

TUNISIA 2023 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution requires the state to support and advance the purposes of Islam and provides that “Tunisia is part of the Islamic Umma [community or nation],” and that the state must work to achieve the purposes of Islam in preserving “life, honor, property, religion, and freedom.” The constitution also states that this will be carried out “within the framework of a democratic system.” The constitution states that it guarantees freedom of belief and conscience, as well as the freedom to worship. It requires the president to be Muslim.

On May 9, a member of the National Guard shot and killed two civilians and three security officers near the al-Ghriba Synagogue during the Lag b’Omer festival, an annual Jewish pilgrimage on the island of Djerba. The government announced that it would fully investigate the attack. On May 17, President Saied met with leaders of the country’s three primary religious communities. According to country’s Chief Rabbi, the president assured them that such an attack “would not happen again.” On October 17, in the wake of Hamas’ attack on southern Israel, pro-Palestinian rioters defaced and set fire to a closed synagogue and shrine in central Tunisia. Local police responded but were overwhelmed by the rioters. In response, President Saied publicly called on Tunisians to stand by the Palestinian people “without attacking anyone or any property.” Authorities had not reported any arrests associated with the incident as of year’s end.

On February 22, police detained the president and vice-president of the Federation of Evangelical, Protestant, and Pentecostal Christian Churches after a local television station profiled “house churches” associated with their organization. Authorities released the men without charges on March 10. Police detained another Christian in February, as he left church in Tunis, and interrogated him regarding his religion and books in his possession; he was released the same day without charges. The government had not provided updates regarding the case of Slimane Bouhafs, a Christian Algerian citizen who had been granted asylum in the country and was later extradited back to Algeria, as of year’s end. According to a local nongovernmental organization (NGO), the government supports extradition of foreign Christians to their home countries. The government continued to reject Baha’i citizens’ efforts to form an association. The government continued to ban *niqabs* and other face coverings on the premise that the ban is required due to national security considerations. Christian citizens continued to report strong pressure from the government to restrict any public discussion or display of their religion. A local NGO reported that police had harassed and interrogated Christians regarding their displays of Bibles and crosses. Non-Catholic Christian citizens continued to report that they were denied the right to establish a legal entity that would allow for the establishment of a church. The Jewish community reported that students who attended private Jewish schools were unable to receive certification from the government stating that they were students.

Religious communities who signed a charter advocating peace in 2022 reported that they continued to be targets of anonymous insults and violence. Atheists reported pressure from their Muslim families to revert to Islam or keep their atheism hidden. Some Christians, especially converts reported rejection from their families and society, which included threats, violence, and banishment from their homes. In June, a Christian was

accused of “witchcraft” and physically assaulted by intruders in his home in Tunis. The authorities had not charged anyone with the assault as of year’s end. Some civil society organizations reported a growing number of Muslim converts to Christianity, but who, due to social stigma, kept their conversions secret. They reported that families accused converts of bringing “shame” due to their conversion.

The Ambassador and other U.S. embassy officials maintained regular contact with multiple governmental agencies on the topic of religious freedom. The embassy also maintained regular contact with multiple religious groups regarding their security and freedom to worship without restrictions from the government or harassment by the community.

In May, the U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism visited Tunisia, and held meetings with government officials, members of the Jewish community, civil society organizations, and university students. Before the May 9 attack, the Special Envoy and the Ambassador visited Djerba to attend the annual Lag B’Omer pilgrimage and to meet with members of the Jewish community to discuss the practice of their faith and challenges they face. The embassy’s social media platforms highlighted the event as demonstrating U.S. commitment to advancing freedom of religion and peaceful coexistence. The Ambassador returned to Djerba on May 18 to offer condolences to the victims of the May 9 attack and to meet with members of the Jewish community. The Ambassador also visited a mosque and a Catholic church to highlight Tunisia’s longstanding support for religious coexistence. In June, the embassy organized a workshop, bringing together leaders of 14 faith-based organizations and minority rights associations from Tunisia, Lebanon, and Morocco. The workshop included interactions with representatives from the country’s multiple religious communities.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 12 million (mid-year 2023), of which approximately 99 percent are Sunni Muslim. Christians, Jews, Shia Muslims, Baha'is, and nonbelievers constitute less than 1 percent of the population. The Ministry of Religious Affairs (MRA) estimates there are approximately 30,000 Christian residents, most of whom are foreigners, and of whom 80 percent are Roman Catholic. The remaining 20 percent of the Christian population is composed of Protestants, Russian Orthodox, French Reformists, Anglicans, evangelicals, Greek Orthodox, Jehovah's Witnesses, and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. There are approximately 5,000 Christian citizens, according to community leaders, most of whom are Anglicans or evangelicals. According to members of the Jewish community, there are approximately 1,500 Jewish citizens in the country. Approximately 1,100 of them live on the island of Djerba and in the neighboring town of Zarzis and the remainder in and around Tunis. There is a small Baha'i community, but reliable information on its numbers is not available. A Baha'i leader told local media in 2022 that the community numbered in the thousands.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The country's 2022 constitution requires the state to support and advance the purposes of Islam. It states, "Tunisia is part of the Islamic Umma [community or nation]" and provides that the state must work to achieve

the purposes of Islam in preserving “life, honor, property, religion, and freedom.” The constitution also states that this will be carried out “within the framework of a democratic system.”

The constitution provides for freedom of belief and conscience and for the freedom to worship. It requires that worship not compromise public security.

The constitution requires the president to be Muslim.

The penal code criminalizes speech likely “to cause harm to public order or morality” as well as acts undermining public morals in a way that “intentionally violates modesty.”

There is no legal prohibition against proselytism. The law criminalizes forced conversions.

Religious groups may form and register associations under the law to establish a bank account, conduct financial activities such as charity work, and receive favorable tax treatment, including tax-free donations from government-approved associations, provided the association does not purport to represent all believers of a religious group or use the name of a religious group. In practice, minority religious groups often reported bureaucratic roadblocks and government delays when applying to form associations. To establish an association, a religious group must submit a registered letter to the Prime Minister’s Office stating the purposes of the association; copies of the national identity cards of its founders, who must be citizens; and two copies of the articles of association signed by the association’s founders or their representatives. The articles of association must contain the official name of the association in Arabic and any other

language used; its address; a statement of its objectives; membership criteria; membership fees; and a statement of organizational structure, including identification of the decision-making body for the association. The law requires that associations and political parties respect the rule of law and basic democratic principles. The law prohibits associations from engaging in for-profit activities, providing material support to individual political candidates, or adopting bylaws or conducting activities that incite violence or promote hatred, fanaticism, or discrimination on the basis of religion. An association may receive tax-exempt income from organizations, including foreign organizations that have a prior agreement with the government.

Once an association receives a return receipt from the Prime Minister's Office, it has seven days to submit an announcement of the name, purpose, and objectives of the association to the government printing office. The government printing office has 15 days to publish the announcement in the official gazette, which constitutes the association's official registration. In the event the government does not return a registered receipt within 30 days, an association may proceed to submit its documents for publication and obtain registration. A foreign association may establish a branch in the country, but the government may also reject its registration request if the government finds the principles or objectives of the foreign association contravene the law.

Associations that violate the law are first given a warning of up to 30 days from the secretary general of the government, who reports directly to the Prime Minister. If the violation persists, a court may suspend the association's activities for up to 30 days. If the association is still in violation of the law, the secretary general may then appeal to the court for

dissolution of the association. Under the law, associations have the right to appeal court decisions.

Registered associations have the right to organize meetings and demonstrations, to publish reports and leaflets, to own real estate, and to engage in “all types of civil activities.”

A 1964 *modus vivendi* with the Holy See grants official recognition to the Roman Catholic Church. The agreement allows the Catholic Church to function in the country and provides state recognition of the church. The agreement, however, restricts religious activities and services to the physical confines of authorized churches and prohibits construction of new churches and the ringing of church bells. A limited number of Catholic schools and charities operate under the *modus vivendi*, but their financial activities are conducted through registration as an association and their affiliation with the church is not publicized.

The government subsidizes mosques and appoints and pays the salaries of imams. The Grand Mufti, appointed by the president, is charged with declaring religious holidays, issuing certificates of conversion to Islam, attending to citizens’ inquiries, representing the country at international religious conferences, providing opinions on school curricula, and studying and writing about Islam, including offering religious guidance and issuing fatwas. The MRA suggests themes for Friday sermons but does not regulate their content. The government may initiate administrative and legal procedures to remove imams who authorities determine are preaching “divisive” theology.

By law, new mosques may be constructed, provided they are built in accordance with national urban planning regulations. The MRA pays for

construction of mosques, although private and foreign donors are also able to contribute to construction costs. Mosques become government property upon completion, after which the government must maintain them.

Students in public schools attend mandatory courses on the principles of Islam for one hour per week. Non-Muslim students generally attend these courses but may seek an exemption. The curriculum for secondary school students also includes references to the history of Judaism and Christianity. Religious groups may operate private schools. The MRA oversees the administration of 1,994 *kotebs*, traditional religious schools attached to mosques that teach children how to recite the Quran.

Provisions of law addressing marriage, divorce, and other personal status issues are largely based on principles of civil law, combined with elements of sharia. Laws of inheritance are principally based on requirements in sharia, but there are some provisions that allow for exceptions as outlined in the Code of Personal Status.

Newly married couples must state explicitly in the marriage contract whether they elect to combine their possessions or to keep them separate. Sharia inheritance law provides men with a double share of an inheritance compared to women. Some families avoid the application of sharia by executing sales contracts between parents and children to ensure that daughters receive shares of property equal to that given to sons. Non-Muslim women and their Muslim husbands do not automatically inherit from each other, unless they seek a legal judgment from a court based on the rights provided in the constitution, because inheritance law is based on sharia. The government considers all children of those marriages to be Muslim and forbids those children from inheriting from their mothers.

According to the law, spouses may freely give up to one-third of their estate to whomever they designate in their will.

The law does not list religion as a prohibited basis for political parties but prohibits political parties from using religion to call for violence or discrimination.

Military service is required for men 20 to 23 years of age for a compulsory one-year term. Men who are 18 to 23 years of age may also volunteer for military service. Several exemptions to military service exist. There is no option for alternative service for conscientious objectors.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

Abuses Involving Violence, Detention, or Mass Resettlement

On May 9, Wissam Khazri, a member of the National Guard, opened fire near the al-Ghriba Synagogue during the Lag b'Omer festival, an annual Jewish pilgrimage on the island of Djerba, killing two civilians and three security officers, and wounding eight persons. The two dead civilians were Jewish cousins. Press reports stated that approximately 7,000 pilgrims attended the event, the largest turnout since before the COVID-19 pandemic. High-level government officials were also in attendance. The MRA also facilitated the tax-free importation of kosher food for consumption during the pilgrimage.

On May 10, President Saied blamed criminals seeking to harm the tourist sector for the attack: “The goal was to sow the seeds of discord and to hit the tourist season and the state” and said that Tunisia was “a land of tolerance and peaceful coexistence.” On May 11, the Minister of Interior announced the launch of a full government investigation into the attack. Tunisian authorities described the attack as “criminal” versus antisemitic. On May 13, while touring a site where Tunisian Jews hid from Nazi German forces in World War II, President Saied said to media, “They speak of antisemitism, while the Jews were protected here,” and that “Palestinians are killed every day, and no one talks about them.” In response, the Conference of European Rabbis issued a statement criticizing the President’s remarks, stating the President “continues to incite further hatred and even attacks against the country’s Jewish community.” On May 15, 22 Tunisian human rights organizations issued a joint statement that, without directly mentioning the President’s remarks, expressed solidarity with the victims of the attack and stated, “Jewish citizens ... are targeted by acts of hostility, denial, and hatred.” The government had not provided more specific detail regarding a motive for the attack or the results of its investigation as of year’s end.

According to the Israeli outlet Ynetnews, the Jewish community in Djerba said in a statement that it was outraged by the authorities’ decision to perform an autopsy on the Jewish victims, which prevented the community from observing Jewish burial and funeral traditions.

On May 17, President Saied met publicly with leaders of the country’s Sunni, Jewish, and Catholic communities, in what the government said was an effort to highlight the country’s longstanding tradition of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence among different faiths. In a broadcast of part of the meeting, Saied said, “We will provide you security in your temples. Live

in peace and security, and we will provide you with all security conditions.” The country’s Chief Rabbi, in attendance, said publicly that the President had guaranteed that the May 9 attack at the Lag b’Omer festival in Djerba “would not happen again.”

On October 17, in the wake of Hamas’ attack on Israel and hours after an explosion at Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza, pro-Palestinian rioters defaced and set fire to a non-operational synagogue and shrine in central Tunisia. Local police responded but were overwhelmed by the rioters. In response, President Saied called on Tunisians to stand by the Palestinian people “without attacking anyone or any property,” adding, “We do not want it said that Tunisia is attacking the Jews ... the battle is against global Zionism and we will not back down on this.” Authorities had not reported any arrests associated with the incident as of year’s end.

On February 22, police detained the president and vice-president of the Federation of Evangelical, Protestant, and Pentecostal Christian Churches after a local television station profiled “house churches” associated with their organization, according to a local NGO. The program described the churches as places where Christian sub-Saharan migrants gathered to worship. Authorities released the two without charges on March 10.

On February 16, police detained a Tunisian Christian as he was exiting a church in Tunis, according to a local human rights NGO. Authorities questioned him about his religious background and books in his possession before releasing him the same day without charges.

Abuses Involving the Ability of Individuals to Engage in Religious Activities Alone or In Community with Others

The government provided no updates to its promised investigation of the 2021 extradition of Algerian Christian refugee Slimane Bouhafs. The Algerian government, which requested Bouhafs' extradition, had previously sentenced him to three years in prison following his conviction on charges that included "offending Islam." In December 2022, Bouhafs told an Algerian judge that in 2021, three unidentified men took him from his home in Tunis, physically and verbally assaulted him, questioned him about his Christianity, and drove him to the Algerian border, where Algerian police arrested him. According to a local human rights NGO, the government supported the removal and return of multiple Christian nationals from Libya, Algeria, Chad, and Mauritania to their home countries, who, the NGO stated, were subjected to religious persecution in those countries.

As part of the Ministry of Justice's rehabilitation program for countering violent extremism, the Committee General for Prisons and Rehabilitation continued to maintain an agreement with the MRA to permit vetted and trained imams to lead religious sessions with prisoners identified as extremists. As part of the ministry's measures to counter violent extremism, prisons prohibited organized communal prayers but permitted individual detainees to have religious materials and to pray in their cells.

The Baha'i community's continuing efforts to register as an association remained unresolved. A government prosecutor's 2021 appeal of a 2020 court ruling in favor of allowing Baha'is to form an association remained pending as year's end. Despite being unable to officially organize, Baha'is were active in civil society.

Although the law provided for the right of freedom of association, observers stated the government did not always respect it, particularly regarding restrictions on political and religious associations. Some religious minority

groups reported administrative delays and lack of government response regarding processing of association applications; some of the applications dated as far back as 2017.

As of year's end, the Baha'i community had not received a reply from the Minister of Local Affairs regarding a 2020 petition to establish a Baha'i cemetery.

The government continued to publicly urge imams to disseminate messages of moderation and tolerance to counter what it said were threats of violent extremism. Since 2015, the MRA has conducted regular training sessions for imams on how to disseminate these messages. According to several local committees in charge of mosque operations, the government generally allowed the committees to manage the daily affairs of their mosques and choose their own imams, with the exception of imams for Friday prayers, who were selected exclusively by the MRA. Regional MRA representatives within each governorate were required to vet, approve, and appoint both the local mosque committees and the imams. According to an MRA official, the government standardized and enforced mosque opening and closing times, except for certain mosques with cultural or historical significance and very small community mosques. In 2022, the MRA authorized a department for religious minorities; according to a local NGO, however, the department had not started operations as of year's end.

The niqab remained officially prohibited in administrative and public buildings. The government prohibited the wearing of niqabs and other face coverings in administrative and public institutions following 2019 terrorist attacks in order to "maintain public security and guarantee optimal implementation of safety requirements," although women who wore niqabs in these settings were generally not detained. Government officials denied

that the restriction limited religious freedom and stressed that its goal was to promote improved security.

Christian citizens continued to describe strong governmental and societal pressure not to discuss publicly a church's activities or theology. Christian community contacts indicated that many Christians practiced their faith through in-home gatherings for prayers and services or mass. A local NGO reported that police targeted Christians who displayed faith-related objects – such as crosses and Bibles – harassing and questioning them.

Christians reported the government allowed churches to operate within set guidelines and provided security for their services. The government generally restricted Catholic public religious services or processions outside churches as agreed under the 1964 modus vivendi with the Vatican; however, some celebrations outside of church buildings were permitted. On August 16, hundreds gathered in La Goulette, a suburb of Tunis, to participate in the annual procession of the Madonna of Trapani at the Church of St. Augustine and St. Faithful. Archbishop of Tunis Ilario Antoniazzi led the procession.

Christian citizens and members of other religious minorities reported the government continued to deny them the right to establish a legal entity or association that would allow the establishment of an Arabic-language church or a cemetery that would serve Christian citizens. The Christian community, however, did not submit a formal request for an association or legal status during the year. Christian cemeteries existed for foreign members of the Christian community; however, the government required Christian citizens to obtain permission from the government to bury family members in these cemeteries. Citizens reported they generally did not

request such permission due to what they said was a pattern of governmental nonresponse.

Jewish groups said they continued to worship freely, and the government continued to provide security for synagogues and partially subsidized restoration and maintenance costs. Government employees maintained Jewish cemeteries in Tunis and Djerba but did not maintain them in Sousse and El-Kef, where there are also small Jewish communities. According to Jewish community representatives, the synagogue of Tataouine, which was placed on the national heritage registry in 2020, remained under state protection to prevent further degradation of the building. According to Jewish groups, police intermittently harassed Jews and discriminated against them in the south by enforcing stop-and-frisk measures.

In accordance with government permits, the Jewish community operated private religious schools, and Jewish children were allowed to split their academic day between public schools and private religious schools or to attend either type of school full-time. The government-run Essouani School and the Houmt Souk Secondary School in Djerba remained the only public schools in which Jewish and Muslim students studied together, primarily because of the small size and geographic concentration of the Jewish community. At these schools, Muslim students attended Islamic education lessons on Saturdays while their Jewish classmates could choose to attend classes on religion at a Jewish school in Djerba. According to Jewish community members, students who attended a private Jewish school were unable to receive a government-recognized certificate of identification stating they were students.

According to a 2023 study by the Tunisian Association for the Support of Minorities (ATSM), *Religious Minority Youth in Tunisia*, religious studies

courses in Tunisia's public education system focused primarily on Islamic studies and did not provide sufficient instruction about minority religions in the country. While the government endorsed principles of religious tolerance and diversity, it did not adequately integrate them into curricula, according to ATSM.

Representatives of the Jewish community reported that the MRA still had not responded to a 2019 request to establish a national Jewish community association, despite the Minister's 2021 pledge to support it. At year's end, the MRA had not responded or acted on the application. The Jewish community initiated the application to establish associations in order to better advocate with the government on behalf of Jewish community interests and to serve as an organizing body for the Jewish communities in Gabes, Medenine, and Tunis.

Abuses Involving Discrimination or Unequal Treatment

Human rights organizations denounced as antisemitic President Saied's September 19 statement that the "Zionist movement" was behind the naming of Storm Daniel, which triggered large-scale flooding in Libya, killing thousands, according to the World Health Organization. "Didn't anyone wonder why the name Daniel was chosen?" the President asked during a televised meeting of his cabinet. "Because the Zionist movement has infiltrated minds and thinking. We've fallen into a cognitive coma." Jewish groups said they feared the President's remarks could lead to violence against Tunisian Jews. The Anti-Defamation League said it "strongly" condemned Saied's comments, stating that they "resonate with some of the worst conspiracy theories of Jewish control of the weather."

Other Developments Affecting Religious Freedom

The MRA was responsible for facilitating Tunisians' participation in the annual Hajj pilgrimage. According to state media, more than 200,000 persons registered for the Hajj in 2023. Of those, the MRA selected 10,982 to participate. The MRA supported arrangements for transportation, hotels, guides, and healthcare. Pilgrims were responsible for funding their participation.

On March 31, judicial police questioned Monia Arfaoui, an editor for the daily newspaper *Assabah*, for a third time in connection with a complaint filed against her by the Minister of Religious Affairs. Arfaoui had criticized the Minister for “mismanaging” public funds earmarked for facilitating participation in the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. In a statement, Arfaoui said authorities were attempting to intimidate her into silence.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Following the October 17 explosion at Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza, rioters in the central city of al-Hammah set fire to the city's historic 16th century synagogue and shrine. The synagogue, which was not an active site of worship, was largely destroyed by the arson.

A local NGO reported that, during the year, religious communities that signed the 2022 *National Charter for Peaceful Coexistence*, an agreement that called for supporting the rights of religious minorities to practice their faith and promotes peaceful coexistence between religious groups, continued to be subjected to anonymous insults and threats of violence.

Some atheists from Muslim families reported receiving family and societal pressure to return to Islam or to conceal their atheism, including by fasting during Ramadan and abstaining from criticizing Islam. Some Christians, especially converts, reported strong family and societal rejection, including threats and violence, and some of them were reportedly beaten and forced to leave their homes on account of their beliefs. In June, three Muslim neighbors, including a retired police officer, forcibly entered a Christian Tunisian's home in Tunis, physically assaulting him and accusing him of "witchcraft," according to a local NGO. The individual reported the incident to local police, who were nonresponsive, prompting him to stage a brief hunger strike. Authorities had not charged anyone in the assault as of year's end.

Open Doors, an NGO focused on religious freedom for Christians around the world, reported that Tunisians who converted from Islam to Christianity faced a level of hostility that forced many to keep their faith secret. According to the NGO, this was especially true in the south, where the Muslim population is more conservative. Urban areas offered believers a place to escape where they could enjoy relatively more freedom. Gathering with other Christians brought risk of exposure due to monitoring by the Tunisian security services. If believers' faith was discovered, the NGO said, it could have a damaging impact on their daily life, including verbal and physical abuse, rejection by loved ones, and job insecurity.

Some civil society organizations reported a growing number of Muslim converts to Christianity, but said social taboos remained so strong and widespread that these individuals generally preferred to keep their conversions secret. Many faced ostracism and violence from their own families due to the stigma surrounding conversion from Islam. Some Christians said that people who attended church services faced pressure

from family members and others in their neighborhood not to attend. Christians reported family members frequently accused converts of bringing “shame” to the family by their conversion. A local NGO reported that non-Christian family members harassed Christians.

A local NGO said that government coordination with local churches to help sub-Saharan congregants pay for rent, food, and basic necessities due to economic hardships largely stopped after President Saied said publicly in February that the influx of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa was a “criminal conspiracy” to change the demographics of Tunisia through “successive waves of immigration.”

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The Ambassador and other embassy officials continued to maintain regular contact with government officials, including in the MRA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, and the Office of the Presidency, to discuss issues concerning religious freedom. Conversations also focused on religious groups’ unsuccessful attempts to form associations, difficulties facing Baha’is, Jews, and Christians, and reports of discrimination or violence against religious minorities. On August 18, the Ambassador met with the Minister of Religious Affairs to discuss peaceful co-existence in the country.

Embassy officials maintained frequent contact with leaders of religious groups, including members of the Baha’i, Christian, and Jewish communities, throughout the country to discuss the impact of the security situation on religious groups and the freedom of religious minorities to worship without restrictions by the government or threats from the community. The embassy continued to support programs designed to highlight religious acceptance and to counter violent extremism related to religion, including

informal youth-led conversation groups to discuss these issues and alternatives to violence; a program working with scout troops to learn how to recognize and combat signs of religious radicalization; and several research programs aimed at identifying and countering religious radicalization and violent extremism, especially in youth. In June, the Ambassador visited the Grand Mosque of Kairouan and a U.S.-funded project restoring ancient Qurans.

Prior to the attack on May 9, the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism and the Ambassador visited Djerba to attend the annual Lag B'Omer pilgrimage and meet with members of the Jewish community to discuss the practice of their faith and challenges facing the community. During a press conference in Djerba, the Special Envoy and the Ambassador reiterated the U.S. government's shared commitment with Tunisia to religious inclusion. Local media highlighted the Ambassador's remark: "We witnessed Jewish children studying side by side with Muslim children."

The Special Envoy also held meetings with government officials, members of the Jewish community, civil society organizations, and university students. The embassy's social media platforms highlighted the trip as demonstrating U.S. commitment to advancing freedom of religion and peaceful coexistence. The Ambassador traveled to Djerba on May 18 to offer condolences to the victims of the May 9 Lag B'Omer attack and meet with members of the Jewish community, including Chief Rabbi Haim Bittan. The Ambassador also visited a mosque and a Catholic church to highlight the country's longstanding support for religious coexistence. Separately, the Special Envoy posted on a social media platform, "I'm impressed by the resilience of Tunisia's small Jewish community; their endurance is a fragile reminder of bygone Jewish heritage and, I hope, future coexistence."

In June, the embassy organized a religious and ethnic minority partners' workshop in the country, bringing together leaders of 14 faith-based organizations and minority rights associations from Tunisia, Lebanon, and Morocco. The workshop included interactions with representatives from the country's Christian, Jewish, Baha'i, and Muslim communities.

The embassy continued to support a two-year grant awarded in 2021 to a local NGO to promote religious diversity through interfaith dialogue, raise awareness of religious freedom, and advocate for reforms to improve freedom of religion in the country.