

# Tunisia

PARTLY FREE

**56**  
/100

|                         |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| <u>Political Rights</u> | <b>20</b> /40 |
| <u>Civil Liberties</u>  | <b>36</b> /60 |

**LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS****64 /100    Partly Free**

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. See the methodology.



## Overview

After the ouster of a longtime autocrat in 2011, Tunisia held a series of free multiparty elections, and citizens enjoyed considerable political rights and civil liberties under a constitution promulgated in 2014. However, endemic corruption, economic challenges, security threats, and unresolved problems related to gender equality and transitional justice remained obstacles to full democratic consolidation. In 2021, President Kaïs Saïed took a number of emergency measures aimed at transforming the political system and expanding his own executive power. Having unilaterally replaced the prime minister and suspended the parliament, in 2022 Saïed formally dissolved the old legislature, issued a new constitution and electoral law, and continued campaigns of legal harassment against his political opponents.

## Key Developments in 2022

- In March, after a majority of lawmakers from the suspended parliament attempted to convene online for a vote against President Saïed’s emergency measures, he formally dissolved the body, leaving the country without a legislature.
- Saïed issued the draft of a new constitution in June, with further modifications added in early July. The constitution, which shifted power from the parliament to the presidency, won approval in a flawed referendum later that month, with a voter turnout of roughly 31 percent.
- In September, Saïed issued a new electoral law by presidential decree, and the first round of elections for a new parliament were held in late December. Amid an opposition boycott and a lack of candidates for some constituencies, voter turnout was extremely low at 11 percent, and a second round of voting was scheduled to take place in January 2023.
- Tunisia’s social and economic crisis continued to worsen during the year, with food insecurity linked to the Russian invasion of Ukraine adding to the hardships faced by much of the population.

## Political Rights

### A. Electoral Process

**A1** 0-4 pts

**Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?**

**3/4**

The 2014 constitution laid out a semipresidential system in which a popularly elected president served as head of state and exercised circumscribed powers, while the majority party in the parliament selected a prime minister, who served as head of government. The president was directly elected for up to two five-year terms.

The last presidential election held under the 2014 constitution took place in October 2019, following the death of President Beji Caid Essebsi that July. Kaïs Saïed, an independent candidate and former constitutional law professor, won a runoff against businessman and media owner Nabil Karoui with 73 percent of the vote. Local observers concluded that the election was generally competitive and credible, but raised some concerns about Karoui's inability to campaign while in prison.

Claiming emergency authority under Article 80 of the 2014 constitution, President Saïed took the unilateral decision to dismiss Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi in July 2021, and in October 2021 he installed a new government headed by Prime Minister Najla Bouden without parliamentary approval. Bouden remained prime minister during 2022. Under the new constitution adopted in July 2022, the prime minister and cabinet are appointed and dismissed by the president and responsible to him rather than to the parliament. The presidential term limit remained in place.

**A2** 0-4 pts

**Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?**

**1/4**

Tunisia's 2014 constitution established a unicameral parliament, the 217-seat Assembly of the Representatives of the People (ARP); 199 members were directly elected in domestic multimember constituencies, while 18 represented multimember constituencies abroad via a party-list system. All members served five-year terms.

The last legislative elections under the old constitution took place in October 2019. International and national observers declared the balloting to be generally competitive and credible. The Islamist party Ennahda placed first with 52 seats, Karoui's Qalb Tounes (Heart of Tunisia) party took 38 seats, the progressive Democratic Current

took 22, and Al-Karama (Dignity) Coalition took 21. The remaining seats were won by 11 other parties and 17 independent candidates.

In July 2021, President Saïed unilaterally suspended the parliament and revoked lawmakers' legal immunity, and several members later faced house arrest or detention and trials in military courts. Saïed formally dissolved the body in March 2022, after a majority of legislators met online and attempted to reverse several of the president's emergency measures.

In the fall of 2022, Saïed announced legislative elections scheduled to begin in late December under a new constitution and electoral law. The new parliament would have 161 members elected in single-member constituencies, including 10 representing Tunisians living abroad. Due in large part to onerous candidacy restrictions and a boycott led by major opposition parties, turnout in the first round of voting was extremely low at just 11 percent. Only 1,058 candidates campaigned for office—a steep drop-off from prior legislative elections. Ten constituencies attracted only one approved candidate, and seven of the seats for expatriate voters had no candidates at all. Following the first round of voting, just 21 candidates were declared as winners, and a second round was scheduled to take place in January 2023. As of December 28, at least 57 appeals of the initial results had been submitted to the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE).

The new constitution envisioned the creation of a second legislative chamber, the indirectly elected National Council of Regions and Districts, but this body had yet to be formed at the end of 2022.

*Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because the parliament elected in 2019 and suspended in 2021 was formally dissolved in March, and the first round of voting for a new legislature in December was marred by problems including opposition boycotts, extremely low voter turnout, and a lack of candidates for several districts.*

**A3** 0-4 pts

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| <b>Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?</b> | <b>2/4</b> |
|--|------------|

From the 2011 revolution through the last elections under the 2014 constitution in 2019, the ISIE's supervision of parliamentary and presidential balloting was well

regarded by Tunisian and international observers, and the authority itself was seen as politically independent.

In May 2022, Saïed replaced the ISIE's executive committee, and the newly appointed body was tasked with organizing the referendum on his draft constitution in July. Watchdog groups including I Watch and Mourakiboun criticized the ISIE's handling of the referendum, citing computational errors and a lack of transparency regarding the release of station-level results. The referendum was also marred by a low turnout of some 31 percent and complaints that opponents of the new charter were unable to campaign freely. The new constitution left the ISIE open to greater presidential interference in its composition, as it removed a clause from the 2014 constitution that stipulated the process by which ISIE members must be appointed, meaning the process could be set through ordinary legislation or presidential decrees.

Saïed issued a new electoral law by decree in September 2022, setting the stage for the parliamentary elections that began in December. In addition to replacing the proportional-representation system with voting in single-member districts, the law imposed new requirements on candidates. For example, each potential candidate must collect 400 signatures of registered voters who do not endorse any other candidate. The decree also eliminated public funding for campaigns, removed a ceiling on private fundraising, barred anyone ever charged with a legal violation from candidacy, and revoked prior laws promoting gender parity and youth representation on electoral lists. Finally, the decree ramped up punishments for vaguely defined "electoral crimes," including receiving illegal donations or "intentionally exploiting another candidate's honor or familial or geographic affiliation."

*Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 2 due to the president's unilateral replacement of the election authority's leadership, the flawed July referendum on a new constitution, and the new charter's lack of protections for the election authority's independence.*

## **B. Political Pluralism and Participation**

**B1** 0-4 pts

**Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?**

**2/4**

Tunisia's numerous political parties represent a wide range of ideologies and interests, but since the president seized extraordinary powers in July 2021, parties have experienced serious restrictions on their ability to operate. After the suspension of the old parliament and parliamentary immunity, some lawmakers and political figures were immediately subjected to repressive measures, including travel bans, detention, and house arrest. Such judicial harassment continued during 2022. For example, Rached Ghannouchi, the former parliament speaker and leader of the Ennahda party, faced a travel ban, asset freezes, questioning by antiterrorism police, and legal charges ranging from money laundering to the promotion of "jihadist" activity. Former prime minister Ali Laarayedh, also of the Ennahda party, was placed in detention on terrorism charges shortly after the December 2022 elections.

The new electoral law issued in September 2022, with its changes to funding and candidacy rules and the switch to single-member districts, was widely seen as a blow to the strength of political parties as opposed to individual candidates with access to private resources.

*Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to legal changes that weakened the role of political parties, in part by imposing procedural barriers on prospective candidates and eliminating public funding of campaigns.*

**B2** 0-4 pts

**Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?**

**3/4**

Opposition parties and political independents have generally participated actively in political processes since 2011, resulting in multiple rotations of power at the executive and legislative levels. However, major opposition parties boycotted the December 2022 parliamentary elections to protest adverse conditions created by the authorities' restrictions on opposition leaders beginning in 2021, the new constitution, and the



new electoral law. The lack of meaningful competition in the elections contributed to their extremely low level of voter turnout.

*Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because a combination of constitutional and legal changes, government restrictions, and electoral boycotts undermined the ability of opposition parties and candidates to win seats in the 2022 legislative elections.*

**B3** 0-4 pts

**Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?**

**3/4**

Voters are generally able to exercise their political choices without undue interference. However, powerful domestic economic interests have exercised a high degree of influence over politics. Foreign groups also reportedly supply funds to preferred parties and candidates, though these channels of support are opaque.

In 2021, the president's critics accused him of colluding with the regimes of the United Arab Emirates and Egypt to carry out his seizure of power, particularly in light of their common enmity toward Ennahda. However, the precise nature of foreign influence on recent political events remained unclear in 2022.

**B4** 0-4 pts

**Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?**

**2/4**

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations have worked to increase the political participation of marginalized groups. A 2017 law required an equal number of men and women at the top of candidate lists, as well as at least one candidate with a disability and three people under the age of 35 on each list. Representation of women in subsequent elections was comparatively high, and legislation aimed at protecting the rights of women has been passed. Fifty-four women held parliamentary seats after the 2019 elections, while 11 women and one

openly gay man requested nomination to stand as candidates in the 2019 presidential election. The prime minister since 2021, Najla Bouden, is a woman.

However, the September 2022 electoral law eliminated the 2017 quotas, and in the December 2022 parliamentary elections, only 11 percent of the candidates were women, 4 percent were aged 35 or younger, and two were people with disabilities.

Other segments of the population, including the Amazigh ethnic community, Black Tunisians, and LGBT+ people, remain underrepresented in electoral politics. The first party dedicated to addressing Amazigh interests, the Akal Movement, was formed in 2019. Black Tunisians have achieved some progress in advancing their political interests, including passage of an antiracism law in 2018, but they are largely excluded from leadership positions and often conflated with foreign migrants. Societal discrimination and laws criminalizing same-sex sexual activity impede active political participation for LGBT+ people, and political parties largely fail to address LGBT+ issues.

Both the 2014 constitution and the new charter adopted in 2022 state that the president must be a Muslim.

*Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because the elimination of laws promoting political representation for women, young people, and people with disabilities contributed to reduced participation by those constituencies in practice.*

## C. Functioning of Government

**C1** 0-4 pts

**Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?**

**1/4**

Conflict over the division of powers between the legislative and executive branches has undermined policymaking and governance since 2011. Late president Essebsi manipulated the national budget in such a way that the parliament was deeply underfunded, leaving it with limited ability or resources to craft legislation on its own or check executive authority. Clashes between the executive and legislative branches continued under Saïed, culminating in his emergency powers declaration on July 25, 2021. The move to suspend the parliament effectively allowed Saïed to rule by decree,



with elected lawmakers playing no role. The new government of Prime Minister Bouden took office that October without the constitutionally required approval from parliament, and it remained responsible only to the president.

In 2022, Saïed and his appointed government continued to govern unilaterally, without input from an elected legislature, and the new constitution adopted in July 2022 formally concentrated power in the presidency. Among other changes, it eliminated the parliament's ability to impeach the president and requires a two-thirds majority for the parliament to remove the prime minister and cabinet.

**C2** 0-4 pts

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|---|--------------|
| <b>Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?</b> | <b>1 / 4</b> |
|---|--------------|

Tunisia's anticorruption legislation has historically been considered weak. The Economic Reconciliation Law of 2017 effectively offered amnesty for those implicated in corruption under the pre-2011 regime of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, though its initial provisions were partly rolled back due to public disapproval. President Saïed issued a decree in March 2022 that expanded the concept of "criminal reconciliation," allowing businesspeople facing corruption charges to avoid punishment by repaying allegedly stolen funds or investing them in designated regional development projects. The process was to be managed by a commission appointed by the president.

The National Commission for the Fight against Corruption (INLUCC) was established in 2011, and a permanent body, the Commission on Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption (IBGLCC), was meant to replace it under the 2014 constitution. While legislation intended to establish the IBGLCC was passed in 2017, the new body remained inactive. INLUCC thus continued its operations with inadequate funding and little authority to compel legal action.

President Saïed justified his seizure of power in July 2021 in part by arguing that it was necessary to uproot corruption in the political establishment, but his administration's subsequent steps led critics to accuse the president of instrumentalizing anticorruption efforts to eliminate his political enemies. Police shut down INLUCC's headquarters in August 2021, and in March 2022 INLUCC employees organized a sit-in to protest the nonpayment of their salaries and the freezing of their work. In October

2022, the president installed Nadia Saadi as temporary head of INLUCC by decree, but the organization's future remained uncertain.

**C3** 0-4 pts

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| <b>Does the government operate with openness and transparency?</b> | <b>2/4</b> |
|--|------------|

President Saïed's centralization of power after July 2021 exacerbated the government's existing opacity regarding official decision-making and actions by law enforcement agencies. Al-Bawsala, a nonprofit organization that promotes transparency and accountability, has criticized ruling elites from all parties over their lack of responsiveness to the public, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. A 2016 freedom of information law was faulted by watchdog groups for its security-related exemptions.

A 2018 law requires the president, ministers, and high-level public officials, among others, to declare their assets to INLUCC; penalties for violating the law include large fines and prison terms of up to five years. Members of the Bouden government reportedly declared their assets in October 2021.

## Civil Liberties

### D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

**D1** 0-4 pts

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| <b>Are there free and independent media?</b> | <b>2/4</b> |
|--|------------|

The 2014 constitution and its 2022 replacement guarantee freedom of opinion, thought, expression, information, and publication, subject to some restrictions. During the 2011–21 period, independent outlets proliferated, including online. However, it remains difficult to obtain data about the ownership of media companies, their audiences, or the allocation of public advertising.

Since Saïed’s seizure of extraordinary powers in 2021, journalists have faced increasing pressure and intimidation from government officials in connection with their work, including criminal penalties for defamation and other alleged offenses. In June 2022, for example, Salah Attia, editor of the independent news website Al-Ray al-Jadid, was arrested and questioned at a military facility in connection with his public statements; he was sentenced in August to three months in prison on charges including “harming the military’s morale and reputation.” In September, Ghassen Ben Khelifa, editor of the news website Inhiyez and a popular political writer, was arrested on unclear charges of promoting terrorism.

**D2** 0-4 pts

**Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?**

**3/4**

Both the 2014 constitution and the new charter adopted in 2022 call for freedom of belief and conscience, but they also contain provisions that give Islam an official status. Blasphemy remains illegal, and police may invoke it as a pretext for arrests. Islamic education remains a required component of the curriculum in public schools. Converts to Christianity often experience harassment and discrimination.

**D3** 0-4 pts

**Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?**

**3/4**

Article 33 of the 2014 constitution protected academic freedom, which improved in practice after 2011, and Article 45 of the 2022 constitution provides a similar guarantee. However, self-censorship by academics persists in some instances. Students have reported being unable to pursue dissertation research on topics including sexuality and gender identity, or to engage in critiques of Islam’s role in violent extremism.

**D4** 0-4 pts

**Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?**

**3/4**

Private discussion is generally open and free, though public speech on certain topics, including criticism of the military, can draw official reprisals. The criminal ban on same-sex sexual activity also discourages open discussion of issues affecting LGBT+ people.

Since 2021, the authorities have increasingly prosecuted journalists, politicians, activists, and social media commentators for speech-related offenses, including insulting the president and defaming the military. The accused, who have been tried in military as well as civilian courts, have generally been individuals with significant online or offline platforms, as opposed to ordinary citizens or social media users. However, the high-profile cases effectively discouraged critical speech more broadly, as did a new presidential decree issued in September 2022 that imposed heavier prison sentences and monetary penalties on individuals who spread “false information or rumors” through online or offline communication networks. Those convicted can face up to 10 years in prison if the content targets public officials. The law also grants civilian and military law enforcement authorities greater latitude to access and search private devices and materials.

*Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because aggressive enforcement of existing laws and a new presidential decree that imposes harsher penalties for spreading “false information or rumors” have served to deter open criticism of the president and the military.*

## **E. Associational and Organizational Rights**

**E1** 0-4 pts

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|--------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Is there freedom of assembly?</b> | <b>2/4</b> |
|--------------------------------------|------------|

Like the 2014 constitution, the 2022 constitution guarantees the rights to assembly and peaceful demonstration. During the postrevolutionary period, public protests on political, social, and economic issues were frequent and well-attended. However, a

2015 counterterrorism law and successive states of emergency imposed significant constraints on such gatherings.

Emergency measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic have also been abused to crack down on protests. For example, new public health restrictions on public gatherings were announced in January 2022, ahead of planned demonstrations coinciding with the anniversary of the 2011 revolution.

Police routinely use violent tactics to disperse public demonstrations. Journalists have photographed officers at various times using batons, tear gas, and armored vehicles against protesters. Large protests against the president and his constitutional reforms in June 2022 were met with police beatings and water cannons in downtown Tunis.

**E2** 0-4 pts

**Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work?**

**2/4**

A 2011 decree guaranteed the freedom for NGOs to operate and outlined procedures governing the establishment of new groups. Tens of thousands of new NGOs began operating after the revolution, holding conferences, trainings, educational programs, and other events throughout Tunisia in subsequent years.

However, a 2018 law effectively equates NGOs with businesses and requires them to submit to onerous reporting requirements beyond those codified in the 2011 decree. Under the law, all NGOs (and businesses) are required to register with a National Registry of Institutions, and to provide data on staff, assets, decisions to merge or dissolve, and operations. Failure to register may result in a year of imprisonment and a fine. Critics of the rules argue that they increase state monitoring and oversight of civil society. Registration applications can be denied at the discretion of the Council of the National Registry.

In February 2022, Tunisian media published a leaked set of proposed amendments to laws governing civil society organizations. The draft changes would grant authorities greater latitude to block or dissolve associations and restrict their access to foreign funding.

**E3** 0-4 pts

**Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?**

**3/4**

The constitution adopted in July 2022, like its 2014 predecessor, guarantees the right to form labor unions and to strike, with exceptions for the military, security forces, and customs officials. The new charter also prohibits strikes by judges, who had mounted a strike in June to protest the president's purge of the judiciary. Large-scale strike actions have occurred across all sectors of the economy since the 2011 revolution, with participants demanding labor reform, better wages, and improved workplace conditions. Unions have reported that some employers take steps to discourage union activities, including the dismissal of union activists.

The Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) is the predominant union organization, though independent unions also exist. The UGTT has played a significant role in brokering political agreements during moments of crisis since 2011. In late 2021 it began to push President Saïed to move toward a broader political dialogue, and in 2022 it criticized the conduct of the December parliamentary elections. Also during the year, the UGTT galvanized societal opposition to a multibillion-dollar International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan agreement championed by the president. The union led a public-sector strike in June to protest against austerity measures that would result from the IMF deal, including public payroll cuts and subsidy reductions.

## **F. Rule of Law**

**F1** 0-4 pts

**Is there an independent judiciary?**

**1/4**

Between the 2011 revolution and President Saïed's seizure of extraordinary powers in 2021, elected officials took steps to institutionalize an independent judiciary. Legislation adopted in 2016 established the High Judicial Council (HJC), a body tasked with ensuring the independence of the judiciary and appointing a third of the Constitutional Court judges. Council members were elected that year by thousands of legal professionals. However, governments and lawmakers repeatedly failed to establish the Constitutional Court as envisioned by the 2014 constitution; its role



would have been to evaluate the constitutionality of decrees and laws. The absence of such a court became especially problematic in 2021, as there was no authoritative mechanism for assessing the constitutionality of Saïed’s emergency measures.

In February 2022, Saïed followed through on his promises to dissolve the professionally elected HJC and issued a decree creating a new, appointed body to replace it. In June, he issued a decree allowing the president to unilaterally dismiss judges, then immediately fired 57 judges on grounds of alleged corruption. Unions representing Tunisian judges initiated a four-week strike against these measures. An administrative court ordered the reinstatement of 49 of the dismissed magistrates in August, citing a lack of due process, but the government had yet to comply with the order at year’s end.

While the new constitution preserved both an HJC and a Constitutional Court in name, it granted the president final authority over judicial appointments following nominations by the HJC, whereas the 2014 charter had made the HJC’s appointment recommendations binding on the executive. In addition, the new constitution removed a clause of the 2014 constitution that granted the Constitutional Court authority to rule on the extent of the president’s powers.

*Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because the president unilaterally replaced the High Judicial Council and dismissed dozens of judges after granting himself the power to do so.*

**F2** 0-4 pts

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|--|------------|
| <b>Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?</b> | <b>2/4</b> |
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Though civil and criminal procedures have improved significantly since the time of Ben Ali, a state of emergency in place since 2015 and renewed repeatedly has given police broad license to arrest and detain people on security- or terrorism-related charges, and arbitrary arrests continued to take place during 2022. Civilians are still tried in military courts, particularly on charges of defaming the army. Those targeted for military trials have included lawmakers, businessmen, journalists, and bloggers.

In 2014, Tunisia established a Truth and Dignity Commission (IVD) to examine political, economic, and social crimes committed since 1956, and it soon began collecting

testimony. In early 2018, the parliament voted against extending the commission's mandate, a decision that drew criticism from rights activists for weakening transitional justice efforts. The commission presented its final report in 2019 and officially published it in 2020, drawing on over 62,000 complaints filed by Tunisian citizens against the state for human rights abuses. Tunisian courts began reviewing 69 indictments and 131 referrals from the IVD, but the president's emergency measures in 2021 created uncertainty about the future of the transitional justice process.

**F3** 0-4 pts

**Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?**

**3/4**

Physical security has been threatened by periodic terrorist attacks in recent years, including some claimed by the Islamic State (IS) militant group.

The police force is the subject of long-standing brutality complaints, with officers accused of abusing civilians and detainees with impunity. Police unions have resisted reform efforts aimed at addressing the problem.

While some offenses can still draw the death penalty under Tunisian law, the authorities have not carried out an execution since 1991.

**F4** 0-4 pts

**Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?**

**2/4**

Although the constitution guarantees gender equality, women experience discrimination in employment, and sexual harassment in public spaces remains prevalent. Black Tunisians face chronic disparities on indicators including employment and education; societal bias remains a widespread problem, though a 2018 law criminalized racial discrimination.

LGBT+ people continue to face legal discrimination. Same-sex sexual activity remains illegal, with the penal code calling for prison sentences of up to three years for "sodomy." This law has been enforced in practice in recent years.

Tunisia has no asylum law, leaving the United Nations as the sole entity processing claims of refugee status in the country. Irregular migrants and asylum seekers are often housed in informal detention centers, where they suffer from substandard living conditions. Delays in the issuance of residency permits make it impossible for many to work legally, forcing them to take informal jobs with no labor protections.

## G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

**G1** 0-4 pts

**Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?**

**3/4**

The constitution guarantees freedom of movement within the country, as well as the freedom to travel abroad. However, authorities have broad license under the state of emergency to restrict individuals' movement without initiating formal charges, and thousands of people have been affected by such orders. Human rights groups criticized the travel bans imposed after the president's seizure of extraordinary powers in July 2021 as arbitrary restrictions on freedom of movement.

**G2** 0-4 pts

**Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?**

**2/4**

The protection of property rights and the freedom to operate businesses are impeded in part by high levels of corruption and a large court backlog of property disputes.

Under existing law, women are granted half the share of inheritance that men receive, and efforts to establish gender equality in inheritance rights have failed to make progress in the parliament.

**G3** 0-4 pts

**Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?**

**3/4**

Tunisia has long been praised for relatively progressive social policies, especially in the areas of family law and women's rights. In 2017, the Justice Ministry repealed a decree that had banned Tunisian women from marrying non-Muslim men. However, women face high rates of domestic abuse. The 2017 Law on Eliminating Violence against Women addressed domestic violence and included language intended to protect women from harassment in public and from economic discrimination. The law's implementation has been limited by shortcomings including a lack of awareness of its provisions, a shortage of trained agents to handle complaints, pressure on women from some agents to avoid taking abusive husbands to court, and logistical barriers to reporting abuse. High-profile cases of femicide stemming from domestic violence continued to be reported during 2022.

Public displays of affection can lead to charges of violating public morality laws, which carry penalties including jail time.

**G4** 0-4 pts

**Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?**

**2/4**

Despite efforts by civil society groups to combat such problems, Tunisian women and children are subject to sex trafficking and forced domestic work both in Tunisia and abroad. Refugees and other migrants are also susceptible to exploitation by traffickers. Cases of exploitation in the agriculture and textile sectors are prevalent; women often work long hours with no contracts, benefits, or legal recourse, and many are reportedly transported to work sites under dangerous conditions.

Protests continue to call attention to the lack of economic opportunity associated with high inflation, unemployment, and a dearth of meaningful reform to address such issues. The COVID-19 pandemic, by many measures, exacerbated Tunisia's social and economic challenges. In 2022, rising food prices and shortages of basic staples were driven by a combination of internal causes and the international effects of the war in Ukraine.





### On Tunisia

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### Country Facts

Global Freedom Score

**56/100** Partly Free

Internet Freedom Score

**61/100** Partly Free

### Other Years

2022

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