

USDOS – US Department of State

Country Report on Terrorism 2020 - Chapter 1 - Tunisia

Overview: Counterterrorism and border security continued to be top priorities of the Government of Tunisia. The risk of terrorist activity remained high, exacerbated by sustained instability in Libya, although the frequency and scale of terrorist attacks in 2020 decreased from 2019. Tunisian strides in professionalizing its security apparatus in partnership with the United States and its commitment to joint Ministry of Interior (MOI) and Ministry of Defense (MOD) CT operations have steadily degraded violent extremist organizations' capacity within the country. Despite COVID-19 challenges affecting national resources, Tunisia demonstrated consistent security force readiness and carried out proactive CT operations throughout the year. Tunisia continued work on implementation of a national preventing/countering violent extremism (PVE/CVE) strategy and the freezing of terrorist assets and, as evidenced by the responses to the terrorist attack near Embassy Tunis and to the Sousse attack, demonstrated improvements in CT crisis response, coordination, and investigation.

2020 Terrorist Incidents: The following is a representative list of terrorist incidents:

- On March 6, two Tunisians on a motorbike carried out a suicide attack targeting a police checkpoint near the perimeter of Embassy Tunis. The attack killed one police officer and injured five other security personnel as well as a Tunisian civilian.
- On September 6, three Tunisians carried out a combined vehicular attack and stabbing, targeting two National Guard officers on patrol in Sousse. MOI forces killed the three attackers, and security officers subsequently arrested 11 individuals for suspected ties to the operation.
- On December 20 a shepherd was found beheaded near the Algerian border region of Jebel Salloum in west-central Tunisia. According to local media, Jund al-Khilafah-Tunisia (JAK-T), the ISIS branch in Tunisia, killed the man for being a suspected security forces informant.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: There were no changes to Tunisia's counterterrorism legislation. The Tunisian government's CT efforts continue to demonstrate advances in successful, proactive CT operations and improved coordination between MOI and MOD security elements. There is substantive cooperation with the embassy on investigations, prosecutions, and prevention of terrorist activity aimed at U.S. interests in Tunisia.

Interior Minister Taoufik Charfeddine reported during a November parliamentary hearing that MOI and MOD CT units arrested 1,020 people for belonging to terrorist groups, with 876 of those transferred to the CT judicial pole and 112 eventually imprisoned in 2020. The minister also reported 33 terrorist cells dismantled and 48 preventive CT operations carried out in 2020. Significant CT-related law enforcement actions and arrests reported publicly included the following:

- On January 25, investigations related to a leader of JAK-T led to MOI security forces uncovering multiple locations used to hide ammunition, landmines, and explosive material on Arbata Mountain in Gafsa governorate.
- On February 25, MOI National Guard and MOD military units conducted a CT operation in Kasserine governorate killing two suspected terrorists, one of whom was confirmed to be Bassem Ghenimi of JAK-T.
- During September 11-12, MOI National Guard units arrested 73 individuals suspected of links to terrorism in the governorates of Beja, Ben Arous, Bizerte, Sidi Bouzid, and Sousse.

Border security remained a top priority. The Tunisian Armed Forces, along with the MOI's National Guard, successfully employed U.S.-funded patrol craft, vehicles, and weapons in joint operations throughout 2020. Phase 2 of the southern electronic border surveillance system is currently underway with German assistance and is expected to be completed in 2021. Talks for a third phase are currently underway with the Tunisian Ministry of Defense. In 2020 the maritime coastal surveillance system began to provide full coverage along the entire Tunisian coast.

Safeguarding tourist zones remained a Tunisian government emphasis, with work continuing in the context of the G-7+7 Tourist and Cultural Sites Protection project group. The Ministry of Tourism reported Tunisia experienced a 77 percent decline in tourist arrivals by October 2020 because of COVID-19.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Tunisia is a member of MENAFATF. Its FIU, the Tunisian Financial Analysis Committee (CTAF), is a member of the Egmont Group. Tunisia is also a member of the Defeat-ISIS Coalition's CIFG.

In 2020 the Tunisian National Counterterrorism Commission (CNLCT) announced renewed asset freezing for 23 Tunisians linked to terrorist activities. These measures are part of the CNLCT's fight against financing terrorism in accordance with the 2019 CT and Counter-Terrorist Finance Law, as well as the 2019 government decree No. 419 on the implementation of the UN Security Council measures on Countering the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Financing of Terrorism. CTAF also announced the launch of "Hannibal," an online platform dedicated to the exchange of information on hard currency transfers in real time to improve cooperation between law enforcement and the private sector, planned for 2021.

Countering Violent Extremism: Tunisia remained committed to preventing terrorist radicalization through youth and educational programs coordinated among its ministries and civil society organizations. In 2019 the CNLCT secured Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund financing for several CVE projects led by Tunisian civil society organizations that continued implementation through 2020. The U.S. Agency for International Development's five-year, \$48.5 million Youth/PVE program begun in 2018 continued, as did the Ministry of Justice's Tawasol Project. USAID is also assisting the CNLCT in planning and executing strategic PVE/CVE interventions nationwide. Despite continued concerns about returning FTFs and their family members from Iraq and Syria, the government remained committed to working with the international community on building local capacity to effectively rehabilitate and reintegrate these individuals back into their communities.

International and Regional Cooperation: Tunisia holds a nonpermanent seat on the 2020-21 UN Security Council representing both Africa and the Middle East. The nation hosted the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum in November. Tunisia agreed to host the GCTF's 2020 regional workshop on returning families of FTFs, but the event was cancelled because of COVID-19. Tunisia also participated in a national-level workshop hosted by UNODC's Terrorism Prevention Branch on implementation of UNSCR 2396, on detecting and preventing terrorist travel.

ecoi.net summary:

Annual report on
terrorism (covering 2020)



Country:

Tunisia

Source:

[USDOS – US Department of State](#)

Original link:

<https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2020/tunisia/>

Document type:

Periodical Report

Language:

English

Published:

16 December 2021

Document ID:

2065451

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

