



# Civil Society Confronting Repression

**Report on Violations  
Targeting Associations**

from May 2024 to the End of May 2026

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Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms  
Tunisia, July 2026

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## Executive Summary

This report examines the violations, restrictions, and legal proceedings carried out by the Tunisian authorities between May 2024 and May 2026 as part of a broader campaign targeting civil society. Throughout this period, civil society organizations and actors have been subjected to public accusations of treason and foreign allegiance, resulting in the disruption of the activities of numerous associations and organizations, security harassment, arrests of civil society leaders and activists, and legal proceedings seeking the dissolution of several organizations.

The report documents a pattern of institutional measures undertaken by state authorities against civil society organizations, their staff, leaders, and members. A total of 88 cases of violations were documented, including 47 cases involving restrictions and legal proceedings against associations and organizations, and 41 cases of judicial prosecution targeting activists, association leaders, and members. Preliminary judgments were issued against seven individuals, while 34 others remain at liberty pending the outcome of ongoing proceedings. These cases have been pursued on the basis of a range of criminal and misdemeanor charges, including money laundering, forming a criminal association, and financial offences. The nature of these allegations reflects the narratives of conspiracy and betrayal that have increasingly characterized official state discourse toward civil society actors.

Between May 2024 and May 2026, civil society in Tunisia operated in an increasingly restrictive environment marked by intimidation, judicial harassment, and punitive measures targeting associations, their leaders, and their members. Documented violations included arrests and detention, prolonged judicial proceedings, searches of association premises, security raids, suspension of organizational activities, and repeated extensions of police custody. Taken together, these measures constitute a broader pattern of repression aimed at undermining independent civic action and further shrinking civic space in Tunisia.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations addressed to the Tunisian authorities, calling for an end to violations targeting civil society and for full respect for freedom of association and the right to engage in legitimate civic and human rights work. It further calls for the release of those detained in connection with their civil society activities and for an end to the use of pre-trial detention as a tool of intimidation and restriction.

The report also urges the international community to strengthen its support for civic space in Tunisia and to enhance monitoring and advocacy efforts aimed at addressing ongoing violations. At the national level, it highlights the importance of reinforcing coordination, solidarity, and collective action among civil society actors in order to confront continuing restrictions and defend fundamental rights and freedoms.



## Introduction

Since the outbreak of the 17 December–14 January Revolution in Tunisia, civil society has constituted one of the principal pillars of the country's democratic transition. It has played a central role in accompanying political and social transformations, both through its contributions to the drafting of the Constitution within the National Constituent Assembly and through its sustained advocacy for the establishment of a democratic state that respects the rights of all citizens, promotes the values of pluralism and justice, and upholds and advances human rights across a wide range of fields.

For more than a decade, civil society has served as a key partner and driving force in advancing human rights reforms. Civil society organizations have contributed to several important legislative achievements through advocacy and campaigning efforts directed at decision-makers, including the adoption of Organic Law No. 58 of 2017 on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Organic Law No.

50 of 2018 on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Decree-Law No. 88 of 2011 provided a legal framework guaranteeing freedom of association and regulating the work of associations, contributing to an unprecedented expansion of civic space between 2011 and 2021. This framework enabled thousands of associations and organizations to play vital roles in monitoring, advocacy, public education, accountability, and the promotion of active citizenship. Throughout the years following the Tunisian Revolution, civil society maintained its position as a central actor despite the political transformations experienced by the country.

However, Tunisia's political landscape underwent a profound transformation following 25 July 2021, particularly after the measures adopted by the President of the Republic and the subsequent concentration of power in the executive. During this period, the space for rights and freedoms significantly contracted, as reflected in documented human rights violations and the growing number of prosecutions related to freedom of expression and politically motivated cases. These developments occurred in a context marked by the concentration of powers in the Presidency, the weakening of democratic practices, and the erosion of political pluralism. At the same time, official rhetoric increasingly portrayed opponents of the President's policies, including civil society actors, as conspirators and traitors, making civil society a primary target of the authorities' accusations and campaigns.

Within this context, civil society has faced an unprecedented wave of restrictions and pressure, including judicial proceedings, security investigations, and smear campaigns, particularly against organizations working on transparency, governance, and the rights of migrants and refugees, as well as other human rights and accountability-related issues. This escalating approach became especially visible during May and October 2024 and continued throughout 2025 through the systematic, coordinated, and sustained targeting of civil society actors, including both individuals and organizations.

This report seeks to highlight the principal threats facing civil society

actors and to document the human rights violations committed against a large number of associations, as well as civil society workers employed by organizations working on the rights of migrants. These violations pose a direct threat to the independence, safety, and essential role of civil society in Tunisia.

The report examines the broader Tunisian context and its implications for civil society, including official rhetoric that has increasingly portrayed associations as threats to national security and accused them of treason and foreign allegiance, blurring the line between political discourse and human rights concerns. Such narratives have promoted the theory that migrants from sub-Saharan Africa are being “resettled” in Tunisia with the support of civil society organizations and the backing of international organizations. These allegations were subsequently accompanied by coordinated smear campaigns on social media, followed by a series of arrests and prosecutions based on what civil society actors describe as unfounded accusations. In several cases, these proceedings ultimately resulted in prison sentences, mirroring patterns observed in cases involving political opponents.

The report also provides an overview of violations affecting human rights associations, many of which have been subjected to similar charges and judicial proceedings. These violations have been accompanied by security harassment, searches of organizational premises, and the freezing or seizure of bank accounts, resulting in the effective suspension of their activities.

In addition, the report presents a detailed account of the violations committed against a number of civil society activists from May 2024 through the end of May 2026 and classifies these violations in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the situation facing civil society in Tunisia under the post-25 July 2021 authorities. It further assesses these practices against Tunisia’s obligations with respect to freedom of association, the right to establish and operate associations, the freedom to engage in civic activity, and the rule of law. In doing so,

the report examines the extent to which the Tunisian authorities have complied with these obligations and with the international and regional human rights instruments to which Tunisia is a party.

The report concludes with a set of specific recommendations aimed at strengthening respect for human rights, ensuring the state's compliance with its obligations, and providing a safe and enabling environment for associations and the broader civil society sector.

## Methodology

In preparing this report, Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms adopted a documentation and analytical methodology covering the period from May 2024 to the end of May 2026. The report aims to monitor judicial proceedings, arrests, and violations targeting civil society actors, including associations, organizations, activists, and civil society leaders, in connection with their human rights and civic work.

The findings are based on 26 in-person and telephone interviews conducted with lawyers, experts, family members of detainees, and several defendants, in addition to representatives of targeted and active associations and organizations. The report also draws on official statements and speeches issued by state institutions, media coverage, social media posts, and reports published by local and international organizations.

The report examines the broader context of escalating restrictions on civil society since May 2024 and documents 88 cases of violations, including 47 cases involving restrictions and legal proceedings against associations and organizations, and 41 cases of judicial prosecution targeting activists and association leaders. Preliminary judgments were issued against seven individuals, while 34 others remain free pending the conclusion of legal proceedings.

The report situates these violations within the broader political context and the incitement rhetoric that accompanied the authorities' handling of the migration file. It concludes with an overview of the

principal human rights violations documented during the reporting period, the Association's assessment of these developments, and a set of recommendations.

The cases documented herein do not constitute an exhaustive account of all violations committed against human rights defenders and civil society workers. Rather, they illustrate a recurring pattern of systematic restrictions and violations. During the preparation of this report, the research team encountered several challenges, including limited access to information, difficulties in verifying and documenting cases, a climate of fear among victims, and the reluctance of some individuals to disclose their identities. Additional challenges arose in conducting interviews with both victims and legal representatives.

The report also adheres to a strict policy on privacy and personal data protection. In several cases, identities have been withheld and pseudonyms used at the request of victims, whether individuals or associations, in order to safeguard their personal information.

For the purposes of this report, violations include any measures or practices adopted by state authorities or other actors exercising authority or influence that result in the restriction or infringement of rights and freedoms protected under domestic and international law, including freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, and freedom of association.

The violations documented in this report include the suspension of the activities of associations, the initiation of investigations and judicial proceedings against association leaders and members in connection with their activities, as well as the prohibition, obstruction, or disruption of associations' activities.

## Historical Background of Tunisian Civil Society

The first foundations of associative life in Tunisia date back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1896, the Khaldounia Association was established as a student organization whose primary objective was to expand the knowledge of Zaytouna students. It also played a role in the national struggle for independence from French colonial rule<sup>1</sup>.

In the same historical context, the Sadiki Alumni Association was founded in 1905. Although it was primarily a cultural association, it served as an incubator for anti-colonial political leadership, including figures such as Ali Bach Hamba and Tahar Sfar<sup>2</sup>.

Between World War I and the outbreak of World War II, Tunisian civil society experienced relative development within the broader anti-colonial struggle, through the establishment of local associations run entirely by Tunisians. Several sports associations were created, as well as the first Tunisian and Arab labor union, the General Confederation of Tunisian Workers (CGTT), founded by Mohamed Ali El Hammi in 1924. The Tunisian Muslim Scouts were established in 1933, and early feminist organizing emerged with the creation of the Tunisian Islamic Women's Union in 1936<sup>3</sup>. These organizations faced strong resistance from the French authorities, who adopted a rigid stance opposing any form of independent civic activity.

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1 Ultra Tunisia, "Tunisia: Al-Khaldounia, a School of Modernization and Resistance," 26 December 2016, last accessed 24 November 2025.

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

2 Assarih. "Issa Bakkoush writes: 150 Years Since the Founding of the Sadiki School and 120 Years Since the Revival of Its Alumni Association." 1 March 2025. Last accessed 25 November 2025.

<https://assarih.com/%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%B3%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%83%D9%88%D8%B4-%D9%8A%D9%83%D8%AA%D8%A8-150-%D8%B3%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%A9/>

3 Assafir Al-Arabi. "Civil Society in Tunisia: A Century of Existence and Struggle." 24 April 2019. Last accessed 25 November 2025.

<https://assafirarabi.com/ar/25806/2019/05/24/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3-%D9%82%D8%B1%D9%86-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%AC%D9%88%D8%AF-%D9%88/#:~:text=%D9%88%D9%82%D8%AF%20%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%B2%20%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%AA%D8%A9,%D8%AA%D8%AE%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%81%20%D8%AD%D8%AF%D8%A9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%85%D8%B9%20%D8%B9%D9%86%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B6%D9%8A%D9%86.>



After World War II, a significant number of civil society organizations were established, many of which continue to operate today and have played important roles in Tunisia's modern history. Among them was the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT), founded in 1946, which played a key role in the national liberation struggle, particularly during periods when political activity was frozen and several leaders of the national movement were exiled. In 1947<sup>4</sup>, the Tunisian Union of Industry and Commerce was founded under a different name and was later renamed in 1948 during its second congress, while the Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fisheries was established in 1949<sup>5</sup>. The combined efforts of civic and political action culminated in Tunisia achieving national independence in 1956.

During the presidency of Habib Bourguiba, Law No. 154 of 1959 on associations was enacted, while Tunisia simultaneously entered an authoritarian system based on the suppression of political and civil rights. Political parties were dissolved, and a one-party system was institutionalized. In this context of political closure, the Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH) was founded in 1976<sup>6</sup>, becoming the first organization of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa. The authorities initially refused to grant it legal recognition, but following sustained judicial, national, and international pressure, the League eventually received authorization to operate. Nevertheless, tensions and repression continued throughout Bourguiba's rule, as the League became a refuge for political opponents and raised issues such as torture in prisons and arbitrary detention. During this period, the Tunisian Association Against Torture and the International Association for the Support of Political Prisoners were also established<sup>7</sup>.

At the same time, relations between the authorities and the UGTT

4 Union of Arab Chambers – Official Website.

<https://uac-org.org/ar/arabchamber/arab-chambers/-tunisian-union-for-industry-trade-and-handicrafts>

5 Official Website of the Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fisheries (UTAP).

[. http://www.utap.org.tn/language/ar/%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AE%D9%8A%D8%A9/](http://www.utap.org.tn/language/ar/%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AE%D9%8A%D8%A9/)

6 Official Website of the Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH).

<https://ltdh.tn/>

7 Arab Reform Initiative. "The Emergence, Development, and Challenges of the Human Rights Movement in Tunisia." 28 September 2017. Accessed 25 November 2025.

<https://www.arab-reform.net/ar/publication/%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%A3%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%B1-%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%88%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A/>

deteriorated sharply, reaching a peak during the events historically known as “Black Thursday” on 26 January 1978, when the union called for a general strike in protest against economic, social, and political conditions. The authorities responded by besieging union headquarters with security and military forces, then opening fire on demonstrators, resulting in between 250 and 500 victims, both killed and injured. Union leaders were arrested and charged with sabotage and murder, and were sentenced to ten years of imprisonment with hard labor, while new leadership loyal to the regime was imposed on the union<sup>8</sup>.

The early years of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali’s rule witnessed a brief period of political and civic opening and an expansion of freedoms of association, following amendments to Law No. 154 of 1959 through Law No. 90 of 1988. The government also established the Higher Committee for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in January 1991 as an official body concerned with human rights in Tunisia. In addition, the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD) was founded in 1989<sup>9</sup>.

However, the political system soon reverted to authoritarian practices. In 1992, the Ministry of Interior issued a decision classifying the Tunisian League for Human Rights as an “association of public interest,” which under the associations law obliged it to accept all membership applications. This enabled regime loyalists to infiltrate the organization and take control of its internal decisions, effectively undermining its ability to adopt critical positions toward the authorities. Although the Administrative Court annulled this decision after four years of litigation, the authorities continued to obstruct the League’s activities, preventing it from holding its congress for six

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8 Al Jazeera. “Black Thursday... A Tragedy That Refuses to Be Forgotten.” 6 February 2017. Accessed 25 November 2025.

<https://www.aljazeera.net/encyclopedia/2017/2/6/%D8%A3%D8%AD%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AB-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%A3%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%89>

9 Arab Reform Initiative. “The Emergence, Development, and Challenges of the Human Rights Movement in Tunisia.” 28 September 2017. Accessed 25 November 2025.

<https://www.arab-reform.net/ar/publication/%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%A3%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%B1-%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%88%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A/>

years, from 1994 until 2000<sup>10</sup>.

Following the 17 December–14 January Revolution, Tunisia experienced a significant opening in rights and freedoms. Law No. 154 of 1959 was repealed and replaced by Decree-Law No. 88 of 2011 regulating associations. Most previously restricted organizations were able to resume their activities, and a large number of new associations and organizations were established at both national and local levels.

However, after 2015, a new wave of restrictions targeting civil society organizations emerged. Between 2016 and 2017, the government reportedly sought the dissolution of more than 45 associations, most of which were active in human rights and humanitarian assistance, under the pretext of counterterrorism<sup>11</sup>. In most cases, however, the alleged violations amounted to procedural irregularities that were grossly disproportionate to the severe sanction of dissolution.

In a related development, at the beginning of 2016, the activities of Shams Association, which defends the rights of LGBTQ+ persons and sexual minorities, were suspended for 30 days following a request by the Secretary-General of the Government. However, the court ruled that the association did not violate Decree-Law No. 88 of 2011 and lifted the suspension. Later in 2016, the State Litigation Authority filed a lawsuit seeking the dissolution of the association, but in May 2019, the Court of Appeal upheld the first-instance ruling allowing the association to continue its activities<sup>12</sup>.

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10 Same source.

11 Ultra Tunisia, “Under the Pretext of Counter-Terrorism: A Crackdown on Associations,” 3 April 2018, last accessed 22 December 2025.

<https://ultratunisia.ultrasawt.com/%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%AA-%D8%BA%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%85%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%AD%D9%85%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B6%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%82-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%B6%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%8A/%D8%B1%D8%A3%D9%8A>

12 France 24, “Tunisia: Court Upholds Ruling in Favor of an Association Defending LGBT Rights,” 25 May 2019, last accessed 22 December 2025.

<https://www.france24.com/ar/20190520-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3-%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B4%D9%85%D8%B3-%D9%82%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%85%D8%AB%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86>

## **A History of Restrictions and Targeting of Civil Society**

Restrictions on civil society in Tunisia did not emerge suddenly. Rather, they are the result of a cumulative process in which mechanisms of control and restriction have evolved alongside changing political and security contexts. Since the post-revolution debates surrounding freedom of association, repeated attempts have been made to subject civil society activity to systems of authorization, oversight, and suspicion through a range of administrative, security, and financial measures. Over time, this trajectory has deepened, evolving from administrative obstruction and physical intimidation to the use of counter-terrorism measures, financial compliance requirements, and administrative registries as tools to reassert control over civic space and curtail the independence of civil society actors.

### **From Notification to Administrative Obstruction: Resisting the Implementation of Freedom of Association**

The adoption of Decree-Law No. 88 of 2011 marked a significant legislative milestone in the regulation of civil society activity in Tunisia. The Decree-Law repealed the previous legal framework established by Law No. 154 of 1959 and introduced a notification-based system in place of the prior authorization regime. Under this framework, an association is deemed legally established upon completion of the notification procedures, notably through the submission of a registered letter with acknowledgement of receipt.

However, the administrative implementation of the Decree-Law during its first year revealed significant resistance to this shift. In numerous cases, the General Directorate for Associations within the Presidency of the Government failed to issue acknowledgements of receipt, despite their practical importance in enabling associations to open bank accounts and carry out financial and administrative transactions. As a result, hundreds of newly established associations, particularly those working on human rights and public freedoms, were placed in a legally uncertain position. This effectively reproduced elements

of the previous system of state tutelage through new bureaucratic mechanisms, transforming a purely declaratory procedure into a mechanism of implicit authorization or effective obstruction<sup>13</sup>.

## From Administrative Obstruction to Physical Violence

During 2012 and 2013, pressure on civil society evolved from administrative obstruction to direct physical intimidation, coinciding with the rise of the so-called Leagues for the Protection of the Revolution and their regional branches. These structures were described in a number of reports and judicial proceedings as groups implicated in acts of violence targeting civil society organizations, the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT), and political opponents.

This escalation reached its peak on 4 December 2012, when the headquarters of the UGTT in Tunis was attacked during commemorations marking the anniversary of the assassination of Farhat Hached. The assault resulted in injuries among trade unionists and triggered widespread criticism of the conduct of the security forces. This period was also marked by the death of Lotfi Nagdh, the regional coordinator of the Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fisheries in Tataouine, on 18 October 2012 following clashes with individuals affiliated with the Leagues. The episode ultimately culminated in a court ruling ordering the dissolution of the Leagues on 26 May 2014 on the grounds that they had violated the provisions of Decree-Law No. 88 and had been implicated in acts of violence against political and civil society actors<sup>14</sup>.

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13 International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), *Attacks on Civic Space: Proposed Revisions to Decree-Law No. 88 on Associations – Questions and Answers*, June 2022, accessed on 15 May 2026. <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/icj-tunis-qa-AR-WEB.pdf>

14 Arab Reform Initiative, “Questions and Answers: Proposed Amendments to Decree-Law No. 88 on Associations,” June 2022, accessed on 15 May 2026.

<https://www.arab-reform.net/ar/publication/%D8%A5%D8%B4%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9-%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%88%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D9%88/>

## **Counter-Terrorism as a Vehicle for Restricting Civil Society Activity: The Mass Suspension Decisions of 2014**

In August 2014, following the Henchir Ettala attacks, the government of Mehdi Jomaa, acting through what was then known as the Crisis Cell, adopted a collective administrative decision suspending the activities of 157 associations, including a number of prominent charitable organizations.

The decision raised serious legal concerns, given that Article 45 of Decree-Law No. 88 of 2011 grants the judiciary exclusive authority to suspend or dissolve associations after the completion of procedures guaranteeing due process and the right to defence.

Nevertheless, the government relied on the provisions of the 1978 State of Emergency Decree and the 1975 Governorates Law to bypass judicial procedures. Human rights organizations criticized this approach as an arbitrary measure that subjected the associative sector to executive control. Subsequent judicial proceedings in several cases further revealed the weakness of the evidence underpinning the suspension decisions, reinforcing concerns that counter-terrorism measures were being used as a pretext to restrict freedom of association and civil society activity<sup>15</sup>.

## **Financial Oversight and the Expansion of Suspicion: Re-Restricting Civil Society after 2015**

Following the Bardo Museum and Sousse attacks in 2015, a new phase emerged in the restructuring of oversight mechanisms governing associations, particularly following the adoption of Organic Law No. 26 of 2015 on Counter-Terrorism and the Prevention of Money Laundering.

This legislative framework imposed extensive financial and accounting obligations on non-profit organizations and strengthened the role of the Tunisian Financial Analysis Commission as a supervisory body

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15 Human Rights Watch, “Tunisia: Suspension of Associations’ Activities Is Arbitrary,” 13 August 2014, accessed on 16 May 2026.  
<https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2014/08/13/254843>

overseeing sources of funding, particularly foreign funding.

In practice, the expansion of suspicion-based oversight contributed to the emergence of an increasingly restrictive financial environment. This manifested itself in the freezing of bank accounts and the blocking of financial transfers before the issuance of final judicial decisions. These developments coincided with official and media narratives that repeatedly associated civil society activity with suspicious funding. Consequently, some financial institutions adopted risk-avoidance policies, including refusing to open bank accounts for newly established associations or delaying international transfers. Collectively, these practices contributed to restrictions on the autonomy of civil society organizations and affected their ability to operate effectively<sup>16</sup>.

## **From Financial Compliance to Dual Oversight: Increasing Restrictions on Association Funding after 2017**

Tunisia's inclusion on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list in November 2017 intensified scrutiny of the associative sector under the banner of compliance with anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing standards.

Within this framework, the Presidency of the Government issued more than 1,005 warnings to associations between 2014 and 2019, alleging financial and administrative violations. Of these, 566 cases concerned the failure to publish details of foreign funding in printed newspapers.

While financial oversight reports did reveal shortcomings in monitoring and transparency mechanisms, the broad reliance on such findings contributed to the stigmatization of civil society organizations as a whole and paved the way for a system of dual oversight exercised by both financial and administrative authorities. As a result, the right to

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<sup>16</sup> Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Platform, "Guide to the Monitoring of Associations' Bank Accounts in Tunisia and Its Impact," 2018, accessed on 17 May 2025.  
<https://fatfplatform.org/assets/publication-FATF-Tunisia-Final.pdf>

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access funding, that is guaranteed under Article 35 of Decree-Law No. 88, became, in practice, increasingly dependent on undeclared financial and security approvals rather than functioning as a protected right<sup>17</sup>.

## The National Register of Enterprises: Expanding Administrative Control over Civil Society

Organic Law No. 52 of 2018 establishing the National Register of Enterprises introduced an additional structural constraint on the functioning of associations. The law required associations to register within a framework primarily designed for commercial and administrative entities, while also imposing financial penalties for delays or failures to update information and allowing for sanctions that could ultimately lead to deregistration or the suspension of activities.

Civil society and human rights organizations criticized this approach for conflating profit-oriented companies with non-profit civil society organizations and for creating a broad database containing information on activists, donors, and association leaders. The Register's impact

17 Nawaat, "Tunisia's Inclusion on the Blacklist: Tunisian Hypocrisy and European Short-Sightedness," 15 February 2018, accessed on 17 May 2026.

<https://nawaat.org/2022/02/15/projet-de-loi-sur-les-associations-lecture-critique/>

extended beyond procedural obligations, introducing an additional layer of administrative oversight and complexity that departed from the spirit of Decree-Law No. 88, which was designed to simplify procedures and safeguard freedom of association<sup>18</sup>.

## Civil Society Between Reality and Repression

Since 2021, Tunisian civil society has undergone major changes compared to the conditions under which it operated prior to that year. The country's fractured political context has directly disrupted the usual functioning of civil society organizations. Official discourse emanating from the Presidency of the Republic since 25 July 2021 has taken an unprecedented direction, especially compared to the post-revolution period. The President increasingly adopted rhetoric marked by hate speech and incitement to violence—most notably against political opponents, dissenting voices, and migrants from sub-Saharan Africa. This was accompanied by hostile discourse targeting civil society organizations, alongside online “treason” campaigns on social media led by supporters of the current political course.

Within this context, the state moved toward attempts to amend—and effectively undermine—Decree-Law No. 88 of 2011<sup>19</sup>. A new draft law proposing amendments to Decree-Law No. 88 was submitted to the Assembly of the Representatives of the People and was presented and referred to the Rights and Freedoms Committee on 12 October 2023. The proposed changes were severe and restrictive, introducing prior and subsequent oversight by state authorities over associations and organizations, and weakening their independence in a way that would create institutional dependency on the ruling power<sup>20</sup>.

Debate over amending the Decree-Law continued after Parliament failed to settle the initiative. The issue was raised again through a

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18 Al Bawsala, “The Erosion of Freedom of Association in Tunisia: Context and Restrictions,” 2019, accessed on 18 May 2026.

[https://www.albawsala.com/uploads/documents/policybrief-lerosion-de-la-liberte\\_ar.pdf](https://www.albawsala.com/uploads/documents/policybrief-lerosion-de-la-liberte_ar.pdf)

19 Interview with lawyer Ayachi Hammami, 20 December 2024.

20 Al Bawsala, 2023. Proposed Amendment to the Associations Decree: Toward the Dismantling of the Last Gains of the Democratic Experiment, 5 December. Last accessed: 24 December 2025. <https://www.albawsala.com/ar/publications/20235888>

communiqué from the Prime Ministry regarding a restricted ministerial council meeting chaired by Prime Minister Ahmed Horchani, dedicated to continuing consideration of a draft organic law on associations, dated 5 July 2024<sup>21</sup>.

The trigger for the campaign launched by the authorities against civil society can be traced to the issue of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa residing on Tunisian territory, following a presidential speech marked by racist rhetoric on 21 February 2023<sup>22</sup>. This speech fueled hatred and incited violence, alongside a political and media campaign against migrants involving several pro-authority actors.

Tunisia subsequently entered an unprecedented wave of violence and racism, marked by physical and verbal attacks against migrants, which directly increased their exposure to danger. At the same time, the authorities failed to adopt protective measures, contributing to the movement of migrants toward several areas, most notably the city of El Amra in Sfax Governorate. Camps were established, including the “19-kilometer camp.” The influx continued from 2023 until April 2024, when Tunisian authorities began dismantling these camps, coinciding with the signing of a bilateral agreement between Tunisia and Italy on addressing irregular migration on 18 April 2024<sup>23</sup>.

On the other hand, activists and human rights organizations, especially

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21 Assabah News, 2024. While the Initiative to Amend Decree 88 Remains Suspended... The Law on Regulating Associations and Oversight of the Electoral Process Resurfaces, 7 July. Last accessed: 24 December 2025.

<https://www.assabahnews.tn/ar/%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AD/100504-%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%85%D8%A7-%D9%85%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%B3%D9%88%D9%85-88-%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A9-%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%8A%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A8%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%B7%D9%81%D9%88-%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%AF%D8%AF%D8%A7-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D8%AD>

22 Amnesty International, 2023. Tunisia: President’s Racist Rhetoric Incites Wave of Violence Against Black Africans, 10 February. Last accessed: 24 December 2025.

<https://www.amnesty.org/ar/latest/news/2023/03/tunisia-presidents-racist-speech-incites-a-wave-of-violence-against-black-africans/>

23 Info Migrants, 2024. On the Eve of a New Agreement Between Tunisia and Italy, Tunisian Authorities Dismantle Migrant Camps in the City of El Amra, 18 April. Last accessed: 24 December 2025.

[https://www.infomigrants.net/ar/post/56537/%D8%B9%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%B7%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%81%D9%83%D9%83-%D9%85%D8%AE%D9%8A%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A9](https://www.infomigrants.net/ar/post/56537/%D8%B9%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%B7%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%81%D9%83%D9%83-%D9%85%D8%AE%D9%8A%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A9)

those working on migration and on the rights and freedoms of migrants living in Tunisia, continued their advocacy, rejecting the authorities' official narrative and policies, despite the risks and difficulties faced by victims of violations.

The migration case witnessed new developments at the beginning of May 2024, when demonstrations were organized in several areas, including Sfax and Tunis, calling for the rapid removal of migrants. These mobilizations coincided with official statements, primarily from the Presidency, together with a member of parliament, describing the situation as “unacceptable” and urging authorities to find solutions<sup>24</sup>. Authorities forcibly evacuated hundreds of migrants, no fewer than 300, including refugees and asylum seekers, women, and children, from camps they had set up in front of the United Nations headquarters in Tunis, and transferred them toward Tunisia's borders<sup>25</sup>.

In this context, the President's speech of 6 May 2024, delivered during a National Security Council meeting on irregular migration, represented a key escalation. Irregular migration was described as an “unnatural phenomenon” linked to the country's internal situation<sup>26</sup>. In his remarks, the President directly attacked associations, portraying them as the cause of the crisis. He referred to the Tunisian Council for Refugees and an accommodation proposal it had published, accusing it of “settlement” (**tawfīn**). He further accused associations of being “traitors and agents,” alleging that they receive funding to form militias

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24 France 24, 2024. Tunisia: Protesters Demand the “Swift” Evacuation of Migrants as Authorities Deport Hundreds to the Algerian Border, 4 May. Last accessed: 20 December 2025.

<https://www.france24.com/ar/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9/20240504-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3-%D8%A5%D8-AC%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%85%D8%A6%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%88-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%AD%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%87%D9%85-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D9%81%D9%82-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%BA%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%88%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9>

25 Al Jazeera, 2024. Forced Eviction of Hundreds of African Migrants from Camps in the Tunisian Capital, 4 May. Last accessed: 5 July 2025.

<https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2024/5/4/%D8%A5%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%82%D8%B3%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A6%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%82%D8%A9>

26 Wataniya Replay, 2024. President Kais Saied Chairs a Meeting of the National Security Council on Monday, 6 May 2024, 7 May. Last accessed: 5 July 2025.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jULNuZWj10Q>

and internal networks linked abroad and aimed at undermining the Tunisian state and its laws. He likened them to paid mouthpieces from abroad, stating that “huge sums of money are flowing to these African migrants from abroad for their benefit and for the benefit of networks and associations operating inside Tunisia,” and that “there is no room for associations to replace the state in accommodating migrants<sup>27</sup>.”

This official discourse coincided with the launch of an organized campaign against associations and organizations, including legal proceedings targeting many civil society leaders and activists, as well as harassment measures, inspections, investigations, and imprisonment. The authorities deployed policies of denunciation, intimidation, and “treason” accusations from the very first days of May, with the campaign continuing thereafter, whether during the electoral process and the debate around monitoring the presidential elections (including interference by the Independent High Authority for Elections to restrict organizations and pursue them for refusing to refrain from monitoring), or through renewed referrals and investigations against associations working on migrant rights, particularly toward the end of the administrative year on 12 November 2024. New cases were documented, while earlier files continued to be procedurally prolonged.

Most proceedings concerned financial matters, with the use of counter-terrorism and anti-money-laundering legal frameworks, alongside accusations related to assisting persons in crossing borders irregularly, and other charges such as undermining external security, in addition to files referred under provisions of the Penal Code<sup>28</sup>. Complex files saw no meaningful procedural developments until January 2025, as cases remained pending expert assessments and investigations were repeatedly extended without decisions<sup>29</sup>.

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27 Le Maghreb, 2024. President of the Republic: “There Is No Place for Associations to Replace the State”, 7 May. Last accessed: 20 December 2025.

<https://ar.jemaghreb.tn/%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%85/item/108251-%D8%B1%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%E2%80%99%E2%80%99-%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%84-%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9%E2%80%99%E2%80%99>

28 Interview with Rami Khouili, Director of Lawyers Without Borders office in Tunisia, 23 December 2024.

29 Interview with Rami Khouili, Director of Lawyers Without Borders office in Tunisia, 23 December 2024.

Monitoring and surveillance expanded to include a large number of Tunisian associations, whether through direct authority action or through specialized units such as tax investigation bodies. Even where oversight is formally “subsequent,” it operates within a context of weakened judicial independence—raising concerns regarding the use of these mechanisms against associations for their positions and work<sup>30</sup>.

Tax investigation departments began sending summonses regarding the declaration of tax obligations under the Code of Tax Rights and Procedures and Decree-Law No. 88. Financial transfers from abroad became subject to heightened scrutiny, alongside follow-up by social security bodies, which issued enforcement notices regarding alleged unpaid social security contributions—indicating a policy trend toward tightening, auditing, and administrative burden<sup>31</sup>.

Following arrests and presidential statements targeting civil society—preceded by online incitement campaigns—procedures affected most detainees, creating widespread disruption and pressure on their families. In response, actors moved from hesitation to action, establishing a horizontal group that brought together families of the accused, individuals, and representatives of associations under the name “Against the Policies of Criminalizing Civil Society Work.” The group chose confrontation despite the broader political climate that leaves them exposed to questioning at any moment.

The group faces pressures tied to families of the accused, who themselves face pressure from investigating judges and others aimed at preventing civil society from engaging in the file, alongside recurring accusations of treason and foreign allegiance. This has made the group’s work irregular, yet still impactful—creating what the report describes as a “butterfly effect”—amid continuing threats against activists and civil society actors.

Strategically, the group works to counter the misinformation that accompanied the campaign by publishing accurate information

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30 Interview with lawyer Ayachi Hammami, 20 December 2024.

31 Interview with lawyer Baha Barhoumi, 24 December 2024.

about the circumstances of arrests, and by widening the solidarity base, including mobilizing artists. The group also invested in African solidarity, reflected in letters from African organizations and networks addressed to Tunisian diplomatic missions. In addition, the group turned toward African human rights mechanisms, including the African Special Rapporteur on Migrants, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons; the African Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders; and the African Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women. The group also liaises with associations to secure legal assistance.

The group faces challenges, including mobilizing as many families of the accused as possible. The family of Cherifa Riahi plays an important role in this regard, particularly through the actions it organized in the past period. It is expected that, as trials begin, families will draw closer and more consistently to the group's work<sup>32</sup>. Importantly, files have not seen new developments due to repeated procedural prolongation. Decisions concerning police custody and detention have continued from May 2024 until now, alongside the issuance of expert reports in some files.

In April, the authorities also continued deportation operations of dozens of migrants from sub-Saharan African countries, according to statements by the spokesperson of the National Guard, alongside dismantling and removing their camps in El Amra and Jebiniana (Sfax Governorate)<sup>33</sup>.

In this context, the authorities continue to rely on a discourse grounded in conspiracy narratives and alleged foreign influence, repeatedly searching for an "internal enemy" to mobilize public opinion and justify repressive policies. This discourse is accompanied by an undeclared but systematic restriction campaign, including

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32 Interview with the official spokesperson of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES), Mr. Romdhane Ben Amor, 22 May 2025.

33 Alhurra, 2025, "About 20,000 people": Tunisia continues dismantling "migrant camps" in Sfax, 6 April, last accessed: 22 May 2025.

<https://www.alhurra.com/tunisia/2025/04/06/%D8%AA%D8%B6%D9%85-%D9%86%D8%AD%D9%88-20-%D8%A3%D9%84%D9%81-%D8%B4%D8%AE%D8%B5-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3-%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%84-%D8%AA%D9%81%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%83-%D9%85%D8%AE%D9%8A%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B5%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%B3>

financial, administrative, and fiscal measures aimed at limiting the ability of independent associations and organizations to operate, in an apparent effort to weaken their role in public life. The report further notes that whenever the authorities face challenges or limitations in public legitimacy or influence, they tend to generate new crises and new enemies to divert attention—particularly amid speculation around a potential third presidential term, a scenario that would require silencing political and civic voices, suggesting that a new cycle of repression may be initiated.

The report also argues that authorities are likely to pursue the maximum penalties in cases related to civil society work and in files concerning associations targeted by the ruling power, in order to substantiate the official narrative. It cites, among other examples, the case concerning Tunisia *Terre d’Asile*: after an investigating judge dropped the felony charges by reclassifying the case as a misdemeanor, the Public Prosecution appealed the decision and the case later returned to felony status with an additional charge under Article 96 of the Penal Code—an indication, in the report’s view, that maintaining felony classification serves to validate the President’s discourse.



# 1. Targeting Organizations

## Working on Migration Issues

Since May 2024, a clear and organized wave aimed at criminalizing and prosecuting associative work has emerged. Numerous civil society organizations, as well as their staff and activists, have been subjected to pressure and legal action, closely linked to official discourse directly targeting them.





14 May, in relation to charges including illicit enrichment and money laundering.

On 16 May 2024, she appeared before the Public Prosecutor and the investigating judge at the Tunis 1 Court of First Instance. She was released, while the investigation phase continued, including referral for expert examination<sup>40</sup>.

On the same day, the association's president was interrogated on the same charges, after which the investigating judge issued a committal warrant ordering her detention<sup>41</sup>. The investigation continued, and the defendants were heard on 22 May 2024 before the investigating judge on allegations including illicit enrichment, money laundering, forming an association, and failure to keep legally compliant accounts.<sup>42</sup>

They were summoned again on 26 June 2024 and informed that a forensic accountant had been appointed to review the association's financial files, with proceedings continuing until 7 November 2024. On that date, Saadia Mosbah was transferred from prison to the Tunis Court of First Instance No.1.

She was not brought before the judge and remained in the holding room until she was returned to prison. She was informed that her detention had been extended by four additional months, after she had already spent six months in detention<sup>43</sup>.

On 13 March 2025, the expert submitted the report to the investigating judge, who extended Saadia Mosbah's<sup>44</sup> detention for another four

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40 Interview with lawyer Anas Kaddoussi, 20 December 2024.

41 IFM, 2024, "Activist Saadia Mosbah Appears Today Before the Investigating Judge," 22 May 2024, last accessed 24 January 2025.

<https://www.ifm.tn/ar/article/category/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%B7%D8%A9-%D8%B3%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%AB%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%85-%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%82/81441/%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%8A>

42 IFM, 2024, "Activist Saadia Mosbah Appears Today Before the Investigating Judge," 22 May 2024, last accessed 24 January 2025.

<https://www.ifm.tn/ar/article/category/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%B7%D8%A9-%D8%B3%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%AB%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%85-%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%82/81441/%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%8A>

43 Phone interview with Zied Rouin, Project Manager of Mnemty Association, 23 January 2025.

44 Phone interview with Zied Rouin, Project Manager of Mnemty Association, 16 May 2025.

months on the same day<sup>45</sup>.

The defendants were summoned on 13, 14, and 16 May 2025 to review the expert report. They objected to its findings, and their lawyers submitted responses. The report was not presented to Ghofrane Binous due to her absence, as review of the file is considered a personal procedure that cannot be conducted in the absence of the concerned person<sup>46</sup>.

On Friday, 4 July 2025, the investigating judge closed the investigation, dropping the charges related to money laundering and forming an association against Saadia Mosbah, leaving only allegations of illicit enrichment and failure to keep accounts. All charges against the other defendants from the association were also dropped. The Public Prosecutor appealed the decision to close the investigation. However, on 15 July 2025, the Indictment Chamber issued a decision returning the case to the investigation stage with the same charges<sup>47</sup>.

On 22 December 2025, the first hearing in the case against the Mnemty Association was held before Criminal Chamber No. 44 of the Tunis Court of First Instance. The court, however, postponed consideration of the case until 26 February 2026, pending a ruling by the Court of Cassation on the appeal lodged by the defence against the decision of the Indictment Chamber. The court also rejected the request for the release of Saadia Mosbah. On 19 March 2026, she was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment and fined 100,000 Tunisian dinars<sup>48</sup>.

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45 Al-Masdar, 2025, "Breaking: This Is the Decision Taken Against Saadia Mosbah," 13 March 2025, last accessed 16 May 2025.

<https://ar.webmanagercenter.com/2025/03/13/397749/%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%84-%D9%87%D8%B0%D8%A7-%D9%85%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%B1%D9%91%D8%B1-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AD%D9%82-%D8%B3%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%91%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AD/>

46 Phone interview with lawyer Anas Kaddoussi, 18 May 2025.

47 Phone interview with Zied Rouin, Project Manager of Mnemty Association, 8 July 2025.

48 Telephone interview with Ms. Hela Ben Salem, lawyer representing the Association, conducted on 23 December 2025.

## Suspension of Mnementy Association's Activities

On 9 October 2025, Mnementy Association received a formal notification of an ex parte court order (order on petition) providing for the suspension of its activities for one month. The notice was delivered to the home of its president, Saadia Mosbah, who has been detained since May 2024.

The association was unable to challenge the suspension order, as most official documents and invoices, including the association's official stamp, had been seized by judicial authorities in connection with the criminal case brought against its president. Moreover, the association had not received any prior warning or notification requesting the submission of documents or reports, in violation of the procedures established under Decree-Law No. 88<sup>49</sup>.

The Mnementy Association subsequently received a summons to appear before the Tunis Court of First Instance on 11 May 2026 in proceedings seeking its dissolution, following an application filed by the State Litigation Department<sup>50</sup>.

## Tunisian Council for Refugees

On 3 May 2024, security forces raided the offices of the Tunisian Council for Refugees (CTR) in Tunis and arrested its Executive Director, Mustapha Djemali. On 4 May 2024, security forces also arrested the CTR's project manager, Abdelrazak Krimi, and questioned him regarding the organization's activities and sources of funding.

On 7 May 2024, the investigating judge at the Court of First Instance of Tunis issued committal warrants ordering the detention of both defendants, bringing charges related to forming an association or organization for the purpose of guiding, planning, facilitating, assisting, mediating, or organizing, by any means, even without financial gain, the entry of persons into Tunisian territory, and providing

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Zied Rouin, Project Manager at the Mnementy Association, conducted on 9 November 2025.

<sup>50</sup> Statement by the Campaign Against the Criminalization of Civil Society Work, 19 April 2026.

accommodation for them<sup>51</sup>. These charges were brought in connection with the organization’s publication of a call for tenders to provide accommodation for vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers, in compliance with applicable legal requirements.

Defense lawyers submitted multiple requests for provisional release on behalf of Mustapha Djemali within the legally prescribed deadlines, all of which were rejected. The first request was submitted on 21 May 2024 before the investigating judge and was rejected without justification. The subsequent appeal lodged by the defense was also dismissed. In August 2024, another release request was submitted to the same investigating judge, but it was again rejected without any clear legal reasoning<sup>52</sup>.

In September 2024, the defense submitted another release request to the Indictment Chamber, supported by medical documentation attesting to Mr. Djemali’s specific health condition and advanced age, as well as diplomatic efforts by the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations urging Tunisian authorities to release him, with a proposal to place him under house arrest as an alternative to detention.

Despite this, the request was also rejected, as was another release request submitted by Djemali’s lawyers in October 2024, again without clear justification<sup>53</sup>.

In February 2025, the judge renewed the pretrial detention of both the CTR Project Manager, Abdelrazak Krimi, and the Council’s Executive Director, Mustapha Djemali<sup>54</sup>.

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51 Amnesty International, 2025, “Tunisia: Two Human Rights Defenders Arbitrarily Detained,” 5 May 2025, last accessed 22 May 2025. <https://www.amnesty.org/ar/mde30-9312-2025-ar/>

52 Support Committee for Mustapha Djemali, 2025, “Report on the Situation of Mustapha Djemali,” pp. 1–2, 11 May 2025.

53 Support Committee for Mustapha Djemali, 2025, “Report on the Situation of Mustapha Djemali,” pp. 3–11, 11 May 2025.

54 Amnesty International, 2025, “Tunisia: Two Human Rights Defenders Arbitrarily Detained,” 5 May 2025, last accessed 22 May 2025. <https://www.amnesty.org/ar/mde30-9312-2025-ar>

On 11 March 2025, a request for release accompanied by full withdrawal of charges was submitted, based on the final expert report issued on 4 March 2025<sup>55</sup>, which found no evidence of criminal wrongdoing. Nevertheless, the request was rejected without justification.

On 25 March 2025, the defendants appeared before the investigating judge starting at 10:00 a.m., but the hearing was extremely brief, with each defendant being heard for only two or three minutes, despite the seriousness 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, and Tunisia’s history and laws will pay the price for this<sup>56</sup>.”

This occurred despite the expert report refuting the charges and despite the financial and administrative documents submitted. It should be noted that the Tunisian Council for Refugees does not make decisions regarding the registration of refugees and asylum seekers in Tunisia; such procedures fall under the exclusive competence of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Justice.

The confrontation hearing between Mustapha Djemali and Abdelrazak Krimi scheduled for 25 March 2025 was postponed to 2 April 2025. Since that date, only former accountants of the organization and the financial director were heard, and sworn statements were requested to confirm the absence of any personal or professional relationship between former employees and the court-appointed financial expert responsible for auditing the organization’s accounts.

On 3 April 2025, Mustapha Djemali and Abdelrazak Krimi appeared before the investigating judge without their lawyers having been notified in advance.

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55 Phone interview with Yosra Djemali, daughter of Mustapha Djemali, 22 May 2025.

56 Support Committee for Mustapha Djemali, 2025, “Report on the Situation of Mustapha Djemali,” pp. 6, 11 May 2025.

On 6 May 2025, the investigating judge decided to close the investigation. Djemali was informed of the closure of the investigation while in prison. The decision was appealed, and the file was referred again to the Indictment Chamber for reconsideration of the investigation and its closure<sup>57</sup>.

It is important to note that Mustapha Djemali suffers from Horton's disease, also known as temporal arteritis. His family reports that he did not receive appropriate treatment for a significant period, despite his condition requiring continuous medical care. They also report that the prison doctor did not administer medication according to prescribed dosages, leading to a noticeable deterioration in his health. In addition, he was not allowed to repair his broken eyeglasses, and he was prevented from accessing certain newspapers, such as *Le Quotidien*, without any clear explanation, the same restrictions reportedly affecting other detainees as well, especially those imprisoned in political cases or due to their human rights work<sup>58</sup>.

After 17 months of detention of both Abdelrazak Krimi and Mustapha Djemali, the first trial hearing was finally held on 16 October 2025<sup>59</sup> before the Court of First Instance of Tunis. The hearing was postponed to 24 November 2025<sup>60</sup>.

On the evening of 25 November 2025, Mostafa Djemali, President of the Tunisian Council for Refugees, and Abdelrazek Krimi, the Association's Project Director, were released following a judgment issued by the Criminal Chamber of the Tunis Court of First Instance

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57 Phone interview with Yosra Djemali, daughter of Mustapha Djemali, 22 May 2025.

58 Support Committee for Mustapha Djemali, 2025, "Report on the Situation of Mustapha Djemali", 11 May 2025

59 On the evening of Monday, 25 November 2025, both Mustapha Djemali, President of the Tunisian Council for Refugees, and Abdelrazak Krimi, the association's Project Manager, were released. This followed a ruling by the Criminal Chamber of the Tunis Court of First Instance sentencing them to two years' imprisonment with suspended execution for the remaining term of the custodial sentence, after deducting the period already spent in detention.

60 Interview with Amina Djemali, daughter of victim Mustapha Djemali, 20 October 2025.

sentencing them to two years' imprisonment. Their release came after the court ordered the suspension of the execution of the remaining portion of the sentence, taking into account the period they had already spent in detention.<sup>61</sup>

## Terre d'Asile Tunisie

In the context of the broader campaign targeting civil society organizations and the wave of judicial proceedings against human rights defenders, particularly those working on migration issues, the association Terre d'Asile Tunisie became the subject of several judicial investigations. These investigations targeted the association's legal representative as well as six former and current employees. The case led to the arrest of Cherifa Riahi, Iyadh Bousselmi, and Mohamed Joou, in addition to 17 former officials and employees of the Municipality of Sousse<sup>62</sup>, including the former mayor of Sousse<sup>63</sup>, Mohamed Ikbek Khaled, and his former deputy, Imen El Ouardani, both of whom are currently detained. The municipality's former secretary general was also arrested, but was released after one week<sup>64</sup>.

On 7 May 2024, Cherifa Riahi, president of Terre d'Asile Tunisie, was arrested at her home in L'aouina area of Tunis and taken to the Central Brigade for Financial Crimes of the National Guard. On the same day, the association's financial officer, Mohamed Joou, was also arrested<sup>65</sup>.

Cherifa Riahi was interrogated until 2:00 a.m. on 8 May 2024<sup>66</sup>, after which she was placed in police custody for five days and transferred to

61 Mosaïque FM, "Release of Mustapha Djemali and Abdelrazak Krimi," 24 November 2025, last accessed 2 February 2026.

<https://www.mosaicqefm.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>

62 Amnesty International, 2025, Urgent Action: Human Rights Defenders Arbitrarily Detained, 20 May 2025, last accessed 7 July 2025.

<https://www.amnesty.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2025/05/MDE3093932025ARABIC.pdf>

63 Tunisian Solidarity, 2025, Imen El Ouardani, 11 January 2025, last accessed 23 May 2025.

<https://tunisiansolidarity.org/ar/imen-werdani/>

64 Phone interview with Leila Riahi, sister of Cherifa Riahi, 21 May 2025.

65 Tunisian Solidarity, 2025, Mohamed Joou, 9 January 2025, last accessed 20 May 2025.

<https://tunisiansolidarity.org/ar/mohamed-jouu/>

66 Phone interview with Cherifa Riahi's mother, 23 January 2025.

the Bouchoucha detention center. On 8 May 2024, Iyadh Bousselmi, director of Terre d'Asile Tunisie, was also arrested<sup>67</sup>.

On 12 May 2024, her detention was extended for an additional five days<sup>68</sup>. She remained under continuous interrogation for nearly two weeks at the Financial Judicial Pole on Mohamed V Avenue<sup>69</sup>.

On 16 May 2024, the investigating judge ordered that the defendants be placed in pretrial detention on charges including money laundering, fraud, assault against persons and property, and financial support to irregular migrants, under Articles 38 to 43 of Law No. 40 of 1975 on Passports and Travel Documents, as well as abuse of public office “for personal or third-party benefit” under Article 96 of the Penal Code<sup>70</sup>. Both Mohamed Joou and Iyadh Bousselmi were transferred to Mornaguia Prison<sup>71</sup>.

On 17 May 2024, Cherifa Riahi was taken to the Financial Judicial Circuit. She arrived at 9:00 a.m. and was scheduled to be heard by the investigating judge, but remained waiting for approximately twelve and a half hours before being allowed to enter at around 11:30 p.m. Her lawyer then requested that she not be questioned due to the extreme exhaustion she had suffered during the prolonged wait.<sup>72</sup> An order for her imprisonment was subsequently issued, and she was transferred to the Manouba Women’s Prison, while her interrogation was postponed to 21 May 2024<sup>73</sup>. On 18 May 2024, the investigating

67 Tunisian Solidarity, 2025, Iyadh Bousselmi, 9 January 2025, last accessed 20 May 2025.

<https://tunisiannessolidarity.org/ar/mohamed-jouu/>

68 Friends and Family of Cherifa Riahi, Report on the Cherifa Riahi Case (Tunisia Terre d'Asile) Submitted to OHCHR.

69 Phone interview with Cherifa Riahi’s mother, 23 January 2025.

70 Amnesty International, 2025, Urgent Action: Human Rights Defenders Arbitrarily Detained, 20 May 2025, last accessed 7 July 2025.

<https://www.amnesty.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2025/05/MDE3093932025ARABIC.pdf>

71 Interview with Romdhane Ben Amor, spokesperson of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES), 22 May 2025.

72 Friends and Family of Cherifa Riahi, Report on the Cherifa Riahi Case (Tunisia Terre d'Asile) Submitted to OHCHR.

73 Tunis Afrique Presse (Kapitalis), 2024, “Lawyer Ben Ghazi on the Imprisonment of Cherifa Riahi: A Lesson in Humanity” (video), 17 May 2024, last accessed 25 January 2025.

<https://kapitalis.com/anbaa-tounes/2024/05/17/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B0-%D8%A8%D9%86-%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%B2%D9%8A-%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A5%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B9->

judge ordered the release of one of the defendants<sup>74</sup>.

On 21 May 2024, Cherifa Riahi appeared for her first and only interrogation before the investigating judge at the Financial Judicial Circuit. She was questioned for approximately three hours in the presence of her lawyer, after which she was returned to prison on charges including money laundering, conspiracy to change the nature of the regime, providing assistance in transportation and shelter to irregular migrants, and document forgery.<sup>75</sup>

On 12 June 2024, three experts were appointed to examine the association's files<sup>76</sup>, and Cherifa Riahi's pretrial detention was extended by four additional months. On 8 January 2025, the expert submitted a report on the money laundering charges, concluding that no violations had occurred<sup>77</sup>.

On 28 January 2025, the investigating judge closed the investigation and referred the case to trial against four defendants from Terre d'Asile Tunisie, namely Cherifa Riahi, Iyadh Bousselmi, Mohamed Joou, and a fourth employee<sup>78</sup>, after dropping the main felony charges related to money laundering and abuse of public office<sup>79</sup> under Article 96 of the Penal Code.

However, following the Public Prosecutor's appeal of the decision to close the investigation, the Indictment Chamber ruled on 26 February

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<https://www.amnesty.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2025/05/MDE3093932025ARABIC.pdf>

74 Friends and Family of Cherifa Riahi, Report on the Cherifa Riahi Case (Tunisia Terre d'Asile) Submitted to OHCHR.

75 Friends and Family of Cherifa Riahi, Report on the Cherifa Riahi Case (Tunisia Terre d'Asile) Submitted to OHCHR.

76 Friends and Family of Cherifa Riahi, Report on the Cherifa Riahi Case (Tunisia Terre d'Asile) Submitted to OHCHR.

77 Amnesty International, 2025, Urgent Action: Human Rights Defenders Arbitrarily Detained, 20 May 2025, last accessed 7 July 2025.

<https://www.amnesty.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2025/05/MDE3093932025ARABIC.pdf>

78 Amnesty International, 2025, Urgent Action: Human Rights Defenders Arbitrarily Detained, 20 May 2025, last accessed 7 July 2025.

<https://www.amnesty.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2025/05/MDE3093932025ARABIC.pdf>

79 Amnesty International, 2025, Urgent Action: Human Rights Defenders Arbitrarily Detained, 20 May 2025, last accessed 7 July 2025.

<https://www.amnesty.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2025/05/MDE3093932025ARABIC.pdf>

2025 to prosecute six employees of Terre d'Asile Tunisie, including Cherifa Riahi, Iyadh Bousselmi, and Mohamed Joou, on charges of forming an association and harboring persons who entered or exited Tunisian territory irregularly, under Articles 39 and 41 of Law No. 40 of 1975, and intentionally assisting a foreigner, directly or indirectly, in entering, exiting, moving within, or residing illegally in Tunisia, under Article 25 of Law No. 7 of 1968 on the Status of Foreigners, as well as abuse of public office. The Indictment Chamber also decided to prosecute Mohamed Joou for fabricating certificates issued in the name of a public official, including certificates of good conduct or need, for the purpose of obtaining employment, loans, or assistance, under Article 199 of the Penal Code, without substantiated evidence<sup>80</sup>. The defendants appealed the decision of the Indictment Chamber.

Cherifa Riahi's family requested that authorities allow her to meet her infant daughter during direct visits without physical barriers during family visiting hours. However, authorities imposed an ultimatum: either the baby would remain with her mother inside the prison, or visits would take place through non-contact visits, thereby depriving the infant of direct physical contact with her mother until late January<sup>81</sup>.

During the ten months of her detention, Cherifa was able to see her daughter only five times through non-contact visits, via a window and telephone, for approximately ten minutes each, and only twice in direct visits, each lasting twenty minutes after being granted access to a private room.

Beyond the serious violations of fair trial guarantees throughout the judicial process, the imprisonment of Cherifa Riahi constituted a profound humanitarian failure, as the Tunisian state detained a mother and deprived her of her newborn child<sup>82</sup>. In a letter written

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80 Amnesty International, 2025, Urgent Action: Human Rights Defenders Arbitrarily Detained, 20 May 2025, last accessed 7 July 2025.

<https://www.amnesty.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2025/05/MDE3093932025ARABIC.pdf>

81 Telephone call with Cherifa Riahi's mother, 23 January 2025.

82 Friends and Family of Cherifa Riahi, Report on the Cherifa Riahi Case (Tunisia Terre d'Asile) Submitted to OHCHR.

from prison on 17 March 2025, she urged the judicial authorities to expedite cassation proceedings in order to schedule a hearing as soon as possible, especially after the money laundering charges had been dropped. She wrote: “I have never regretted my work in the humanitarian field. It is unjust to convict people for their commitment to humanitarian action.”

She continued: “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 member.”

She also addressed the denial of direct visits with her children, stating: “My bond with my daughter and my ability to breastfeed her were made conditional on her staying with me in prison, whereas I asked for a very simple solution: that I be allowed to breastfeed her daily in a designated room and then return her to my mother.”

She added: “Procedures for direct visits with my children were extremely slow and complicated, to the point that I can say they resemble a form of torture for imprisoned women, especially those prosecuted under the 2015 anti terrorism and anti money laundering law.”

She further expressed astonishment at her continued detention despite being cleared of money laundering charges, saying: “The judge dropped the money laundering charges, yet I am still in prison, paying the price for my commitment and humanitarian work<sup>83</sup>.”

Following the cassation appeal of the Indictment Chamber’s decision, and after the money laundering charges were dropped, Cherifa Riahi was no longer classified under restrictions prohibiting direct visits, which entitled her to direct contact visits with her children every fifteen days<sup>84</sup>.

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83 Kashf, 2025. Cherifa Riahi from her detention cell: “My imprisonment was not the worst experience; the worst was being deprived of my children”, 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/>

On 8 October 2025, the Court of Cassation rejected the defense's appeals against the Indictment Chamber's decision and upheld the prosecution order.<sup>8586</sup>

On 15 December 2025, the first hearing in the case was held before the Criminal Chamber specializing in financial corruption cases at the Tunis Court of First Instance. The court, however, postponed the hearing until 5 January 2026 and rejected all requests for the release of the detained defendants<sup>87</sup>.

At the hearing held on 5 January 2026, the court sentenced Cherifa Riahi, Mohamed Jouou, Iyadh Bousselmi, Mohamed Ikbek Khaled, and Imen El Ouardani to two years' imprisonment, suspended. The court also dismissed the charges against all other defendants who had been referred to trial while at liberty<sup>88</sup>.

## Tunisian Association of Democratic Women – ATFD Sfax

On 13 May 2024, the late feminist activist and professor Naama Nsiri<sup>89</sup>, president of the Sfax branch of the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD), was summoned for questioning in connection with a

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85 Phone interview with lawyer Hayet El Jazaar, 8 October 2025.

86 Court ruling of the Tunis Court of First Instance, 6 January 2026, sentencing Cherifa Riahi, Iyadh Bousselmi, Mohamed Ikbek Khaled, and Imen El Ouardani to two years' imprisonment with suspended execution, and dismissing charges against defendants released pending trial.

87 Bab Net, "Postponement of the Trial of Defendants in the Tunisia Land of Asylum Association Case and Rejection of All Release Requests," 15 December 2025, accessed on 11 February 2026. <https://www.babnet.net/cadredetail-320283.asp>

88 France 24, "Tunisia: Cherifa Riahi and Activists from the 'Terre d'Asile Tunisie' Organization Released After 20 Months in Detention," 15 January 2026, accessed on 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%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>

89 Position paper on CSOs Leaders in prison- limited edition.

migration-related case. Her hearing was postponed to 21 May 2024<sup>90</sup>.

In the early hours of Tuesday, 21 May 2024, feminist activist Naama Nsiri passed away aboard a return flight from Côte d'Ivoire, after her health deteriorated while she was attending an event related to the International Women's March<sup>91</sup>.

## Tunisian Association for Justice and Equality (DAMJ)

Mira Ben Salah, a queer feminist activist, has been subjected to repeated forms of harassment and pressure due to her human rights advocacy and her work with the Tunisian Association for Justice and Equality (DAMJ) in the governorate of Sfax.

On 13 May 2024, Mira Ben Salah was summoned in her capacity as a member of DAMJ to the Sfax office for questioning at the Bab Bhar Judicial Police Station. She had previously filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor against the police station and against an officer who is also employed there, after both allegedly threatened her with death following the provision of association services to the officer's son<sup>92</sup>.

In the same month, she received another summons from the National Guard post in El Hajeb, concerning the same case. During that interrogation, she was questioned about accusations including

90 Legal Agenda, 2024, Detainees, Threatened, and Imprisoned: Women Against the Political Trajectory, 10 June. Last accessed: 5 July 2025.

<https://legal-agenda.com/%D9%85%D9%88%D9%82%D9%88%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%8C-%D9%85%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%91%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%8C-%D8%B3%D8%AC%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%B6%D8%AF%D9%91-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85/#:~:text=%D8%A3%D8%AB%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AA%20%D9%87%D8%B0%D9%87%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%AA%20%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AA%20%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B9%D8%A9,%D8%AA%D9%85%D9%88%D9%8A%D9%84%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%B7%D8%A9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA%20%D9%8A%D9%82%D9%85%D9%86%20%D8%A8%D9%87%D8%A7..>

91 Mosaique FM, 2024. Death of feminist activist Naama Nsiri aboard a flight arriving from Abidjan, 21 May. Last accessed: 5 July 2025.

<https://www.mosaiquefm.net/ar/%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3-%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9/1273439/%D9%88%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B6%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%86%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B5%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%86-%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%85%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%86>

92 Phone call with Mira Ben Salah, queer feminist activist, 21 May 2025.

“promoting homosexuality” and “facilitating settlement.” An additional complaint accused her of “transporting persons for the purpose of changing their gender.” This complaint was accompanied by a petition submitted by the head of the Bab Bhar police station, referring to the association’s support provided in the same previously mentioned case.

Since receiving her first summons, Mira Ben Salah has faced continued harassment by the authorities. Security forces contacted her father, considering him to be the accused rather than her. Mira submitted legal and financial documentation related to the association’s activities at the Sfax office, along with her employment contracts with the organization. She was subsequently summoned for interrogation at the El Hajeb National Guard post on four additional occasions until the investigation was formally closed. The file was later referred for judicial prosecution against Mira, and she is currently awaiting the scheduling of court hearings in three separate cases, after each charge was split into a distinct legal file.

In addition to judicial harassment, the victim has also been subjected to multiple forms of intimidation linked to her activism, including repeated raids on her home by security forces. She confirmed that she filed several complaints regarding these incidents, but they were not handled seriously—particularly since the alleged perpetrators were themselves police officers<sup>93</sup>.

Furthermore, another activist from the association was summoned by the Central Brigade for Financial and Economic Investigations of the National Guard in Laouina to appear at its headquarters on Tuesday, 14 May 2024<sup>94</sup>. She was interrogated without being informed of the reason for the summons. It later became clear that the questioning related to her previous work with another organization active in

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93 Phone interview with queer feminist activist Mira Ben Salah, 21 May 2025.

94 Al-Horria, 2024. “Investigations Target the Head of DAMJ Association Specializing in Defending LGBTQ+ Communities,” 13 May. Last accessed: 5 July 2025.

<https://alhorria.com/2024/05/13/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%AA%D8%B7%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%B1%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%A9-%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AF%D9%85%D9%80%D9%80%D8%AC-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AE/>

migrant rights. She was interrogated from 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. After the interrogation, the Public Prosecutor authorized that she remain at liberty pending investigation<sup>95</sup>.

## Association “Ifriqiya”

The month of May 2024 witnessed an escalation in incitement against migrants from sub-Saharan African countries, particularly in light of the growing crisis in the governorate of Sfax and the increasing repression targeting migrants and human rights organizations.

On 10 May 2024, a former mayor and a municipal employee were placed in custody after the Public Prosecutor charged them with human trafficking and money laundering by forming a criminal conspiracy and abusing the privileges of public office. On the same day, Yassine Baklouti, Executive Director and former President of the Association Ifriqiya, received a phone call summoning him to appear before the Sfax police district. Upon his arrival, he was questioned about the association’s sources of funding, activities, and partners. He was then released pending further investigation and instructed to return the following day to continue the inquiry.

On 11 May 2024, investigations continued with Yassine as the representative of Ifriqiya Association. He stated that he submitted all financial documentation and files related to the association’s activities. After being questioned, he was again released, but summoned to appear once more on 13 May 2024 before the Sub-Directorate for Economic and Financial Investigations of the Judicial Police.

On 12 May 2024, an individual referred to as “Khaled”<sup>96</sup> received a phone summons<sup>97</sup> at 9:00 a.m., along with two other individuals from another association, to appear before the same investigative unit.

In February 2026, the National Brigade for the Investigation of Complex Financial Crimes in Tunis summoned the President of the Afrique Association for questioning on suspicion of money laundering.

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95 Phone interview with the activist, 8 January 2025.

96 Name withheld to protect the victim of prosecution

97 Phone interview with “Khaled,” 22 January 2025.

The questioning focused primarily on the Association's sources of funding, its activities, partners, and beneficiaries. In April 2026, experts who had previously worked with the Association were also summoned for questioning<sup>98</sup>.

Representatives of other civil society organizations were also summoned, particularly those who had participated in drafting a guide produced in partnership with the Municipality of Sfax, which contained guidance for migrants and contact details of governmental and non-governmental institutions able to provide assistance and address their needs.

On 13 May 2024, the Executive Director and former President of Association Ifriqiya, together with a representative of another association, were brought before the Economic Investigations Unit in El Gorjani (Tunis). According to his testimony, the questions focused mainly on financial matters, activities, and partnerships of the association. Subsequently, a confrontation was organized with the former mayor of Sfax and municipal employees regarding the migrant assistance guide and the orientation office established by the Municipality of Sfax. Following this, Yassine Baklouti and another representative of a different association were placed in custody.

In the same context, "Khaled" was interrogated for approximately three and a half hours, according to his account, by multiple investigators who successively handled the file. Another representative from a different association and six additional individuals were also questioned, including the former First Delegate (Deputy Governor), the former Governor of Sfax, and a physician. All were referred to appear before the Sfax Court of First Instance on Tuesday, 14 May 2024.

On that day, Yassine Baklouti from the Ifriqiya Association and the representative of the other association were released, while investigations continued. Both were subjected to a travel ban. The

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98 Telephone interview with Yassine Baklouti, Executive Director of the Ifriqiya Association, conducted on 10 May 2026.

appearance of “Khaled” and the other association representative before the investigating judge was postponed to 10 July 2024.<sup>99</sup>

After hearing them, the investigating judge at the Sfax Court of First Instance decided to keep them at liberty pending the completion of the investigation<sup>100</sup>.

During the same month, several other organizations were subjected to harassment and investigations. On 8 May 2024, the offices of “Mixed Migration Center in North Africa” were searched. In the same period, a representative of the ,the Tunisian Association Against Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS was summoned for questioning in connection with the same context, and Doctors of the World offices in Tunis also experienced pressure and obstruction<sup>101</sup>.

Harassment of organizations working on the defense of the rights of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa continued and resurfaced again starting from 12 November 2024, when new legal proceedings were recorded against civil society organizations operating in this field.

## “Children of the Moon” Association

On 12 November 2024, Mr. Abdallah Saïd, President of the Association Children of the Moon, as well as the association’s Secretary General and Treasurer, were summoned by phone for questioning. On the same day, they were placed in custody by the National Unit for Investigating Complex Crimes in El Gorjani (Tunis), without clear charges being formally presented, other than allegations related to the association’s work providing support to refugee and migrant children<sup>102</sup>.

In addition, bank employees were also placed in custody. After the

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99 Phone call with a member of the association, 3 January 2025.

100 Phone call with “Khaled” (pseudonym), 22 January 2025.

101 Position paper on CSOs Leaders in prison- limited edition.

102 Legal Agenda, 2024. Arrest of Dr. Abdallah Saïd: Authorities “Reward” Humanitarian Work with Prison, 4 December 2024. Last accessed: 25 January 2025.

<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/>

completion of the investigation, the case file was referred to the Public Prosecutor at the Medenine Court of First Instance, who in turn claimed the existence of terrorism-related suspicions<sup>103</sup> and referred the file to the Counter-Terrorism Judicial Pole on 17 November 2024<sup>104</sup>.

Abdallah Saïd was thus referred to the Counter-Terrorism Pole, which on 26 November 2024 decided to return the “Children of the Moon” case to the Public Prosecutor at the Medenine Court of First Instance, on the grounds that no terrorist suspicion was established in the file. The Public Prosecutor authorized the opening of a judicial investigation before the Medenine Court of First Instance on charges of money laundering, embezzlement of funds, and endangering external state security. A committal warrant was issued against the president of the “Children of the Moon” Association, Abdallah Saïd, while the other defendants from the association were kept at liberty<sup>105</sup>, including the Secretary General and the Treasurer, who were released. During the same period, the association’s Executive Director was also questioned and remains at liberty<sup>106</sup>. All defendants are still awaiting the results of the court-appointed expert assessment of the case, and no significant developments have occurred to date.

From prison, Abdallah Saïd has protested the conditions of detention and the procedural delays in his case. He has also not received his retirement pension, which has left his family in a precarious financial situation, particularly in light of his continued detention. His family has been able to visit him recently.

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103 Phone call with Mr. Romdhane Ben Amor, official spokesperson of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES), 3 January 2025.

104 Al Hurra, 2024, “The ‘Children of the Moon and Terrorism’ Case: A Tunisian Court Issues a New Decision,” 26 November. Last accessed: 25 January 2025.

<https://www.alhurra.com/tunisia/2024/11/26/%D9%82%D8%B6%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D8%B7%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%85%D8%B1-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B1%D9%87%D8-%A7%D8%A8-%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%B0-%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A7>

105 Tunis Telegraph (2024). Decision of the Counter-Terrorism Judicial Pole Concerning the President of the Children of the Moon Association. 29 November. 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/>

106 Phone call with the official spokesperson of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES), Mr. Romdhane Ben Amor, on 3 January 2025.

It should also be noted that the association's premises were searched and that documents were seized at the time of Abdallah Saïd's arrest, which may negatively affect the association's ability to respond to the expert findings once they are issued. In addition, the association faces the risk of eviction from its premises, which it shares with a coalition of several associations. The premises had served as a space for training activities, language learning, and support for project development.<sup>107</sup> On 3 February 2026, Abdallah Saïd appeared before the Medenine Court of First Instance. The court decided to adjourn the proceedings until the hearing scheduled for 21 April 2026 and rejected his request for release<sup>108</sup>.

On 21 April 2026, the Medenine Court of First Instance sentenced Abdallah Saïd to one year's imprisonment on charges of breach of trust under Article 297 of the Penal Code, relying on a financial report whose findings were challenged by the defence. The following day, the Public Prosecution appealed the judgment, resulting in Abdallah Saïd remaining in detention after his request for release was again denied.<sup>109</sup>

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107 Interview with Romdhane Ben Amor, official spokesperson of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES), 22 May 2025.

108 Ultra Tunisia, "Abdallah Saïd's Release Request Rejected and Trial Postponed Amid Broad Human Rights Solidarity," 5 February 2026, accessed on 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%AD%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%DB%8C%D8%B1>

109 Anbaa Touness, "Intersection: After More Than 500 Days in Detention, Mr. Saïd Sentenced to One Year in Prison and Release Request Rejected," 22 April 2026, accessed on 24 April 2026.

<https://kapitalis.com/anbaa-touness/2026/04/22/%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B7%D8%B9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%81-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B0-%D8%A7%D9%83%D8%AB%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%86-500-%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%8C-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85/>

## **Association for the Promotion of the Right to Difference (ADD)**

On 9 December 2024, Salwa Ghrissa, Executive Director of The Association for the Promotion of the Right to Difference (ADD), was summoned to appear before the Sub-Directorate for Economic and Financial Investigations in El Gorgani (Tunis) on the same day. She was questioned and then released, but was summoned again the following day, 10 December 2024, to complete the investigation procedures. She was subsequently placed in custody for 48 hours and transferred to the Bouchoucha detention center.

On 12 December 2024, Salwa Ghrissa was brought before the Public Prosecutor at the Bizerte Court of First Instance, who decided to refer her immediately to judicial investigation. A judicial inquiry was opened by the First Investigating Judge of the First Office at the Bizerte Court of First Instance against Ghrissa and others named in the case, and any persons who may be identified through the investigation.

Following her interrogation, a detention warrant was issued against her, and she was transferred to the Manouba Women's Civil Prison, on charges of: "Money laundering, by committing intentional acts aimed, by any means whatsoever, at falsely justifying the illicit source of movable or immovable property or proceeds derived from such crimes, or at acquiring, possessing, using, depositing, concealing, disguising, managing, integrating, or retaining such assets, or attempting to do so, or participating in, inciting, facilitating, or assisting in their commission, by exploiting the facilities granted through their professional or social activities; Violations of foreign exchange regulations, including carrying out unauthorized foreign exchange operations, engaging in transactions between residents and nonresidents in violation of legal procedures, and executing cross-border payments without authorization from the Central Bank of Tunisia; Information falsification (cyber-related offenses); and Violation of the Associations Law." These charges were brought pursuant to Articles 92, 93, and 94 of Organic Law No. 26 of 7 August 2015 on Combating Terrorism and Preventing Money Laundering,

as amended by Organic Law No. 9 of 23 January 2019; Articles 6, 7, 20, 21, and 35 of the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Code; Article 23 of Decree-Law No. 54 of 2022 on Combating Crimes Related to Information and Communication Systems; and Article 35 of Decree-Law No. 88 of 24 September 2011 on the Organization of Associations.

The case has remained pending, awaiting progress in the investigation, including technical commissions and the possible conduct of expert examinations<sup>110</sup>, with no significant developments, particularly after the transfer of the first investigating judge, which left the investigative office vacant without assigning the case file to another investigating judge<sup>111</sup>.

On 9 June 2025, Salwa Ghrissa was brought before a substitute investigating judge after being transferred from Manouba Women's Prison to the Bizerte Court of First Instance, where she was informed of an additional four-month extension of her pre-trial detention<sup>112</sup>.

On 7 October 2025, the investigating judge ordered a further four-month extension of Ghrissa's detention, bringing the total duration of her pre-trial detention to more than ten months, without substantive examination of her case<sup>113</sup>.

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110 Telephone interview with lawyer Anas Kadoussi on 25 December 2024.

111 Phone call with lawyer Anas Kadoussi on 18 May 2025.

112 Phone call with lawyer Anas Kadoussi on 10 June 2025.

113 Phone call with lawyer Anas Kadoussi on 7 December 2025.



## 2. Targeting Organizations **Working on Election Monitoring**

As the presidential elections scheduled for October 2024 approached, the features of a new phase of restrictions on public-interest actors began to emerge. In particular, there was an increasing tendency to target civil society organizations, whether through official discourse or through legal and administrative measures. This reflects a continued effort to restrict intermediary and active bodies during electoral periods, in a manner that serves the prevailing political context



## I Watch Organization

Since 2011, the I Watch organization (Ana Yaqedh) has monitored various electoral processes through teams of observers deployed across the entire country, covering parliamentary, presidential, and municipal elections. This work has been carried out within the framework of the “Coalition of Partners for Electoral Integrity,” which includes several civil society organizations from different regions of Tunisia, in addition to organizing training sessions for its observers. The organization also monitored all stages of the presidential election timelines following the revolution through nearly 1,000 observers, including monitoring campaign spending, tracking candidates’ field activities during campaigns, as well as observing polling stations through mobile observers who either move between centers or remain stationed throughout election day to document irregularities and later provide approximate results.

After 25 July 2021, the organization announced its boycott of parliamentary elections, the constitutional referendum, and elections of regional and district councils. However, it decided to participate in monitoring the 2024 presidential election, considering it the conclusion of the President’s current term. In this context, the organization submitted an application for accreditation to observe the elections to the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE). The Authority rejected the request on the grounds of “lack of neutrality,” as explained by the organization in its statement dated 20 August 2024. Based on this, I Watch sent a written request asking the Authority to provide justification for its decision<sup>114</sup>.

The ISIE subsequently filed a complaint against I Watch, and the organization was questioned on 21 August 2024 on the charge of publishing opinion-poll results during the electoral period<sup>115</sup>.

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114 I Watch Organization, 2024. Statement issued by I Watch, 21 August. Last accessed: 29 December 2025.

<https://iwatch.tn/ar/article/1044>

115 I Watch Organization, 2024. Statement issued by I Watch, 21 August. Last accessed: 29 December 2025.

<https://www.iwatch.tn/ar/article/1045>

In its statement, I Watch explained that the Authority had misclassified the published data by considering the results it announced to be opinion polls, whereas they were in fact the outputs of an objective and scientific report that does not rely in any way on citizens' opinions or surveys<sup>116</sup>.

In the same context, I Watch has been subject to several legal proceedings both before and after the election period. In May 2023, its representatives were summoned for questioning before the National Unit for the Investigation of Complex Financial Crimes of the National Guard, with no subsequent developments recorded in the case. The organization continues to be subject to several ongoing investigations; however, as of December 2025, no new developments or judicial rulings have been issued in its regard<sup>117</sup>.

Nevertheless, since 2011, the organization has regularly published multiple accountability reports, nearly during every presidential term. Among the most prominent were a report on the government of Youssef Chahed prior to the 2019 electoral process, followed by a report on "100 Days of Kais Saied's Rule," then "Two Years of Kais Saied's Rule under Exceptional Measures," and finally the "Saied-Meter" report, which presents an assessment of five years of governance and the extent to which promises were fulfilled. Accordingly, the organization stated:

"Since this is not the first time the organization has been questioned or investigated since 25 July 2021, it considers these arbitrary practices to be nothing more than desperate attempts to restrict the organization and its role in accountability<sup>118</sup>."

The ISIE also issued a statement explaining the reasons for not granting accreditation to certain associations, stating that: "The

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116 I Watch Organization, 2024. Statement issued by I Watch, 21 August. Last accessed: 29 December 2025. <https://www.iwatch.tn/ar/article/1045>

117 Interview with Siwar Gmati, official at the I Watch (Ana Yaqedh) Organization, dated 16 December 2025.

118 I Watch Organization, 2024. Statement issued by I Watch Organization, 21 August. Last accessed: 29 December 2025. <https://www.iwatch.tn/ar/article/1045>

Authority was informed by official bodies that some of these associations had received suspicious foreign funding in large financial amounts, originating from countries that do not maintain diplomatic relations with Tunisia. Accordingly, accreditation was denied, and the information received by the Authority was referred to the competent bodies to take the necessary measures<sup>119</sup>.”

In September 2024, I Watch received a summons from the Tax Evasion and Financial Investigations Unit, at the request of the judicial pole, in connection with a case about which the organization had not been informed and regarding which it had received no notifications as of December 2025<sup>120</sup>. In a related development, the authorities froze all funds in the organization’s official bank account without prior notice.<sup>121</sup>

In July 2025, the activities of I Watch were suspended. The organization filed an objection and submitted reports stating that the suspension was based on four funding entries that were considered unpublished, while the organization maintains that the Authority had classified them as published. Court hearings related to the suspension have been repeatedly postponed, and no substantive developments have occurred to date. At the same time, the organization is also facing a dissolution case, which remains ongoing within the same judicial proceedings.

I Watch has also faced additional legal actions related to rent claims by its landlord due to its inability to access its frozen funds. In addition, the National Social Security Fund demanded payment of outstanding contributions, both old and new. Despite the organization’s explanations regarding its financial incapacity, the Fund continues to demand the sale of the organization’s movable assets to settle the

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119 Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE), 2024. Statement issued by the Independent High Authority for Elections, 9 September. Last accessed: 29 December 2025.  
<https://www.facebook.com/isiemn/posts/pfbid0KF2gVeEgP1zmeh7RsgMu5hjndcvkm54diFvtt1EfAGwP9VNd9CsNi1oH9T9ztXopl?rclid=-GuyUYWzvwQeKqiX6>

120 Interview with Siwar Gmati, official at the I Watch (Ana Yaqedh) Organization, dated 16 December 2025.

121 Interview with Siwar Gmati, official at the I Watch (Ana Yaqedh) Organization, dated 16 December 2025.

dues, while the same authorities have frozen its financial resources. The organization considers these measures part of broader efforts to increase pressure and further restrict its work<sup>122</sup>.

## Mourakiboun Network

On 9 September 2024, the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE) issued a statement announcing its refusal to grant accreditation to the Mourakiboun Network<sup>123</sup>, stating that: “The Authority was informed by official bodies that some associations had received suspicious foreign funding in large amounts, originating from countries, some of which do not have diplomatic relations with Tunisia. Accordingly, accreditation was denied, and the information received by the Authority was referred to the competent authorities for further action<sup>124</sup>.”

It should be noted in this regard that Mourakiboun had previously participated in monitoring several electoral cycles since the Tunisian revolution. This statement was issued only three days after the Mourakiboun Network released a statement informing public opinion that it had received no response from the ISIE regarding its applications for accreditation to observe the presidential elections, despite having submitted them within the legal deadlines and having fulfilled all legal requirements. The organization also attached four official letters sent to the Authority inquiring about the status of its accreditation requests<sup>125</sup>.

In its statement dated 12 September 2024, Mourakiboun stated that the ISIE’s refusal to grant 1,220 applications for accreditation to observe the presidential elections was unrelated to funding, stressing that the organization complies with Decree-Law No. 88, that all of its funding passes through official state channels, and that such funding

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122 Interview with Siwar Gmati, official at the I Watch (Ana Yaqedh) Organization, dated 16 December 2025.

123 “To Whom Does Power Belong Today?”, Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms, unpublished report.

124 Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE), official Facebook page, post dated 9 September 2024, last accessed 20 October 2025. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/A7tHmxiaJbLYT79k/>

125 Mourakiboun Network, official Facebook page, post dated 6 September 2024, last accessed 20 December 2025. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/Kc7HEWHadbv4iL6B/>

is duly declared and published in the press.

According to the organization, the refusal was instead due to its working methodology, specifically its use of parallel vote tabulation (PVT), and to the ISIE's intention to exercise full control over the electoral process by positioning itself as the sole source of voter turnout figures and election results. The network considered this insistence to constitute a violation of guarantees of electoral integrity and transparency. Accordingly, Mourakiboun filed an appeal before the Administrative Court on 27 September 2024 seeking the annulment of the ISIE's decisions.

Since October 2024, coinciding with the presidential election period, Mourakiboun has also been subject to tax and financial audits and technical examinations under the authority of the Tax Evasion and Financial Investigations Unit. The organization has submitted its official documents related to its activities over the past four years, and statements have been taken from the former and current presidents of the organization, as well as from the former and current executive directors and treasurers<sup>126</sup>.

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126 Telephone interview with a representative of the Mourakiboun Network, 21 May 2025.

## 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 was notified of the suspension of its activities for a period of thirty days<sup>127</sup>, from 1 to 30 November 2025, in execution of an order issued by the Tunis Court of First Instance in this regard.

The Observatory filed an urgent appeal against the order suspending its activities, requesting that it be reversed. As of the date of its public statement, the case remained pending before the court<sup>128</sup>.

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127 Tunedia, “Exclusive: Suspension of the Activities of the Chahed Observatory for Election Observation for One Month,” 4 November 2025, last accessed 22 December 2025.

<https://tunedia.net/2025/11/04/%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B5-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%81-%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B7-%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/>

128 Chahed Observatory for Election Observation and Support for Democratic Transitions. Statement. 1 December 2025. Accessed 22 December 2025.

<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/>



### 3. Restriction on **Feminist and Human Rights Organizations**

Organizations working on women's rights in Tunisia have experienced a wave of restrictions, primarily in the form of suspensions of activities. Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms documented the suspension of three feminist organizations for a period of one month.



## Aswat Nissa Association

On 14 August 2025, a court bailiff contacted the legal representative of Aswat Nissa Association by phone to inform her that the association's activities had been suspended for one month, following a decision issued on 4 August 2025, on the grounds that the association had violated Articles 3, 39, 40, 41, and 44 of Decree-Law No. 88 of 2011.

It should be noted that the first warning notice sent by the Prime Ministry in July 2024 was addressed to the association's former headquarters as stated in its statutes, even though Aswat Nissa had changed its headquarters several times and had officially notified the Prime Ministry accordingly. The association's current headquarters is also duly registered in the National Registry of Enterprises<sup>129</sup>.

On 10 December 2025, the court reserved the case for deliberation and scheduled the delivery of its judgment for 31 December 2025. At the hearing held on 31 December 2025, the court issued its judgment rejecting the application to revoke the order and upholding the suspension decision<sup>130</sup>.

## Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD)

On 24 October 2025, the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD) was notified of a one-month suspension of its activities for alleged administrative violations of Articles 3, 44, 45, 46, and 48 of Decree-Law No. 88 of 2011. The decision followed a request for records and supporting documents that the association had already fulfilled after receiving the same request on 8 November 2024, submitting the full set of documents<sup>131</sup> on 5 December 2024<sup>132</sup>.

The first hearing was held on 19 November 2025, during which the court adjourned the case to 24 December 2025. At that hearing, the

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129 Interview with Ms. Hela Ben Salem, lawyer for the association, 11 November 2025.

130 Telephone interview with Ms. Hela Ben Salem, counsel for the Association, conducted on 18 December 2025.

131 Babnet, "Suspension of the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women for One Month," 25 October 2025, last accessed 8 November 2025. <https://www.babnet.net/rttdetail-317274.asp>

132 Interview with Ms. Hela Ben Salem, the association's lawyer, 11 November 2025.

court again postponed consideration of the case pending the response of the State Litigation Department. While counsel for the Association had already submitted their written pleadings, the State Litigation Department requested additional time to review the file and respond. A new hearing was therefore scheduled for 21 January 2026.

At the hearing of 21 January 2026, the court once again adjourned the case until 18 February 2026. On that date, the pleadings were closed and the case was reserved for judgment, with the delivery of the judgment scheduled for 4 March 2026. The court subsequently declared the appeal admissible in form but rejected it on the merits.<sup>133</sup>

## Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH)

On 23 January 2026, the Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH) held a press conference to announce that the Ministry of Justice had barred the organization from conducting prison visits. Since 2015, the League had operated under a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Justice allowing it to visit prisons and detention facilities. For ten years, the League complied with its obligations under the agreement by submitting reports following each visit and refraining from publishing their contents until 15 days had elapsed. It also held regular meetings with the General Directorate of Prisons and Rehabilitation.

While the Ministry of Justice did not formally announce the termination of the memorandum of understanding, it effectively ceased its implementation by requiring prior authorization for prison visits, contrary to the terms of the agreement, which were based on a notification rather than an authorization system. The decision followed a series of earlier measures, including the authorities' failure to respond to the League's reports, the suspension of regular meetings, and the lack of responses to official correspondence<sup>134</sup>.

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133 Telephone interview with Ms. Hela Ben Salem, conducted on 20 March 2026.

134 Al Jazeera, "After Being Barred from Visiting Prisons, the Tunisian League for Human Rights Warns Against Restrictions on 'Civil Society,'" 21 January 2026, accessed on 24 April 2026.

<https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2026/1/23/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B7%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%88%D9%82>

Prior to this, the authorities prohibited a human rights event announced by a group of civil society organizations led by the Tunisian League for Human Rights on 10 April 2025. The event consisted of a symbolic mock trial related to the so-called “conspiracy against state security” case and aimed to raise public awareness of fair trial standards and highlight procedural and legal shortcomings in the proceedings. Although the event was scheduled to take place in a private venue, the Rio Hall in Tunis, security authorities prevented it from being held without providing any legal justification, in what constituted a clear overreach of legal authority and an infringement of the freedoms of association and peaceful assembly.

In this context, Bassem Trifi, President of the Tunisian League for Human Rights, described the decision as “a new chapter in the assault on peaceful civil and associative work,” emphasizing that the event was purely legal, human rights, and cultural in nature and therefore did not require prior authorization from administrative or security authorities. The prohibition constitutes a further indication of the continuing restrictions imposed by the executive authorities on civic space and a clear example of the exclusion of civil society from public debate on sensitive human rights issues<sup>135</sup>.

On 25 April 2026, the authorities issued a decision suspending the activities of the Tunisian League for Human Rights for one month on the grounds of an alleged violation of the provisions of Decree-Law No. 88 of 2011<sup>136</sup>.

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135 Ultra Tunisia, “‘Conspiracy’ Case: Bassem Trifi Says We Were Prevented from Organizing an Event Consisting of a Symbolic Trial Simulation,” 10 April 2025, accessed on 18 March 2026.

<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%AD%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%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9%D8%A7%D9%94%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1>

136 Al Jazeera, “Tunisian Authorities Suspend the Activities of the Tunisian League for Human Rights for One Month,” 25 April 2026, accessed on 27 April 2026.

<https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2026/4/25/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B9-%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B7%D8%A9-%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%88%D9%82>

## Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR)

On 27 April 2026, the Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR) issued a statement in response to what it described as a “smear campaign, false allegations, and systematic misinformation” targeting the Institute and its mission of promoting human rights culture and education grounded in human rights principles.

The Institute clarified that the music video circulating online under the title Thank You Tunisia dated back to 2021 and had been produced on the occasion of World Refugee Day. It stressed that the video bore no relation to current debates concerning migration from sub-Saharan Africa. The Institute further explained that the video was the result of a long-standing voluntary collaboration with the Tunisian artist Lotfi Bouchnak, who had contributed to a number of artistic initiatives over the years addressing issues such as peace and war, environmental protection, education, and disability rights.

According to the Institute, the campaign relied on the recirculation of old materials published on its digital platforms with the aim of “damaging its reputation and targeting its partners and collaborators.” The Institute noted that many participants in its activities were volunteers and well-known national figures, including Lotfi Bouchnak, whom it described as “a figure known for his longstanding patriotic positions and commitment to just Arab causes.”

The Institute stressed that the campaign would not deter it from pursuing its mission in the fields of human rights education, educational reform, civic awareness, adult education, literacy, and support for vulnerable groups. It further stated that it had conducted a formal legal assessment and comprehensive documentation of the posts and publications associated with the campaign and was taking the necessary legal measures against those responsible<sup>137</sup>.

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137 Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR), Statement, 27 April 2026.  
<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18uD4YAtip/>

## World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)

On 5 November 2025, the Tunisia office of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) received formal notification of an order issued pursuant to an ex parte application suspending its activities for a period of 30 days from the date of notification.

During this period, OMCT's Tunisia office was unable to provide direct assistance to victims of torture and their families and suspended all of its programmes and activities. The organization reaffirmed its commitment to the rule of law and announced that it would pursue all available legal remedies to challenge the decision<sup>138</sup>.

## Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF)

On 5 May 2026, Avocats Sans Frontières issued a statement announcing that it had received a decision ordering the suspension of its activities for 30 days.

The organization strongly condemned the decision, arguing that it unjustifiably undermined freedom of civil society action and targeted independent spaces working to serve the public interest and promote solidarity, justice, and the rule of law. It further stated that the decision was not based on a transparent legal framework or a participatory process, but rather reflected a broader trend toward restricting civic initiatives and reducing their role within society.

ASF reaffirmed its full commitment to defending its rights and announced its intention to pursue all available legal and judicial avenues to challenge the decision before the competent authorities<sup>139</sup>.

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138 Kapitalis, "Suspension of the Activities of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) Tunisia Office," 5 November 2025, accessed on 6 May 2026.

<https://kapitalis.com/anbaa-tounes/2025/11/05/%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%82-%D8%A3%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%B7%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%B6%D8%A9/>

139 Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF), Statement, 5 May 2026.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18PSHZbvbH/>

## Feminist Association in Sidi Bouzid

On 20 December 2024, a feminist association in the governorate of Sidi Bouzid<sup>140</sup> received a notice from the General Directorate of Associations informing it of the need to provide a set of documents related to its financial transactions. According to the association's president, Sonia<sup>141</sup>, all the requested documents were sent through a bailiff. However, in June 2025, the association discovered by chance that its activities had been suspended for one month starting from 25 January 2025, without having been notified by any legal means.

The association's president then went to the headquarters of the General Directorate of Associations to inquire about the matter, where she found that the correspondence sent in December 2024 had not been opened and that the envelope remained in the same condition in which it had been sent.

In addition, Sonia confirmed that the association has been subjected to repeated security harassment in relation to its activities, as security forces, along with the local district commissioner, intervene in every activity organized by the association<sup>142</sup>.

## International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)

On 10 October 2026, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) received an order on petition notifying it of the suspension of its activities for one month, on the grounds of non-compliance with Decree-Law No. 88 of 2011, without specifying the nature of the alleged violations.

In addition, the organization did not receive the notification through legally prescribed means. Instead, the notice was found under the door of the organization's office, while the suspension decision itself was dated 3 October 2025.

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

141 Pseudonym used to protect the victim of legal proceedings.

142 Interview with the President of the Association, 12 November 2025.

The ICJ challenged the decision before the courts. The hearing was postponed on two occasions at the request of the State Litigation Officer. The court subsequently ruled to dismiss the lawsuit seeking annulment of the decision, thereby upholding the suspension of the organization's activities<sup>143</sup>.

## **Baraa Association for the Protection of Vulnerable Children**

Following an official notification issued against it, the Baraa Association for the Protection of Vulnerable Children announced on 18 November 2025 the suspension of all its activities for a period of one month. The decision affected all programmes and services provided by the Association to children and their families. During this period, the Association was unable to continue its interventions on behalf of children in vulnerable situations, while its field projects and awareness-raising activities were also suspended. The Association warned that the suspension could have serious repercussions for a large number of beneficiaries who rely on its services<sup>144</sup>.

In a statement, the Association reaffirmed its commitment to the rule of law and compliance with all applicable legal procedures. At the same time, it considered the decision to be part of a broader pattern of repeated and unjustified measures targeting civil society organizations, despite the essential role these organizations play in protecting rights and supporting the rule of law. The Association further announced its intention to 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 well-being and protection depend on these interventions.<sup>145</sup>

During the same period, two international organizations operating in Tunisia were subjected to financial and administrative restrictions.

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143 Interview with the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), 7 January 2026.

144 Baraa Association for the Protection of Vulnerable Children, Facebook page, 18 November 2025, accessed on 18 April 2026.

[https://www.facebook.com/AssociationBara2a/posts/1158515003091388?ref=embed\\_post](https://www.facebook.com/AssociationBara2a/posts/1158515003091388?ref=embed_post)

145 Baraa Association for the Protection of Vulnerable Children, Facebook page, 18 November 2025, accessed on 18 April 2026.

[https://www.facebook.com/AssociationBara2a/posts/1158515003091388?ref=embed\\_post](https://www.facebook.com/AssociationBara2a/posts/1158515003091388?ref=embed_post)

One organization had its bank account closed without legal justification, while the other faced the revival of previously initiated judicial proceedings against it<sup>146</sup>. In May 2026, the activities of three German organizations operating in Tunisia on human rights-related issues were suspended for a period of one month<sup>147</sup>.

## Social Accountability Association

On 19 May 2026, the Social Accountability Association announced that it had received a decision suspending its activities for a period of 30 days. The Association strongly condemned the decision, considering it an attack on freedom of civil society action and a restriction on the right of associations to carry out their activities independently and without undue interference.

In a statement, the Association emphasized that all of its activities had been conducted in compliance with the law and applicable regulations. It further stated that it had fulfilled all of its administrative and legal obligations since its establishment and had consistently worked to promote youth participation in public affairs and strengthen a culture of accountability and active citizenship<sup>148</sup>.

The Association considered the suspension decision to be part of what it described as a “continuing pattern of restrictions” affecting a number of civil society organizations in recent years. According to the Association, these measures form part of a broader effort to limit the oversight and human rights role played by independent associations and organizations, particularly with regard to holding state institutions accountable and defending rights and freedoms.

The Association also reaffirmed its full right to defend itself and expressed its determination to challenge the decision through all available legal and judicial avenues. It stated that it would continue to defend its right to carry out its associative activities and to contribute to the promotion of the rule of law and social justice.

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146 The names of the two organizations have been withheld at their request in order to protect their privacy and personal data.

147 The names were withheld to protect their privacy

148 Social Accountability Association, Statement, 19 May 2026.



## 4. Suspension of **Media Associations**

The second half of 2025 witnessed a new wave of restrictions targeting civil society organizations, particularly in parallel with the protests that erupted in the city of Gabès following repeated cases of children suffering from suffocation due to toxic gas leaks from the Chemical Group operating in the area. Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms documented three cases of suspension of journalistic associations and organizations for a period of one month.



## Boubli Project

During 2024, the Boubli Project faced its first serious problems with the Tunisian authorities following the application of Decree-Law No. 54 on cybercrimes, after the publication of content on social media platforms.

By the end of that year, representatives of the project were summoned by the Guidance Unit, and in January 2025, security forces in the Bab Bhar district intervened. 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.

Several accusations were brought against the Tunisian Association for Cultural and Digital Development, which oversees the Boubli Project, including "Satanism," "terrorism," "offending sacred values," and "foreign funding." Some of these accusations remained vague, lacking clear legal grounds or supporting factual evidence. Consequently, an urgent administrative lawsuit was filed before the Administrative Court seeking to suspend the decision ordering the administrative closure of the premises<sup>149</sup>.

## Al-Khatt Association

Since late 2023, Al Khatt Association has faced an escalating and systematic series of banking, administrative, and judicial measures.

Financial transfers received by the Association, whether in the context of project funding or the provision of services, were repeatedly delayed by banks without any clear legal or procedural basis. Although these transfers were properly documented and duly declared, the delays ranged from several weeks to several months, reaching as much as seven months in certain cases. Banks justified these delays by referring to instructions issued by supervisory authorities, without providing any written documentation to that effect. Despite formally requesting clarification from the Central Bank of Tunisia, the Association did not

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<sup>149</sup> Interview conducted with Mehdi Hannana (Executive Director) and Hani Hannana (Co-Founder of the Association), 28 October 2025.

receive any response. Since the spring of 2025, the release of certain funds has also reportedly been made conditional upon the signing of an undertaking waiving the right to initiate legal proceedings, a requirement that raises serious legal and human rights concerns.

In December 2024, the Presidency of the Government issued a notice requiring Al Khatt to provide all documents required under Decree-Law No. 88 of 2011. The Association fully complied with this request in January 2025. However, in October 2025, a decision was issued suspending the Association's activities for one month on grounds related to the declaration of a foreign transfer, despite the submission of evidence demonstrating compliance with the applicable legal deadlines. The Association challenged the decision through urgent proceedings; however, the case was closed without a ruling on the merits after the suspension had already been enforced.

In January 2026, the Association was summoned before the National Brigade for the Investigation of Complex Financial Crimes as part of an investigation covering all of its foreign funding. It was requested to submit, and subsequently provided, all documents relating to its activities and sources of funding since its establishment. The Association was later summoned to appear before the Tunis Court of First Instance on 11 May 2026 in proceedings seeking its dissolution, following an application filed by the State Litigation Department<sup>150</sup>.

## **The Nawaat Journalists' Association**

On 31 October 2025, the The Nawaat Journalists' Association received a formal notice based on a court order on petition, stating that the association's activities were to be suspended for one month. In a public statement, the association expressed its compliance with the decision while announcing that it had initiated legal appeals against it.

The association also stated that on 26 November 2024, it had received a warning from the Prime Ministry requesting several documents, and that on 25 December 2024, it had submitted most of the requested

documents to the Prime Ministry. It further noted that no official correspondence was delivered to its headquarters thereafter, and that its legal representative only discovered the issuance of the suspension decision covertly on 18 December 2024, without any formal notification, while the association's team had been subjected to extensive investigations and interrogations at the Gorjani barracks the previous year. The association considered the suspension decision "a ready-made political decision aimed at silencing its pioneering voice in media resistance against the system of authoritarianism and mediocrity<sup>151</sup>."

## Legal Agenda Association

At the end of August 2025, Olfa Lamoum, president of the Legal Agenda Association, was summoned to appear before the Financial Crimes Investigation Unit at the National Guard barracks in ElAouina, following a complaint filed by the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE) alleging that the association had received foreign funding to influence the elections.

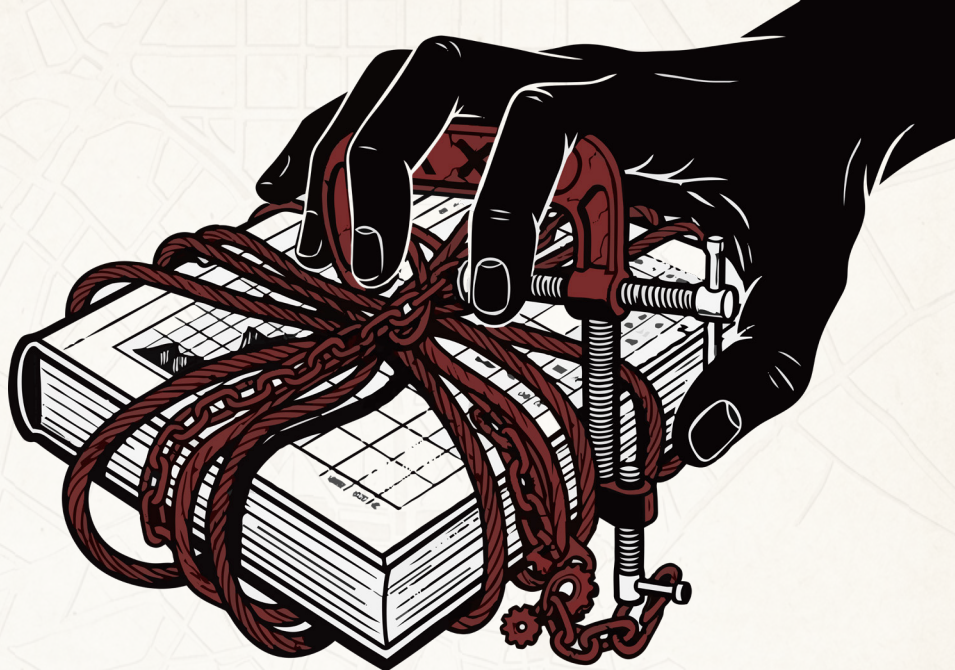
The association's treasurer was also summoned and submitted all legal and financial documents proving that no special or exceptional funding had been received. Nevertheless, the focus of the investigation shifted toward the content of the research and articles published by Legal Agenda, rather than financial violations<sup>152</sup>.

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151 Nawaat. Statement: "Nawaat Will Not Be Silenced." 31 October 2025. Accessed 10 November 2025.

152 Legal Agenda, "Civil Society in Confrontation with Authoritarianism," Issue No. 34, Fall 2025, p. 9, last accessed 22 December 2025.

[https://legal-agenda.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Legal-Agenda\\_TN\\_34\\_FILE\\_Web-1.pdf](https://legal-agenda.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Legal-Agenda_TN_34_FILE_Web-1.pdf)



## 5. Besieging Associations

# Working on Economic and Social Rights

Since late 2024 and early 2025, the authorities have moved to tighten restrictions on human rights organizations working on economic and social rights in Tunisia.



ATVS



جمعية ماجحلا  
Association MAJHLA



جمعية حقوق الانسان  
Association des Droits de l'Homme

## Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES)

On 27 October 2025, the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights received an official notification<sup>153</sup> informing it of the suspension of its activities for one month, using the same standardized wording sent to other associations. It is worth noting that since April 2025, the Forum has been subjected to a series of tax and financial audits<sup>154</sup>.

The hearing was subsequently adjourned to 5 December 2025, and then again to 26 December 2025. The latter hearing was further postponed to 9 January 2026, when the proceedings concluded with a decision rejecting the application<sup>155</sup>.

On Sunday, 19 April 2026, the Treasurer of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES) was prevented from leaving the country through Tunis-Carthage International Airport while travelling to participate in an event related to the presentation of the People's Tribunal judgment on migration issues. He was served with a summons to appear before the National Brigade for the Investigation of Complex Financial Crimes.

On the morning of Monday, 20 April 2026, the Treasurer complied with the summons and was informed that these measures formed part of ongoing investigations targeting the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights since April 2025, and that his questioning was being conducted in connection with a previously opened investigation. He responded to all questions relating to the Forum's activities, sources of funding, and financial management procedures.

He was subsequently served with a further summons requiring him to appear on Friday, 24 April 2026, together with the same documents that had previously been examined by the Research and Tax Evasion

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153 Interview with Abdelrahmen Hedhili, President of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights, dated October 11, 2025.

154 A Facebook post by Alaa Talbi, director of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/17Y9SSR5Gh/>

155 Interview with Romdhane Ben Amor, spokesperson for the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES).

Investigation Unit of the General Directorate of Taxes within the Ministry of Finance<sup>156</sup>.

## **Patrimoine pour l'Économie Solidaire (APES)**

Since early January 2025, Patrimoine pour l'Économie Solidaire (APES) has received several notices from the Prime Ministry requesting administrative documents related to the association's activities. The association complied with these requests and submitted all the required documents in accordance with the law, sending them via the Tunisian postal service.

However, on 17 July 2025, the association was surprised to receive a notification informing it of the suspension of its activities for one month, allegedly on the grounds that it had failed to respond to the earlier notices. In response, APES filed a legal challenge against the suspension decision, and a court hearing was scheduled for 21 November 2025 to examine the case<sup>157</sup>.

## **Tunisian Wildlife Association (ATVS)**

On 3 November 2025, the Tunisian Wildlife Association, which is 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. 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<sup>158</sup>.”

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156 Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES), Statement, 20 April 2026.  
<https://ftdes.net/ar/statement-to-the-tunisian-public/>

157 Interview with Maher Omrani, Project Manager at Patrimoine pour l'Économie Solidaire (APES), conducted on 21 November 2025.

158 Tunisian Wildlife Association, official Facebook page, statement issued on 3 November 2025, last accessed 5 November 2025.  
<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1171030991796183&set=a.585205970378691>

## Blédi Association

Since late 2024, Blédi Association, based in the governorate of Kasserine, has faced repeated harassment and financial audits by the Economic and Financial Crimes Unit in Tunis, in addition to the repeated freezing of its bank accounts.<sup>159</sup> As these measures and investigations continued for nearly a year, the association's governing body was ultimately compelled to initiate procedures to dissolve the organization.

In July 2025, another association <sup>160</sup> working on economic and social rights was also subjected to harassment and judicial prosecution.

## Nakhla Association

On 5 November 2025, Nakhla Association received official notification of an order issued pursuant to an ex parte application suspending its activities for a period of one month, effective from the date of notification. The Association affirmed its commitment to complying with the suspension order while simultaneously pursuing the legal remedies available to challenge the decision under the legislative framework governing associations.

The Association stated that it had complied with all legal and administrative requirements set out in Decree-Law No. 88 of 2011 of 24 September 2011 and expressed its willingness to address any observations contained in the notification in a spirit of transparency and cooperation with the relevant authorities<sup>161</sup>.

The Association further reaffirmed its commitment to its environmental and social mission and expressed its determination to resume its activities as soon as possible in pursuit of its vision of building a sustainable local community that values volunteerism as a fundamental

159 Interview with Tarek Mhamdi about the Blédi Association, dated November 12, 2025.

160 The name of the association has been withheld to protect personal data.

161 Kapitalis, "Suspension of the Activities of Nakhla Association," 5 November 2025, accessed on 18 April 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/>

pillar of development. It also emphasized its reliance on the support of its partners and members, viewing this period as an opportunity to strengthen trust and reaffirm the values guiding its work in the service of the public interest<sup>162</sup>.

## **Association Citoyenneté, Développement, Cultures et Migrations des 2 Rives (Citizenship, Development, Cultures and Migration Between the Two Shores Association)**

At the beginning of 2025, Association Citoyenneté, Développement, Cultures et Migrations des 2 Rives, an organization working on economic and social rights, held a general assembly during which a new governing board was elected. Following the completion of the required legal and administrative procedures, the Association submitted all necessary documentation to the National Register of Enterprises.

However, more than four months later, the Association was informed that the registration of its newly elected Treasurer had been refused without any official explanation or justification. As a result, the Association was compelled to convene a new general assembly and appoint another Treasurer. The registration request was eventually accepted approximately two months after the file had been resubmitted.

During the same period, the Association faced a number of financial restrictions imposed by the Tunisian Post. Its financial account was repeatedly subjected to delays and administrative obstacles without any clear legal justification, despite the fact that most of its funding originated from domestic sources, including other Tunisian associations, and involved relatively limited amounts. These restrictions disrupted the Association's operations and created

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162 Kapitalis, "Suspension of the Activities of Nakhla Association," 5 November 2025, accessed on 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/>

recurring financial difficulties, forcing it on several occasions to suspend certain activities and scale back its programmes<sup>163</sup>.

## Tunisian Organization of Young Doctors

On the evening of 14 May 2026, the Tunisian Organization of Young Doctors received official notification of an order issued pursuant to an ex parte application suspending its activities for a period of one month on the grounds of an alleged violation of Article 41 of Decree-Law No. 88 of 2011.

It should be noted that throughout 2025, the Organization led a series of protests within Tunisia's public health sector to demand improvements in salaries, working conditions, and medical training amid stalled negotiations with the authorities. These mobilizations took various forms, including nationwide strikes, demonstrations, sit-ins, and the boycott of training placements, and involved healthcare and university institutions across the country.

These protests also took place against the backdrop of indications of indirect restrictions on trade union activity and a continuing structural crisis affecting Tunisia's public healthcare sector<sup>164</sup>.

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<sup>163</sup>Interview with Fadia Khoskhoussi, President of the Association, conducted on 11 May 2026.

<sup>164</sup>Interview with Wajih Dhakkar, President of the Tunisian Organization of Young Doctors, conducted on 15 May 2026.



# **Statistics: Cases of Officials and Activists from Civil Society**

Total number of documented  
**individual cases: 41 cases**

## Detention and Imprisonment

# 8 Cases



**Abdallah Saïd**

sentenced to one year's imprisonment on 21 April 2026



**Cherifa Riahi**

sentenced to two years' imprisonment, suspended, on 5 January 2026



**Saadia Mosbah**

sentenced to eight years' imprisonment on 19 March 2026



**Abdelrazak Krimi**

sentenced to two years' imprisonment, suspended, on 25 November 2025



**Iyadh Bouselmi**

sentenced to two years' imprisonment, suspended, on 5 January 2026



**Mohamed Jouou**

sentenced to two years' imprisonment, suspended, on 5 January 2026



**Salwa Ghrissa**

released and allowed to remain at liberty on 19 March 2026



**Mustapha Djemali**

sentenced to two years' imprisonment, suspended, on 25 November 2025

# Released

## 33 Cases



**08 cases**  
related to the Mnenmy Association

**15 cases**  
related to Terre d'Asile Tunisie

**01 case**  
related to the Tunisian  
Association of Democratic

**02 cases**  
related to DAMJ Association  
(Tunisian Association for Justice and Equality)

**02 cases**  
related to the Ifriqiya Association

**03 cases**  
related to another association

**02 cases**  
related to the Children of the Moon Association



# Number of associations whose activities were suspended for one month: **22 associations**

- Aswat Nissa Association
- Tunisian Association of Democratic Women
- Al Khatt Association
- Mnepty Association
- Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES)
- Patrimoine pour l'Économie Solidaire (APES)
- World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
- Tunisian Wildlife Association
- Nawaat Association
- Mourakiboun – Observatory for Election Monitoring and Support for Democratic Transitions
- I Watch Organization
- International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)
- Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH)
- Baraa Association for the Protection of Vulnerable Children
- Nakhla Association
- Feminist Association from Sidi Bouzid\*
- Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF)
- Tunisian Organization of Young Doctors
- Social Accountability Association
- Three organizations whose names have been withheld

**Total number of cases subjected to judicial proceedings** (individuals and associations in their legal capacity)

**44 cases**

**Total number of documented cases** (individuals and associations)

**88 cases**

**Number of associations prosecuted in their legal capacity: four cases (4)**

**Mourakiboun Network**

**I Watch Organization (Ana Yaqedh)**

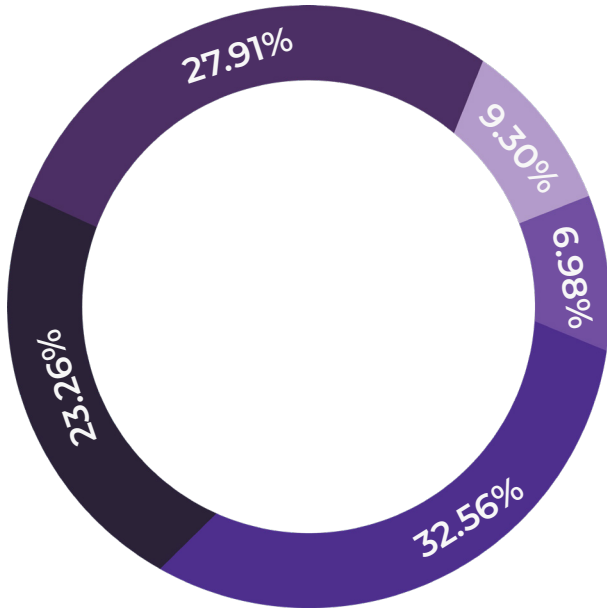
**Legal Agenda**

**Ifriqiya**

**Number of associations to dissolution proceedings: two cases (2)**

**Mnemty Association**

**Al Khatt Association**



## Mapping of Violations Targeting Associations

### Feminist and Human Rights Associations (14)

Aswat Nissa Association

Tunisian Association of Democratic Women

Feminist Association from Sidi Bouzid

International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)

Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH)

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)

Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR)

Lawyers Without Borders

Baraa Association for the Protection of Vulnerable Children

Two international organizations whose names have been withheld

Three additional international organizations whose names have been withheld

Social Accountability Association

## Associations Working on Migration (12)

Tunisian Council for Refugees

Terre d'Asile Tunisie

Tunisian Association of Democratic Women – Sfax Branch

Tunisian Association for Justice and Equality (DAMJ)

Ifriqiya Association

Other Association (name withheld)

Children of the Moon Association

The Society for Activating the Right to Difference Association

Irregular Migration toward North Africa

Doctors Without Borders

The Tunisian Association Against Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS

## Election Observation Associations (03)

I Watch Organization (Ana Yaqedh)

Mourakiboun Network

CHAHED Observatory for Election Observation and Support for Democratic Transitions

## Media Associations (04)

Boubli Project

Nawaat Journalists Association

Al Khatt Association 'Inkyfada'

Legal Agenda

## Associations Working on Economic and Social Rights (10)

Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES)

Patrimoine pour l'Économie Solidaire (APES)

Tunisian Wildlife Association

Bledi Association

Association Citoyenneté, Développement, Cultures et Migrations des 2 Rives

Nakhla Association

Tunisian Organization of Young Doctors

Three additional associations whose names have been withheld

## **Patterns of Systematic Violations Against Civil Society**

Since May 2024, Tunisia's civic space has witnessed a marked escalation in restrictions targeting associations, organizations, and civil society actors, in a systematic and organized manner. The Tunisian authorities have adopted an official discourse that incites restrictions on civil society work, relying on continuous rhetorical campaigns that target associations and organizations by linking them to accusations such as "threatening national security," "foreign allegiance," or "hiding behind charitable work to advance suspicious agendas."

This official discourse has employed strong and highly charged language aimed at alarming public opinion and reframing potential abuses of power as "necessary preventive measures." This has contributed to creating a general climate that justifies legal and security restrictions as protection of the national interest, while simultaneously reinforcing fears related to national security. The intimidating rhetoric has also contributed to producing a form of "preemptive justice," whereby associations and organizations are deemed guilty before any actual judicial investigation is opened, turning the judicial process into a mere formality intended to confer a veneer of legality on decisions that were already taken in advance.

## **Criminalization of Civil and Human Rights Activities**

A pattern of violations against civil society actors has emerged in the form of the criminalization of civil and human rights activities, whereby lawful humanitarian actions are recharacterized as criminal conduct. This has been carried out through the selective use of judicial institutions and security agencies, with the aim of dismantling independent civil life and associations by subjecting them to lengthy and complex judicial proceedings.

This pattern is reflected in the reclassification of ordinary human rights or humanitarian activities as crimes affecting national security

or public order, based on vague legal provisions or overly broad interpretations of the law. This approach has been evident in several cases, including that of Mnementy Association and its president, who has been imprisoned since May 2024, as well as Terre d'Asile Tunisie, where activities such as the temporary sheltering of migrants and the provision of assistance have been transformed into criminal charges, including terrorism-related offenses, money laundering, forming a criminal association, and offenses against external state security.

This legal instrumentalization further enables the authorities to extend detention periods, raid organizational premises, freeze bank accounts, and justify media smear campaigns, in line with official rhetoric centered on “conspiracy” and “treason.” This approach demonstrates that judicial and security institutions are deliberately used to intensify pressure on activists and weaken human rights work, turning the judiciary into a tool for reinforcing this narrative through prosecution decisions that disregard technical and legal evidence.

## **Administrative Restrictions on Associations**

The authorities have adopted a pattern of administrative subjugation aimed at limiting the ability of associations to operate within civic space. This pattern has manifested itself in the obstruction of associations’ administrative procedures, particularly those related to obtaining official documents, including documents from the National Register of Enterprises and the National Social Security Fund. Administrative authorities have obstructed the work of associations by prolonging procedures and failing to meet the deadlines for issuing such documents.

During the second half of 2025, this administrative escalation was marked by a wave of decisions suspending associations’ activities for one month. Nine such cases were documented, with the decisions appearing to follow a standardized, “ready-made” format. These decisions targeted major associations, including those that had refused to align themselves with the authorities’ political project following 25 July 2021. The measures were based on minor administrative irregularities, such as missing documents, indicating a disproportionate use of administrative

law and a failure to respect the principle of procedural fairness.

The timing of these decisions, following the wave of protests in Gabès Governorate, in which civil society played an important role in organizing and framing the protests, suggests that the measures were part of a broader strategy to suppress organized opposition and exert control over civic space, reflecting a systematic policy of repression rather than the mere arbitrary application of the law.

## **Financial Obstruction of Associations' Bank Accounts**

The Tunisian political authorities have also pursued a policy of financial obstruction against associative work, particularly through the banking sector. In late 2024, bank employees were arrested in connection with the case involving the Children of the Moon Association. At the same time, political authorities exerted pressure on banks to scrutinize the bank accounts of several associations, which disrupted their operations for periods exceeding two months. In addition, several banks closed the accounts of a number of associations.

These practices were accompanied by intensified scrutiny of foreign funding and financial transfers through broad oversight involving the Tax Evasion and Financial Investigations Unit, the Tax Investigation Administration, and Social Security services. These forms of harassment were particularly concentrated on active organizations such as I Watch and Mourakiboun, coinciding with preparations for the 2024 presidential elections, which suggests a political intent to control the electoral environment and restrict independent civic oversight.

## Impact of Restrictions on Civil Society and Consequences for Service Beneficiaries

Since May 2024, civil society has faced an escalating and multifaceted wave of restrictions, including suspension decisions, summons, investigations, and arrests. These measures have directly and significantly affected the ability of organizations and associations to operate normally, leading to serious disruptions in services at multiple levels.

These violations, particularly judicial prosecutions and the freezing of bank accounts, have resulted in the closure of association offices, staff reductions, and the scaling down of field projects, including the distribution of humanitarian assistance and the provision of psychological support and legal guidance services. The freezing of Mourakiboun Network's bank accounts since October 2024 led to the loss of its headquarters and the termination of contracts with most of its staff. This impact was not limited to the organization's personnel, but also affected its electoral observation work, as the organization was prevented from monitoring the presidential elections. This constitutes an infringement on civil society's right to observe the electoral process and to provide independent monitoring alongside the Independent High Authority for Elections, especially given that Mourakiboun has monitored most electoral processes since 2011 and that its reports and data have gained credibility among the public<sup>165</sup>.

The targeting of organizations defending the rights of migrants has led to paralysis in reception centers, legal consultation hotlines, and medical services. The Tunisian Council for Refugees, whose president and deputy have been imprisoned since May 2024 on charges of forming a criminal association to assist persons in entering Tunisia irregularly, had been a key partner of the UN Refugee Agency in Tunisia since its establishment in 2016 and was primarily responsible for collecting and conducting initial assessments of asylum

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165 Interview with Raja Jabri, former president of the Mourakiboun Network, conducted on 13 November 2025.

applications before they were later processed by the UNHCR<sup>166</sup>. Decisions to suspend association activities have also had a direct impact on beneficiaries of their services. The one-month suspension of the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women resulted in the interruption of several essential services for women survivors of violence. In compliance with the suspension decision, the association closed its four listening centers in Tunis, Kairouan, Sfax, and Sousse, which receive more than 800 survivors of violence annually and provide services including supportive listening, legal guidance, and psychological follow-up. The association also suspended the activities of the Asma Fanni Observatory, which monitors violations of the economic and social rights of women who are survivors of economic violence<sup>167</sup>.

## Human Rights Violations

The wave of arrests and prosecutions targeting civil society workers has taken place within a broader strategy by the authorities to restrict civic and political space. This has included targeting associations and organizations through hate-inciting rhetoric and attempts to amend the Associations Law, which is considered one of the gains of the 2010–2011 uprising. This confirms the authorities’ systematic approach to undermining civil society work, in a manner that is incompatible with the principles of democracy and pluralism.

Public accusations made by the Presidency against associations, and directly against civil society leaders, activists, and members, constitute a violation of the right to defense and to a fair trial, as guaranteed under Article 33 of the Constitution, which states that “the accused is innocent until proven guilty in a fair trial in which all guarantees of defense are ensured throughout the stages of prosecution and trial.” In a state governed by the separation of powers and judicial independence, the executive authority has no judicial competence. The systematic obstruction of civil society activity, through official

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166 Human Rights Watch, “Tunisia: Escalating Repression Against Civil Society,” 17 May 2024, last accessed 18 November 2025.

<https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2024/05/17/tunisia-deepening-civil-society-crackdown>

167 Interview with Ms. Naila Zoghلامي, representative of the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD).

stigmatization followed by unprecedented legal and judicial campaigns, including raids on association offices and financial investigations, constitutes a violation of Article 6 of Decree-Law No. 88, which provides that “public authorities are prohibited from obstructing or suspending the activities of associations, directly or indirectly.” These practices particularly restrict operational space and aim to intimidate organizations.

In addition, the prolonged handling of cases and repeated extensions of detention constitute excessive reliance on custodial measures and deprivation of liberty, without due consideration of the requirement that judicial procedures be conducted within reasonable time limits.

Moreover, conditions in Tunisian prisons, which lack minimum standards of humane living conditions in terms of infrastructure and logistics, directly contribute to violations of the rights of all detainees without exception, in contradiction with human treatment and respect for dignity as guaranteed under Article 36 of the Constitution.

The policies of restriction and legal prosecution pursued by the Tunisian authorities since May 2024 against civil society organizations and activists contradict Tunisia’s international obligations. These policies violate Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.” Through systematic measures targeting civil society, the authorities violate the right to association, often invoking security or regulatory justifications. These practices undermine the essence of Article 20 by preventing the free exercise of the right to join associations or participate in peaceful assemblies, and by imposing unlawful obstacles to independent civil society activity.

In the same context, the Tunisian authorities also violate Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, which provides that “everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests.” Paragraph 2 of the same

article states that “no restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those which are prescribed by law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order, the protection of public health or morals, or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on members of the armed forces and of the police in their exercise of this right.”

Furthermore, restrictions on the right to assembly and participation in associative life have political, social, and economic consequences. They limit civil society’s capacity to provide social services, monitor public authorities, and contribute to local development, ultimately leading to the erosion of civic and democratic space. Accordingly, the violations affecting this right in Tunisia since 2024 constitute a clear breach of the state’s international obligations and signal the risk of weakening civil society oversight and declining public freedoms, in contradiction with international standards that affirm freedom of assembly and association as essential to dignity and effective participation in society. In the same vein, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Clément Nyaletsossi Voule, stated during a meeting with civil society organizations in Tunisia on 9 February 2024, several months before the wave of restrictions and arrests began, that it is necessary to preserve Decree-Law No. 88 of 2011, considering it an achievement and a symbol of public participation in public affairs<sup>168</sup>.

## Conclusion

Despite the enshrinement of freedom of association in successive Tunisian constitutions, and its recognition as a fundamental right under regional and international human rights instruments ratified by the Tunisian state, current policies and practices reveal a deeply troubling shift toward the de facto criminalization of civil society

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168 Legal Agenda, Interview with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association, Clément Voule: Concerns over the Shrinking of Civic Space in Tunisia, Palestine, and the Region, 1 March 2024. Last accessed: 17 November 2025. <https://legal-agenda.com/%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%85%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B5-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%91%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC/>

through intensified security and judicial pressure on associations and civic actors. Civil and human rights work has become increasingly vulnerable as prosecutions, arrests, and investigations multiply against organizations and individuals solely for fulfilling their roles in defending rights, monitoring public policies, or providing assistance to marginalized groups and migrants. These practices not only undermine the gains achieved by the Tunisian revolution in the field of human rights, including legal and institutional safeguards protecting civic space, but also contribute to the erosion of fundamental freedoms, which are now routinely violated under the application of repressive laws that expand the reach of incarceration.

Although Decree-Law No. 88 of 2011 remains the primary legal framework governing associations, Tunisian authorities have increasingly and alarmingly relied on Organic Law No. 26 of 2015 on counter-terrorism and anti-money laundering to recharacterize the lawful activities of associations and human rights defenders as serious criminal offenses. This selective and expansive application of legislation beyond its original scope reflects a clear intent to criminalize associative work and to constrict civic space through intimidation, stigmatization, and public discrediting—patterns documented across several cases examined in this report involving active civil society and human rights organizations.

## Recommendations

Based on what this report has documented and addressed regarding human rights violations and systematic repressive policies, manifested in a series of arrests, imprisonment, and security prosecutions targeting civil society, and in light of the shrinking space for civil activity and the authorities' tendency to criminalize human rights work, the Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms calls on the Tunisian authorities to take the necessary measures to halt these violations, to respect human rights principles, especially the right to civil and human rights activity, and to ensure the implementation of fair trial guarantees.

### **To the Tunisian authorities:**

- Release all detainees unconditionally.
- Stop using pre-trial detention as a tool to restrict civil society, as well as prolonged procedures and repeated extensions of detention.
- Respect freedom of association, expression, peaceful assembly, and civil and human rights activity, in accordance with international human rights standards.
- End the wave of official discourse that fuels violence and hatred in general, and against civil society and migrants in particular.

### **To the international community:**

- Exert pressure on the authorities to put an end to arrests and ongoing harassment.
- Provide support to civil society, especially human rights organizations, in order to protect civic space and threatened human rights work in Tunisia.
- Send fact-finding missions and conduct official visits to monitor violations targeting civil society in Tunisia.

### **To civil society:**

- Create shared spaces for support, cooperation, and planning in light of the ongoing crackdown on civil society.
- Strengthen coordination and maintain regular media engagement regarding the situation of civil society organizations.







**INTERSECTION**  
ASSOCIATION