–2024 academic year ,Tunisian universities witnessed notable student mobilization ,marked by multiple gatherings and protest actions .However ,this period was also characterized by a significant escalation in restrictions targeting student union activity ,alongside an increased security presence within and around university spaces ,which the General Union of Tunisian Students considered an indirect return of campus policing.

80 Nawaat, “Young Doctors Protest in Rejection of Threats and Forced Migration Policies,” 1 July 2025, last accessed 22 March 2026.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_h1VlcytKQ

81 Al Qatiba TV, “Young Doctors Launch a General Strike and Lead a Protest in Front of Parliament,” 19 November 2025, last accessed 22 March 2026.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v5=H6gee0gM2M>

These restrictions manifested through several incidents accompanying protest movements ,including reported violent interventions and the prevention of student activities .Among the most notable events was the commemoration of the International Day of Youth Against Imperialism and Colonialism on 24 April 2025 in front of the Central Bank ,which was followed by a violent security intervention and subsequent targeting of activists within their university institutions⁸².

Direct security interventions inside university campuses were also recorded. On 26 September ,2025 police forces reportedly entered a university building to disperse a student sit in related to university reorientation procedures. Similar incidents were reported in other academic institutions in the following months ,reflecting an increasing trend toward restricting students 'exercise of their rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression .In the same context ,a security intervention was reported on 10 September 2025 during a student sit in at the Office of University Services in the Central Region ,in Kairouan ,where students were demanding improved accommodation and service conditions .These interventions raised serious concerns regarding respect for students 'civil and political rights ,particularly the right to organize, engage in union activity ,and express social and educational demands⁸³.

On 20 November ,2025 the Faculty of Letters in Sousse witnessed a student sit in lasting several days to demand the resolution of academic issues .The protest was reportedly met with the closure of essential facilities and threats of administrative and security measures against participants ⁸⁴.Additionally, on 10 November ,2025 students from the education sector organized a protest in front of the Ministry of Education demanding the restoration of field training placements ,which was accompanied by security intervention and physical assaults against several participants⁸⁵.

82 Interview with the Deputy Secretary General of the General Union of Tunisian Students.

83 Interview with the Deputy Secretary General of the General Union of Tunisian Students.

84 Zitouna, "Student Sit In at the Faculty of Letters in Sousse," 21 November 2025, last accessed 24 March 2026.

<https://zitounatv2.odoo.com/blog/khbr/2-tsm-tlby-bkly-ldb-bsws13697->

85 Ultra Tunisia, "The General Union of Tunisian Students Denounces the Cancellation of Field Internships for Education Students," 11 November 2025, last accessed 24 March 2026.

<https://ultratunisia.ultrasawt.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%84%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3-%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%AF%D8%AF-%D8%A8%D8%A5%D9%84%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%A9-%D8%B4%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A8%D>

The General Union of Tunisian Students also reported that several of its members were subjected to various incidents ,including the assault of a dormitory guard in Sidi Bouzid during a monitoring visit ,as well as administrative harassment at the Faculty of Humanities in Kebili following the display of images of a student movement figure .Security presence within certain faculties was also reported intermittently.

Violations extended further to include disciplinary councils convened in several institutions ,including the Higher Institute of Technological Studies in Djerba and the Higher Institute of Environmental Sciences and Technologies in Borj Cedria .These disciplinary proceedings were reportedly linked to student union activity and participation in protests supporting the Palestinian cause and boycott campaigns ongoing since 7 October .The General Union of Tunisian Students considered these measures a serious infringement on trade union freedoms and students 'rights within Tunisian universities.

Protest Movements in Gabès

Since early October ,2025 the governorate of Gabès has once again experienced a renewed environmental crisis rooted in decades of accumulated industrial pollution caused by the activities of the Tunisian Chemical Group. Despite repeated government promises to implement structural solutions, halt polluting units ,and initiate dismantling operations ,these commitments have not translated into tangible measures on the ground .Meanwhile ,cases of respiratory distress among residents ,particularly children and students, have continued⁸⁶.

These protest movements were preceded by a wave of gas leaks linked to the activities of the chemical complex ,affecting dozens of residents in the Ghannouch area on ,10 ,9 and 16 September .2025 Several students experienced suffocation symptoms and were transferred to hospital ,where they remained under medical observation⁸⁷.

[9%8A%D8%A9%-D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%-D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3](https://kashfmedia.com/2025/09/17/D8%BA%D9%86%D9%88%D8%B4-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%AC%D9%8A%D9%84-D8%A3%D9%83%D8%AB%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%86-16-D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-D8%A7D-8%AE%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%82-D8%AC%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84?/)

86 Kashf Media, “Ghannouch: More Than 16 Cases of Suffocation Recorded Due to Gas Leaks from the Chemical Complex,” 17 September 2025, last accessed 23 March 2026.

<https://kashfmedia.com/2025/09/17/D8%BA%D9%86%D9%88%D8%B4-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%AC%D9%8A%D9%84-D8%A3%D9%83%D8%AB%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%86-16-D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-D8%A7D-8%AE%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%82-D8%AC%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84?/>

87 Statement issued by the Stop Pollution Campaign, 3 October 2025, last accessed 26 March

In response ,a wave of protests began on 9 October ,including a demonstration in Tunis in front of the central headquarters of the Tunisian Chemical Group, condemning ongoing pollution and demanding the region’s right to a safe and clean environment .The following day 10 ,October ,another protest took place in front of the regional administration of the chemical complex in Gabès ,where residents expressed their rejection of what they described as authorities ’indifference to their ongoing suffering⁸⁸.

As suffocation cases escalated and occurred almost daily ,a broad community mobilization emerged in the governorate ,bringing together civil society organizations ,associations ,football supporters ,and citizens from different age groups and social backgrounds .Protesters demanded the immediate implementation of the 2017 decision to dismantle polluting units ,the cancellation of government decisions that had worsened the environmental crisis ,and an end to recurring suffocation incidents caused by the continued operation of the chemical complex⁸⁹.

Rather than responding to these demands ,Tunisian authorities reportedly adopted a security approach in dealing with the protests .On 13 and14 October ,security forces confronted demonstrators in Ain Salam and Qantara Sidi Boulbaba using extensive tear gas to disperse gatherings .During these confrontations ,Mohamed Amine Cherif was struck directly by a tear gas canister ,requiring surgery after sustaining a severe eye injury .Security forces also conducted arrest campaigns targeting several young protesters ,with

2026.

<https://www.facebook.com/StopPollution2/posts/%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B3-%D9%81%D9%8A%-3-D8%A3%D9%83%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%B1-2025-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%AA-%DA%A8%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B3-%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%B1-%D8%B3%D8%A8%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D9%82%D8%B6%D9%8A-%D9%88%D8%B6%D8%B9%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%BA%D9%8A%D8%B1%-D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A8%D9%88/1121144500222554/>

88 France 24, “Between Government Delays and Rising Anger: Tunisia’s Gabès on Edge,” 13 October 2025, last accessed 23 March 2026.

<https://www.aljazeera.net/politics%/2025/10/13/d8%a8%d9%8a%d9%86-%d8%aa%d8%a3%d8%ac%d9%8a%d9%84%-d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%84%d8%b7%d8%a9%-d9%88%d8%aa%d8%b5%d8%a7%d8%b9%d8%af-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ba%d8%b6%d8%a8%-d9%82%d8%a7%d8%a8%d8%b3>

89 France 24, “Between Government Delays and Rising Anger: Tunisia’s Gabès on Edge,” 13 October 2025, last accessed 23 March 2026.

<https://www.aljazeera.net/politics%/2025/10/13/d8%a8%d9%8a%d9%86-%d8%aa%d8%a3%d8%ac%d9%8a%d9%84%-d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%84%d8%b7%d8%a9%-d9%88%d8%aa%d8%b5%d8%a7%d8%b9%d8%af-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ba%d8%b6%d8%a8%-d9%82%d8%a7%d8%a8%d8%b3>

seven individuals transferred to the Gorjani security unit for questioning.

On 15 October, 2025 a "Day of Anger" was organized across the governorate,⁹⁰ culminating in a march from Martyrs' Square in Bab Bhar toward Chatt Sidi Abdel Salam. Between forty and fifty thousand participants reportedly took part, including women, elderly individuals, and families with children. Participants described the march as entirely peaceful, with organizers emphasizing its nonviolent nature. However, upon reaching an area surrounded by security barriers, security forces deployed tear gas extensively to disperse the crowd. Given the narrow roads and confined space, the intervention resulted in panic, crowding, and suffocation incidents among demonstrators. Two individuals were transferred urgently to hospital for treatment.

This period also saw a wave of arrests targeting protesters, following incitement campaigns on social media and in certain media outlets portraying demonstrators as vandals or paid agitators. In coordination with the regional branch of the Bar Association and the Tunisian League for Human Rights in Gabès, the Intersection Association documented 40 initial arrests as of 18 October. Twenty one individuals were released, while others were referred under Article 79 of the Penal Code, which provides for a two year prison sentence for participation in gatherings deemed likely to disturb public order. The president of the Gabès branch of the Tunisian League for Human Rights confirmed on 17 October 2025 the issuance of 23 detention orders and 15 referrals to the public prosecutor, all linked to participation in the protests of 15 and 16 October⁹¹.

In addition to arrests, authorities reportedly employed further intimidation measures, including summonses to police stations. Two women present near the chemical complex were summoned after their phones were confiscated,

90 Stop Pollution Campaign, Statement, 13 October 2025, last accessed 23 March 2026. <https://www.facebook.com/StopPollution2/posts/%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B3-%D9%81%D9%8A%-13-D8%A7%D9%83%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%B1-2025-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86%-D9%88%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%A9%-D9%84%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%83%-D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%84%-D8%AC%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%A1%-D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AA%-D8%A7%D9%84%-D9%85%D9%84%D9%88%D8%AB%D8%A9%-D9%85%D9%86%-DA%A8%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%8A%D9%8A/1130458929291111/>

91 Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms, Between Freedom and Repression: A Human Rights Report Documenting the Escalation of Violations of the Right to Peaceful Assembly in Tunisia, 11 February 2026, last accessed 23 March 2026. <https://intersection.uno%/d8%a8%d9%8a%d9%86%-d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a9%-d9%88%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%82%d9%85%d8%b9%-d8%a7%d9%84%d8%aa%d8%ac%d9%85%d8%b9%-d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%84%d9%85%d9%8a-%d9%81%d9%8a%-d9%85%d9%88/>

despite their lack of awareness that the area had been designated a “ military zone ”.A young man was also arrested on 16 October 2025 after filming the protests near the chemical complex for publication on social media ;his phone was confiscated and not returned.

Intersection Association also documented allegations of ill treatment within detention centers ,affecting three detainees who reported being subjected to physical abuse .Local activists further reported continued arrests during late hours on Friday 17 October 2025 across neighboring areas of Gabès, describing them as arbitrary and aimed at intimidating youth and discouraging continued mobilization.

As authorities continued to deny the environmental crisis and ignore protesters ’demands ,a general strike and mass march took place on Tuesday 21October ,2025 with approximately 130,000 participants .The march began at Ain Salam Square at 2 p.m ,.passed through Souk Jara ,and concluded at the governorate headquarters .According to participants ,the gathering proceeded without restrictions and with no visible security presence.

On 22 October ,2025 detainees appeared before the court in a hearing lasting until 2 a.m .The court ordered the release of seven individuals and imposed fines of 500 Tunisian dinars on several participants ,following charges under Article 79 of the Penal Code related to participation in protests demanding the dismantling of the chemical complex’s polluting units.

The crisis persisted .On 5 November ,2025 new suffocation incidents were reported in Chatt Sidi Abdel Salam ,affecting residents including children and minors due to ongoing gas emissions from the chemical complex .On31 October ,another protest march took place from Jara Mosque toward Chatt Salam ,without reported security interference or violence .Participants, including environmental civil society organizations and residents ,renewed calls for dismantling polluting units and demanded environmental justice and the right to health and dignified living.

The” Stop Pollution “campaign stated in its communications that state responses during this period had failed to produce meaningful improvements in residents ’lives or halt the ongoing environmental disaster .The campaign called for an end to prosecutions and restrictions targeting protesters and affirmed that mobilization would continue unless authorities adopt structural solutions guaranteeing residents their right to a safe and healthy life.

Criminalization of Digital Expression

Between February 2025 and March ,2026 Tunisia's digital space witnessed a notable escalation in the prosecution of activists and citizens for opinions expressed on social media platforms .This trend emerged in the context of the expanded application of provisions of the Penal Code ,the Telecommunications Code ,and Decree Law No 54 .of 2022 on combating crimes related to information and communication systems.

These legal frameworks have increasingly been used to prosecute critics of authorities .Tunisian authorities have relied on these provisions to investigate, prosecute ,and detain journalists ,lawyers ,students ,and activists on the basis of online statements or social media posts .As a result ,these texts have become instruments for restricting freedom of opinion and expression in Tunisia ,amid a growing number of judicial proceedings related to digital content.

One illustrative case is that of civil society activist Mohamed Khelouli. Although the case dates back to summer ,2024 the first hearing took place on 20 May ,2025 and a first instance judgment was issued on 27 May2025 sentencing him to one month in prison and a fine of 1,000 Tunisian dinars for insulting others through public telecommunications networks ,pursuant to Article 86 of the Telecommunications Code .The judgment was appealed ,and on 5 February ,2026 the Court of Appeal upheld the conviction ,confirming a one month prison sentence with immediate enforcement and a fine of1,000 Tunisian dinars .In February ,2026 he voluntarily surrendered to serve the sentence ,a development reflecting the level of pressure faced by activists⁹².

Prosecutions also targeted bloggers and administrators of independent news pages on social media platforms .Several individuals were summoned or detained for publishing content addressing political developments ,criticizing government policies ,or even sharing musical content on their pages.

During the same period ,particularly severe rulings linked to online expression were issued .Among the most notable was an unprecedented judicial decision issued on 1 October 2025 sentencing citizen Saber Chouchane to death over Facebook posts deemed insulting to the President of the Republic and threatening to state security .This ruling raised serious concerns regarding the increasing criminalization of digital expression⁹³.

92 Interview with Mohamed Khalouli, 16 February 2026.

93 Amnesty International, "Tunisia: Authorities Must Immediately Overturn Death Sentence Issued for Peaceful Dissent," 7 October 2025, last accessed 23 March 2026.

<https://www.amnesty.org/ar/latest/news/2025/10/tunisia-authorities-must-immediately->

Similarly ,several journalists faced charges under Decree Law No 54 .for articles and reports addressing sensitive issues such as corruption and human rights violations .Some lawyers defending individuals detained in opinion related cases were also subjected to prosecution following their public statements or social media posts.

Taken together ,these cases reflect a systematic pattern in the use of criminal legislation ,particularly Decree Law No ,54 .to monitor digital space and pursue critical voices .This trend has contributed to the growing climate of self censorship and intimidation among activists ,journalists ,and internet users ,directly affecting the exercise of freedom of opinion and expression in digital spaces .Without revisions to the application of these legal provisions and safeguards aligned with fair trial guarantees and international human rights standards ,this trajectory risks further narrowing Tunisia’s digital civic space.



Patterns of Violations Affecting Civic Space

The incidents documented in this report indicate that restrictions on civic space in Tunisia do not occur randomly but follow recurring and systematic patterns. These patterns range from direct field level prohibitions and the exhaustion of trade union structures to judicial proceedings targeting lawyers and activists in relation to their professional and civic engagement. What connects these varied practices is a unified logic aimed at targeting intermediary bodies and civil society actors, who currently constitute some of the most influential stakeholders in public affairs. Their cumulative impact therefore signals not isolated incidents but a broader erosion and threat to civic space.

A systematic pattern of violations targeting both civil society actors and political figures has emerged, characterized by the instrumentalization of the judiciary to restrict civic space. Legitimate humanitarian activities and ordinary political practices have increasingly been reframed as criminal acts. This is carried out through selective and targeted use of judicial institutions and security bodies, with the effect of weakening independent civil society organizations and political opposition, while subjecting them to lengthy and complex judicial proceedings.

This pattern is particularly visible in the reclassification of ordinary human rights ,humanitarian ,or political activities as crimes affecting national security or public order .Such reclassification often relies on broadly worded legal provisions or expansive interpretations that enable the criminalization of opposition ,political activity ,and freedom of political expression .Several cases illustrate this trend .In the civil society and human rights sphere ,the case of Mnementy Association and its president ,detained since May ,2024 as well as the Tunisia Terre d'Asile Association ,represent prominent examples of the transformation of activities such as temporary accommodation of migrants and humanitarian assistance into criminal charges ,including terrorism related offenses ,money laundering ,forming criminal associations, and threats to internal and external state security .In the political sphere, judicial prosecutions have targeted party leaders ,opposition figures ,and political activists ,who faced similar charges based on their political positions and activities.

This instrumentalization enables authorities to extend pretrial detention periods ,conduct searches of offices ,freeze bank accounts ,and justify media smear campaigns ,often in alignment with official narratives centered on conspiracy and disloyalty ,which equate civil society activity and political opposition with threats to the state .This approach suggests that judicial and security institutions are deliberately used to increase pressure on activists and political actors and to weaken independent civic engagement .In this context ,judicial decisions often appear to privilege political considerations over legal and evidentiary standards ,thereby reinforcing this restrictive approach and contributing to the shrinking of civic space.

Administrative Instrumentalization as a Tool to Subdue Associations

This pattern reveals a two level strategy in which administrative mechanisms are used to weaken associations rather than regulate their work .The first level consists of chronic bureaucratic obstruction ,based on restricting access to essential administrative documents required for associations to continue operating .This includes documents linked to the National Business Register and the National Social Security Fund ,where procedures are deliberately prolonged and legal deadlines are avoided .What distinguishes this mechanism is that it produces a cumulative and destructive effect without the need for formal decisions that could be legally challenged ,gradually draining associations 'resources and diverting their efforts into prolonged bureaucratic processes.

The second level appears in the form of exceptional administrative escalation, which became particularly visible in the second half of 2025 through a wave of one month suspension decisions .Thirteen such cases were documented, issued in standardized and nearly identical wording .The formal uniformity of these decisions suggests a centralized and coordinated approach .Moreover, the reliance on minor administrative shortcomings ,such as incomplete documentation ,reflects a disproportionate use of administrative law, inconsistent with the principle of proportionality in sanctions.

The selective nature and timing of these measures further clarify this pattern. In terms of targeting ,the decisions focused primarily on associations with strong field presence that declined to align with the political project of the authorities following 25 July ,2021 while other associations committing similar administrative violations were not subject to comparable measures. In terms of timing ,these actions followed closely after the protests in Gabès, where civil society played a central organizing and mobilizing role .This context suggests that the official administrative justification functioned as a cover for a targeted punitive strategy.

Taken together ,this pattern results in what may be described as“ soft criminalization ”.Associations are neither formally dissolved nor are their members systematically prosecuted ;instead ,they are gradually pushed toward operational paralysis and institutional exhaustion .This approach weakens their ability to perform oversight and human rights functions while allowing authorities to avoid the political and legal consequences associated with overt repression.



Security-Based Approach to Criminalizing Protest Movements

During 2025, a recurring pattern emerged in the security-based handling of social and trade union mobilizations. Rather than responding to the substance of protest demands, authorities increasingly relied on security apparatuses to manage forms of legitimate protest. This approach affected multiple sectors, including mobilizations by young doctors and the General Union of Tunisian Students, and extended to police entry into university spaces, dispersal of sit-ins, prevention of gatherings, and referral of union activists to disciplinary councils due to their trade union activities.

What gives this pattern its structural nature is not merely the frequency of incidents, but the unified logic underpinning them. Social mobilizations have increasingly been treated as threats to public order rather than legitimate expressions of professional or rights-based demands. This reflects a shift in official responses from dialogue and negotiation toward containment and deterrence through security measures. In this context, peaceful protest is reframed as a disruption of public order, creating both the legal and rhetorical justification for security intervention.

The entry of security forces into university spaces is particularly significant in this regard. It represents a clear retreat from the principle of university autonomy, traditionally understood as a protected space for debate and

student organization, and signals a return to models of security presence within educational institutions associated with earlier political periods. Similarly, the use of disciplinary councils in response to union activity transforms these administrative bodies from mechanisms for regulating professional conduct into tools for sanctioning independent collective organization.

From a human rights perspective, this pattern affects a range of protected rights, including freedom of peaceful assembly, the right to strike, and freedom of trade union organization. These rights benefit from enhanced protection under International Labour Organization conventions, which require states to refrain from interference that restricts their exercise. The cumulative impact of this pattern is the creation of a constrained space for social demands, where trade unionists and student activists weigh potential security and disciplinary consequences before initiating mobilization. This dynamic fosters self-deterrence, reducing the need for authorities to engage with substantive demands through dialogue and negotiation.

Criminal Sanctions as a Tool to Undermine Civic Action

The judgments issued in the conspiracy cases and in the case of Abir Moussi reveal a pattern of sentencing severity that goes beyond the logic of proportionate punishment toward a broader logic of long term political exclusion. In the first conspiracy case, initial judgments ranged from four years to sentences reaching several decades, before the Court of Appeal revised them in November 2025 through both increases and reductions depending on the case. In the second conspiracy case, initial sentences ranged between 12 and 35 years of imprisonment.

This level of severity carries implications that extend beyond the purely criminal dimension. Sentences spanning decades effectively terminate the political careers of those concerned, resulting in long term political exclusion through judicial processes. This raises serious concerns regarding compliance with judicial independence standards, particularly in light of the absence of sufficient material evidence highlighted by defense teams, and within a broader context marked by the erosion of effective separation of powers.

The risks associated with this pattern are further heightened by the fact that sentencing increases at the appeal stage, as occurred in the case of Rached Ghannouchi, depart from the conventional logic of appeals as a mechanism for review and potential mitigation. Instead, the appeal process appears to function as a mechanism for reinforcing and deepening punishment. When

these rulings are considered alongside the timing of their issuance and the broader escalation of political opposition ,it becomes difficult to interpret them outside the framework of systematic political exclusion .Collectively, these judgments contribute to the emergence of a political landscape stripped of key opposition figures ,thereby undermining the principle of political pluralism ,which remains an essential pillar of any democratic system.

Arrest as a Response to Public Expression

This pattern is clearly illustrated in the case of former judge and lawyer Ahmed Souab ,who was arrested on 21 April ,2025 just two days after delivering public statements outside the Palace of Justice .In those statements ,he criticized what he described as legal irregularities in the” conspiracy “case and referred to pressure exerted on the judiciary .His home was subsequently raided by ten officers from the Counter Terrorism Unit ,followed by searches of his office and residence on two separate occasions .His son was also taken in for questioning for several hours due to his participation in a march supporting his father ,before a detention order was ultimately issued against Souab.

The close chronological sequence between the public statement and the arrest reveals a pattern specifically targeting oversight voices that openly criticize the judicial system itself .In such cases ,arrest appears to function not as a response to a material act ,but to speech .This pattern becomes particularly concerning when it targets a figure combining the roles of lawyer and former administrative judge ,sending a strong deterrent message to anyone considering publicly criticizing judicial policies ,whether from within or outside the legal system.

The use of counter terrorism legislation in this case also intersects with charges related to allegedly providing electronic platforms and documents linked to terrorist organizations .Such accusations appear inconsistent with the professional background of a legal academic and practitioner ,reinforcing the perception that criminal classification in this context serves a silencing function rather than a justice oriented purpose.

Human Rights Violations

Civic Space and the International Human Rights Framework

The violations documented in this report cannot be assessed in isolation from the international legal framework that constitutes the fundamental reference point for any serious human rights analysis. This framework obliges States parties to protect civic space and guarantee the exercise of civil, political, economic, and social rights without arbitrary restrictions. Civic space is not a privilege granted and withdrawn at the discretion of the state; rather, it is a rights-based sphere protected under international obligations that Tunisia has voluntarily and sovereignly undertaken. These obligations carry legal consequences that do not lapse due to shifting political circumstances.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes, in Article 20, the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association as a fundamental right belonging to all individuals, regardless of their affiliation or political position. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights further reinforces this right in Article 22, limiting any restrictions to those that are necessary in a democratic society and grounded in legitimate legal bases. The Covenant also guarantees, in Article 14, the right to a fair trial and the presumption of innocence, while Article 9 prohibits arbitrary detention and requires that individuals be brought promptly before a judicial authority.

At the level of United Nations mechanisms, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Clément Nyaletsossi Voule, warned during his meeting with Tunisian civil society organizations on 9 February 2024 about the risks associated with amendments to Decree Law No 88 of 2011. He described the decree as a fundamental achievement for civil society participation in public affairs and called for safeguarding its independence and preserving its guarantees.

Documented Violations and Their Assessment Under International Standards

Violation of the Presumption of Innocence and the Right to Peaceful Assembly

Tunisian authorities have relied on public incitement against civil society organizations through official accusations issued at the highest levels of the state without substantiated legal grounds .This constitutes a clear violation of the presumption of innocence enshrined in Article 33 of the Tunisian Constitution ,which affirms that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a fair trial guaranteeing all defense rights .This principle is equally protected under Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The seriousness of this approach is further compounded when independent associations are labeled as hostile actors or instruments of foreign interference without transparent legal procedures subject to appeal .Such practices intimidate members and supporters ,undermine civic participation through stigmatization ,and contribute to a climate of fear .This amounts to a direct infringement of the right to peaceful assembly guaranteed under Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ,as well as a violation of the principle prohibiting arbitrary interference in independent civic action, as articulated in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted in.1998

Financial and Administrative Restrictions :Obstructing Associational Activity Through Indirect Means

Repeated raids on association premises and restrictions on financial resources represent tools of institutional exhaustion and gradual subordination rather than legitimate mechanisms of accountability .These practices directly contradict Article 6 of Decree Law No 88 .of ,2011 which prohibits public authorities from obstructing or disrupting association activities ,whether directly or indirectly.

Such measures also conflict with fundamental United Nations principles concerning the role of civil society ,which require states to refrain from imposing arbitrary administrative or financial restrictions designed to deprive associations of resources and hinder their functioning .This aligns with Article 13 of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which affirms the right of organizations to seek ,receive ,and manage funding independently ,free from arbitrary interference by public authorities.

Arbitrary Detention and Violations of Fair Trial Guarantees

The judicial proceedings documented in this report occur within a context where judicial neutrality appears compromised and effective guarantees of independence are weakened. This contradicts Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which prohibits arbitrary detention and requires prompt judicial review, as well as Article 14 which guarantees the right to a fair trial before an independent and impartial tribunal.

Repeated extensions of pretrial detention without timely resolution of cases constitute a clear departure from the Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in resolutions 40/32 and 40/146 of 1985. These principles require prompt adjudication and prohibit the use of pretrial detention as a form of punishment. The seriousness of this pattern is further heightened when considered in light of international human rights standards recognizing prolonged detention without fair trial guarantees as an independent human rights violation requiring remedy and redress.

Detention Conditions and Violations of Humane Treatment Standards

Documented testimonies indicate that conditions faced by activists in detention centers and prisons in Tunisia fall below minimum standards of humane treatment. These conditions violate Article 36 of the Tunisian Constitution, which guarantees humane treatment and protection of detainees' dignity. They also conflict with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, known as the Mandela Rules, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in Resolution 70/175 of 2015, which affirm that humane treatment of detainees is a fundamental right rather than a discretionary measure.

Additionally, Tunisia's obligations under the United Nations Convention Against Torture of 1984, to which it is a party, require not only refraining from torture and degrading treatment but also taking proactive measures to prevent such practices within detention facilities and ensuring prompt and effective investigations into all allegations of abuse.

Decree Law No 54 of 2022 Criminalizing Expression and Shrinking Digital Space

Decree Law No 54 of 2022 contains broadly worded provisions and severe penalties, including prison sentences of up to five years, rising to ten years in certain cases, for acts related to the dissemination of so-called false information, undermining public order, or causing moral harm to public officials. These vague formulations open the door to political instrumentalization against freedom of opinion and expression.



In contrast ,the Human Rights Committee’s interpretation of Article19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights requires that restrictions on freedom of expression be clearly defined and foreseeable, enabling individuals to understand the boundaries between permitted and prohibited conduct .The same provision further requires that any restrictions be necessary in a democratic society and proportionate to the intended objective .This threshold is difficult to justify in the context of severe custodial penalties imposed for peaceful expression.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression has repeatedly emphasized in reports to the Human Rights Council that criminalizing peaceful expression ,even when controversial or factually inaccurate ,does not meet the necessity requirement in a democratic society. States that criminalize such forms of expression therefore risk violating their international obligations in a clear and unequivocal manner.

Targeting Trade Union Rights :Violations of International Labour Obligations

Documented restrictions on trade union activity constitute a direct violation of Article 8 of the International Covenant on Economic ,Social and Cultural Rights ,which guarantees the freedom to form and join trade unions and to conduct union activities independently as a fundamental safeguard for workers 'rights and a mechanism to balance relations between labour and capital.

These restrictions also conflict with International Labour Organization Conventions No 87 .on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise ,and No 98 .on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining ,both ratified by Tunisia .These conventions obligate states to protect workers' rights to independent collective organization without interference from public authorities or other actors .This framework is reinforced by the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of ,1998 which affirms that freedom of association and collective bargaining constitute fundamental rights that must be respected regardless of political or economic circumstances.

The Systematic Nature of Violations Beyond Individual Cases

A comprehensive analysis of the violations documented in this report demonstrates that they do not constitute isolated procedural failures or individual excesses .Rather ,they form part of an interconnected system in which multiple restrictive mechanisms operate simultaneously to silence independent voices and restrict spaces for opposition and oversight.

Decree Law No 54 .complements security raids ,financial restrictions reinforce the impact of judicial prosecutions ,and arbitrary detention strengthens the chilling effect of official incitement rhetoric .These mechanisms operate cumulatively ,each reinforcing and amplifying the effects of the others.

The seriousness of this pattern is further heightened by its simultaneous impact on civil and political rights as well as economic and social rights. From freedom of expression to the right to union organization ,Tunisian citizens face increasing restrictions across the various spaces where civic participation is exercised .These developments occur in parallel with a gradual erosion of judicial independence safeguards ,which should serve as the final mechanism for protecting rights ,as established by the Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary and the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers.

As these safeguards weaken within a context of broader restrictions on civic space ,Tunisian citizens face a dual rights deficit :diminished protection on

the ground and limited access to effective judicial remedies .Taken together, this dynamic constitutes a profound challenge to the democratic social contract that should underpin a rights based state.

Implications of Human Rights Violations on Civic Space

The repercussions of restrictions imposed on civic space in Tunisia extend beyond the immediate and visible effects of judicial prosecutions and administrative measures .These developments produce deeper and longer-term consequences affecting the structure of society ,the relationship between citizens and the state ,and the broader trajectory of Tunisia’s democratic landscape .Understanding these implications requires moving beyond a descriptive approach toward a deeper analysis of how these restrictions reshape public space and redefine its boundaries.

One of the most significant consequences of shrinking civic space lies not only in documented violations but in what is commonly referred to as the “chilling effect “.This invisible impact emerges from a broader climate of pressure and prosecution affecting civil society actors ,political figures ,and trade union activists .When activists witness colleagues prosecuted for a tweet ,a public statement ,or participation in a demonstration ,the message is conveyed without the need for explicit threats .Silence becomes safer than speaking ,and withdrawal appears more prudent than engagement .External restrictions thus transform into internalized self-censorship ,with individuals limiting their own expression before the state intervenes .Several human rights organizations have documented this phenomenon in the Tunisian context ,where activists increasingly report reviewing their digital content more cautiously or refraining from participating in public activities due to fear of prosecution⁹⁴.

The use of Decree Law No 54 .as a tool to restrict digital expression represents a qualitative turning point in the shrinking of civic space .The digital sphere, which had increasingly become an alternative space for expression and civic engagement ,has now also come under pressure .The impact of this decree extends beyond those directly prosecuted ;it creates implicit red lines that

94 Ultra Tunisia, «Prison Sentences and Self Censorship: Calls to Amend Decree Law 54 in Tunisia,» 29 January 2026, last accessed 23 March 2026.

<https://ultratunisia.ultrasawt.com/%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%91%D9%81%-D8%B9%D9%82%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA%-D8%B3%D8%AC%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%B5%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%A9%-D8%B0%D8%A-7%D8%AA%D9%8A%D8%A9%-D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA%-D9%84%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%AD%-D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%B3%D9%88%D9%85-54%-D9%81%D9%8A%-D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%/D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%85%-D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%B1%D9%8A%/D9%85%DB8%C%D8%AF%DB8%C%D8%A7%/D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB8%C%D8%B1>

encourage widespread self-censorship .As a result ,one of the remaining spaces for free expression and political critique becomes constrained, reinforcing a growing perception of limited opportunities for independent public engagement.

For civil society organizations ,the consequences manifest as a multi-layered structural sustainability crisis.On the one hand ,restrictions on foreign funding, combined with the absence of sufficient domestic funding alternatives, have reduced financial margins for civil society work .This has forced some organizations to scale back activities ,suspend programs ,or close entirely. On the other hand ,the broader climate of pressure has contributed to a drain of expertise ,with activists and professionals either leaving the sector or shifting to less sensitive areas of work ,thereby weakening the human capacity of civil society at a time when cohesion is most needed.

This crisis becomes more pronounced when considering the essential roles civil society has played in Tunisia ,including monitoring authorities, documenting violations ,providing services in marginalized areas ,and strengthening civic participation .The weakening of these functions does not

only affect organizations themselves but also diminishes society's presence within public space and reduces its role in democratic governance.

In the political sphere ,restrictions generate serious consequences affecting pluralism and the conditions for fair political competition .Targeting political parties and actors through judicial proceedings and administrative measures affects not only those directly concerned but also the broader political landscape .This dynamic creates what may be described as“ procedural inequality ”,whereby political actors operate under unequal conditions in terms of resources and available space .When judicial proceedings become instruments within political competition ,the balance of democratic contestation is undermined ,and the concept of legitimate opposition as a cornerstone of democratic governance is weakened.

These developments have also contributed to deepening political disengagement ,a phenomenon already present in Tunisia .Civic space is increasingly characterized by declining electoral participation ,reduced engagement in political parties ,and diminished involvement in political initiatives .This reflects an erosion of trust between citizens and the political system as a whole .Such disengagement ,in turn ,fuels a cycle of declining legitimacy ,where political authority becomes increasingly detached from meaningful public participation.

A similar trend is observable in trade union activity ,which faces growing pressures aimed at weakening independence and limiting its capacity to defend workers 'interests and contribute to public policy debates .Restrictions on the right to strike ,limitations on trade union gatherings ,and judicial proceedings against union leaders directly affect workers 'economic and social rights .In the Tunisian context ,trade unions play a broader role beyond representation, acting as key actors in social dialogue and in maintaining balance between labor and capital .Weakening this role therefore affects broader conditions of social justice and increases vulnerability among marginalized groups.

A comprehensive analysis of these implications reveals an interconnected system of mutually reinforcing effects rather than isolated consequences. The chilling effect fuels political disengagement ;political disengagement weakens public oversight ;weakened oversight facilitates concentration of power ;and concentration of power produces further restrictions .This cumulative cycle transforms each individual violation into part of a broader structure reshaping Tunisia's social and political contract.

Conclusion

This report presents a complex and multifaceted picture of civic space in Tunisia ,characterized by the continued engagement of civil society actors, political stakeholders ,and trade union movements on the one hand ,and the simultaneous expansion of restrictions and violations that narrow the space for independent action on the other .The documented violations do not appear as isolated or incidental occurrences but rather as recurring and interconnected practices that collectively reveal a systematic pattern reflecting a broader shift toward restructuring public space through a security ,-judicial ,and administrative-driven approach.

The findings further indicate that restrictive practices no longer rely primarily on overt or exceptional forms of repression ,as seen in contexts of direct authoritarian control .Instead ,they increasingly operate through a coordinated system of legal ,administrative ,and security mechanisms functioning in parallel .These mechanisms include prolonged judicial proceedings and systematic extensions of legal processes ,denial of administrative authorizations and obstruction of activities ,and the use of broadly worded legal provisions applied selectively against civil society actors ,political opponents ,and independent initiatives .This is compounded by growing reliance on smear campaigns and incitement rhetoric aimed at undermining the credibility of targeted actors and excluding them from public space .As a result ,restrictions operate simultaneously at two levels: the formal legal level and the broader symbolic and social level.

The range of targeted actors is notably broad and diverse ,encompassing civil society organizations ,human rights groups ,independent initiatives, political parties ,trade unions ,and digital activists .This diversity indicates that restrictive practices are not directed at a specific group or ideological current but rather at independent forms of organization operating outside or in opposition to state structures .This reinforces the understanding that

these developments are not merely reactive measures but part of a broader governance approach to managing public space.

The implications of this trajectory extend beyond individual documented cases and carry significant structural consequences .Over the medium and long term ,the cumulative effect of these restrictions contributes to the gradual erosion of political and social pluralism ,reduces opportunities for meaningful civic participation ,and weakens society's ability to exercise effective oversight over state authority .It also fosters a climate of self-censorship among civil society actors ,who increasingly face a difficult choice between continuing their work and bearing growing legal ,security ,and social risks.

Despite these constraints ,the continued engagement of many actors reflects the resilience of Tunisian society and the enduring legacy of the culture of freedom shaped by the 2011 revolution .However ,this resilience alone is insufficient to safeguard civic space in the absence of a legal and political environment that guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms and ensures that civil ,political ,and trade union activities can be carried out with genuine independence and institutional protection.

Protecting civic space is not a sectoral concern limited to civil society organizations and associations ;rather ,it is a fundamental condition for the sustainability of any democratic process .Societies where freedom of association ,expression ,and peaceful assembly are restricted gradually lose their internal mechanisms for accountability and balance ,creating conditions for governance models that operate without meaningful oversight .In this sense ,the shrinking of civic space represents a risk affecting society as a whole rather than any single group.

Accordingly ,this report goes beyond documenting violations and analyzing patterns ;it seeks to mobilize national and international stakeholders to safeguard civic space in Tunisia as an essential pillar for protecting rights and freedoms and strengthening democratic participation .The recommendations presented at its conclusion constitute a call for concrete and measurable steps aimed at ensuring the state's compliance with its constitutional and international human rights obligations ,while creating an enabling environment in which civil society actors ,political stakeholders ,and trade unions can carry out their roles freely and responsibly in service of the public good and the protection of human dignity.

Recommendations

Based on the violations documented and analyzed in this report ,which reveal systematic restrictions targeting civic space in Tunisia ,manifested through arbitrary arrests ,pretrial detention ,judicial and security harassment ,and increasing efforts to criminalize civil ,political ,and trade union activity, Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms puts forward the following recommendations addressed to relevant stakeholders.

To the Tunisian Authorities

Immediately and unconditionally release all individuals detained in connection with their civil ,political ,or trade union activities ,and halt all judicial proceedings used to target civic space.

End the use of pretrial detention as a tool of pressure and intimidation, particularly the excessive and repeated extensions of pretrial detention periods that exceed legal limits and effectively amount to punishment prior to judgment.

Guarantee fundamental rights and freedoms protected under international law ,including freedom of expression ,peaceful assembly ,freedom of association ,and participation in civil ,political ,and trade union activities, and establish a legislative and legal environment that protects rather than restricts these rights.

Ensure fair trial guarantees in all cases related to civil society and human rights activities ,including the right to defense ,legal representation ,and respect for the presumption of innocence.

End incitement and hate speech emanating from ,or tolerated by ,official actors in public discourse targeting civil society organizations ,political actors ,and trade union activists ,which contribute to a hostile environment that legitimizes violence and normalizes violations.

To the International Community and International Human Rights Bodies

Urge Tunisian authorities to halt arrest campaigns and security prosecutions targeting civic space actors ,and prioritize civic freedoms within political and economic dialogue frameworks with Tunisia.

Provide institutional and financial support to civil society and human rights organizations operating under increasingly restrictive conditions ,and strengthen their capacities in documentation ,advocacy ,and protection of activists.

Dispatch fact-finding missions and conduct regular monitoring visits to assess the situation of detainees and document violations affecting civil society ,trade union activists ,and political actors ,thereby increasing the international cost of repression.

Include the situation in Tunisia in reports of United Nations bodies and regional human rights mechanisms ,and activate international review mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review ,to ensure accountability for Tunisia's human rights obligations.

To Civil Society Actors

Build broad and diverse coalitions bringing together human rights organizations ,trade unions ,local associations ,and independent actors to form a unified civic front capable of confronting restrictive policies.

Strengthen coordinated media and communication strategies and develop systematic monitoring and documentation mechanisms to ensure the flow of reliable information to national and international audiences.

Activate protection and solidarity networks among organizations and activists ,particularly in cases of arrest or judicial harassment ,including legal assistance ,psychological support ,and public solidarity.

Invest in strengthening legal and monitoring capacities within civil society organizations and develop flexible strategies that enable continued civic engagement within an increasingly restrictive environment.

