

World Report 2026; Tunisia

Tunisian authorities tried dozens of people, including prominent opposition figures, lawyers, and activists, in politically motivated cases and sentenced them to long prison terms on vague charges including terrorism or conspiracy against state security. The government has turned [arbitrary detention](#) into a cornerstone of its repressive policy, aimed at depriving people of their civil and political rights.

Civic space shrunk as authorities harassed activists and [targeted](#) civil society organizations with unfounded criminal investigations, increasing financial and administrative controls, and restrictions on their activities.

Political Crackdown

On April 19, a Tunis court [sentenced](#) 37 people, including lawyers, political opponents, activists, researchers, and businessmen, to between 4 and 66 years in prison in a politically motivated case known as the "Conspiracy Case." They were [accused](#) of "conspiracy against internal and external State security" and terrorism for allegedly plotting to overthrow the government of President Kais Saied. The court issued the [sentences](#) in a mass trial after just three sessions, without providing the defendants an adequate opportunity to present their defenses and without other due process protections.

Following the "Conspiracy Case" trial, anti-terrorism forces [arrested](#) a defense lawyer in the case and former administrative judge, Ahmed Souab, at his home on April 21, following comments he made questioning the independence of the judiciary. A judge ordered Souab [detained](#) on April 23 and on October 31 an anti-terrorism court [sentenced](#) him to five years in prison. Authorities have also [subjected](#) other defense lawyers in the same case to increasing judicial harassment and criminal prosecution for the legitimate exercise of their profession.

On November 27, a Tunis Appeals Court confirmed sentences against 34 of the 37 "Conspiracy Case" defendants between 5 and 45 years in prison and acquitted three. Authorities then [arrested](#) three prominent activists convicted in the case: Chaima Issa, [Ayachi Hammami](#), and Ahmed Nejib Chebbi.

On June 12, a Tunis court [sentenced](#) Abir Moussi, leader of the Free Destourian Party (PDL) and prominent opponent to president Kais Saied, to two years in prison for criticizing the electoral commission. [Moussi](#) has been imprisoned since October 2023 in connection with her statements and activism. She was previously handed a two-year sentence in a 2024 case related to her remarks on legislative elections. On December 12, Moussi was again [sentenced](#) to 12 years in prison for seeking "to change the form of government."

On June 20, a Tunis court [sentenced](#) Moncef [Marzouki](#), former president of Tunisia, [Abderrazak Kilani](#), a lawyer and former minister, and Imed Daïmi, a former member of parliament and prospective candidate for the 2024 presidential election, to 22 years in prison. They faced terrorism and security-related charges [reportedly](#) in connection with a press conference they held in Paris. All three are in exile and were sentenced in absentia.

On July 8, a Tunis court [sentenced](#) 21 people, including leaders of the Ennahda party and other opposition members, former government officials, and lawyers to prison terms of between 12 and 35 years on vague terrorism and state security charges. Among them was [Rached Ghannouchi](#), former president of the Ennahda party detained since April 2023 and convicted in several cases, who received a 14-year sentence in absentia.

On October 1, Nabeul court [sentenced](#) Saber Ben Chouchane to death for peaceful Facebook posts criticizing the president and calling on Tunisians to take to the streets. Ben Chouchane, who was arrested on January 22, was convicted under article 72 of the penal code, which provides for the death penalty for “attempting to change the form of government” as well as under article 67 for “insulting the president,” and [Decree-Law 54 on Cybercrime](#) for “spreading fake news.” After his conviction sparked public outrage, he was released on October 7 following a presidential pardon.

Freedom of Assembly and Association

On April 10 and May 9, security forces [banned](#) two events from taking place at the Rio theater in Tunis without a legal basis. The first was a mock trial in support of people arbitrarily detained for their peaceful opinions and activities, while the [second](#) was a rally in support of imprisoned journalist Mourad Zeghidi.

At least eight people working for non-governmental organizations in Tunisia were arbitrarily [arrested](#) between May and November 2024 in connection with their association work, in particular for providing aid to asylum seekers and refugees and combating racism. On November 24, two employees of the Tunisian Council for Refugees, Mustapha Djemali and Abderrazek Krimi, [charged](#) with facilitating the irregular entry and stay of foreign nationals in Tunisia, were sentenced to two years in prison and [released](#) for time served.

Several associations are facing criminal investigations in connection with their activities and finances or increased financial and administrative controls.

Freedom of the Press and Access to Information

At least three journalists, [Chadha Hadj Mbarek](#), Mourad Zeghidi, and Borhen Bsaisies remained imprisoned as of December. Lawyer and media commentator [Sonia Dahmani](#) was [released](#) on November 27 after 18 months in prison.

Reporters Without Borders [ranked](#) Tunisia 129th out of 180 countries in its 2025 World Report Index on press freedom, a decline by 11 ranks compared to the previous year. It highlighted

increasing political pressure on newsrooms, tightening legislation, and a climate of fear and self-censorship.

In August, the authorities [shut down](#) the National Authority for Access to Information, an independent body established in 2016 to guarantee the right to access information, which had been gradually restricted since Kais Saied became president in 2019.

Migrants, Asylum Seekers, and Refugees

As of March, there were over 10,600 refugees and asylum seekers [registered with the UN refugee agency \(UNHCR\)](#) in Tunisia, including 5,000 Sudanese nationals, many of whom had fled the conflict in Sudan starting in April 2023. UNHCR said that 86 percent of those it had registered [originated](#) from countries affected by armed conflict and widespread violence.

Tunisia lacks a national asylum system and the asylum applications procedures managed by UNHCR in Tunisia have been [suspended](#) since June 2024 at the request of Tunisian authorities.

Migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in Tunisia continue to face serious violations by security forces, including arbitrary arrests and detention, collective expulsions to the borders with Algeria and Libya, ill-treatment, [torture, and sexual violence](#). According to humanitarian sources, Tunisian authorities expelled least 12,000 people between January and April 2025 alone, including unaccompanied children.

In April, security forces [dismantled](#) part of the al-Amra and Jbeniana migrant camps north of Sfax, where thousands of migrants and asylum seekers from other African countries were living. The national guard removed migrants from the camps, arresting some and expelling them from the country. Anti-migrant campaigns continue to be widely shared on social media.

The tightening of security measures and the rise of anti-migrant rhetoric have increasingly restricted migrants' access to health care, education, transportation, work, and housing.

Despite evidence of serious violations, the European Union [continued](#) to cooperate with Tunisia on migration in the follow-up to the 2023 EU-Tunisia [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) that was accompanied by €105 million in EU support for migration management in Tunisia. The European Commission remained silent on Tunisia's violations of migrant rights, despite continued abuses by the National Guard including the Coast Guard, who had benefitted from EU support, and despite the Tunisian government's broader restrictions to civic space and severe crackdown on critics. The European Commission has still not implemented the [recommendations](#) included in the October 2024 report of the European Ombudsman, including ensuring public human rights monitoring and setting criteria for suspending EU-funded projects due to human rights violations.

Women's and Girls' Rights

Tunisian law continues to discriminate against women in inheritance rights and President Saied has [expressed](#) opposition to legal reforms. President Saied promulgated a 2022 constitution which states that “Tunisia is part of the Islamic Umma [community/nation]” and makes the realization of “the purposes of Islam” a responsibility of the state. Such provisions could be used to justify attacks on women’s rights based on interpretations of religious precepts.

A 2017 law on violence against women set out new support services, prevention, and protection mechanisms for survivors. However, there are numerous shortcomings in the law’s implementation. These include inadequate police and judiciary response to complaints of domestic violence, insufficient state funding for the law’s implementation, and a lack of sufficient women’s shelters.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Authorities continued to [prosecute](#) and imprison men for alleged same-sex sexual conduct under article 230 of the [penal code](#), which provides up to three years in prison for “sodomy.” LGBT activists have also faced increased harassment.

According to LGBT rights groups, authorities’ arrest and prosecution of people based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity has [increased](#) since the end of 2024. Between September 2024 and January 2025, over 80 people, mainly gay men and trans women, were arbitrarily arrested in different cities, detained, and prosecuted, according to the Tunisian Association for Justice and Equality (DAMJ). In July, at least 14 people were [arrested](#) in Djerba and Tunis, and at least six of them were [sentenced](#) to prison terms under article 230 of the penal code. Some of those arrested were [targeted digitally](#) and entrapped by members of the security forces on social media or dating applications.

Authorities also continue conduct [forced anal examinations](#)—purportedly to identify “proof” of homosexual conduct—which are a form of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment that can amount to [torture](#).

African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights

In March, the government announced it would [withdraw](#) its declaration under article 34(6) of the [Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights](#). The decision will prevent individuals and certain non-governmental organizations with observer status from directly bringing cases against Tunisia before the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights. The withdrawal decision will take effect in March 2026. The African Court has condemned Tunisia’s human rights and democratic backsliding since 2021 and issued multiple [rulings](#) that the government has failed to implement.

