



Urgent Action Office 3-1992 Yonge Street Toronto ON M4S 1Z7 Phone: (416) 363-9933 Fax: (416) 363-3103 urgentaction@amnesty.ca  
First UA: 27/24 Index: MDE 30/7893/2024 Tunisia of March 28, 2024

## **TUNISIA ARTIST JAILED FOR CRITICIZING PRESIDENT**

On January 31, 2024, a Tunisian appeals court in Monastir sentenced artist Rached Tamboura to two years in jail for peaceful protest through his art. He created graffiti criticizing President Kais Saied's negative remarks about sub-Saharan migrants. Police arrested him on the night of July 17-18, 2023, shortly after his last artwork. On December 4, 2023, he was found guilty of insulting the president and spreading false news that could harm public safety or spread fear, under specific Tunisian laws. Rached is now in Monastir prison, fighting against his arrest. He should be freed immediately since his only "crime" was expressing himself peacefully.

### **Write to the Tunisian President urging him to:**

- Release Rached Tamboura immediately.
- Overturn his conviction and sentence, acknowledging his actions as peaceful expression.
- While he awaits release, provide him with proper healthcare that meets international standards and respects confidentiality, autonomy, and informed consent.
- Stop arresting individuals for peacefully expressing their opinions.

### **Write to:**

President of the Republic, Kais Saied

Email: [contact@carthage.tn](mailto:contact@carthage.tn)

X (Twitter): @TnPresidency

Salutation: *Your Excellency:*

### **And copy:**

His Excellency Lassaad Boutara

Ambassador

Embassy of the Republic of Tunisia

515 O'Connor Street

Ottawa, ON K1S 3P8

Tel: (613) 237-0330, -0332 Fax: (613) 237-7939

Email: [at.ottawa@diplomatie.gov.tn](mailto:at.ottawa@diplomatie.gov.tn)

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Rached Tamboura, a 28-year-old artist and student at Tunisia's Arabic Calligraphy University in Tunis, was arrested by police on the night of July 17-18, 2023. The arrest followed his graffiti critical of President Kais Saied's racist comments towards sub-Saharan migrants made in February 2023. [These remarks had fueled widespread racism](#), leading to attacks and mass expulsions of black migrants and Tunisians.

Without a lawyer, Rached was interrogated by police and then held for 48 hours on orders from the prosecution. He faced a judge on July 20, 2023, regarding charges under specific penal and decree laws, leading to his pre-trial detention. On July 26, the investigation ended, and Rached was charged with insulting the president and spreading false news that could endanger public safety. He was sentenced to two years in prison on December 4, 2023, a decision upheld by the appeals court on January 31, 2024.

Since President Saied took extraordinary powers in July 2021, claiming constitutional authority, [Tunisia's human rights situation has worsened](#). The government has targeted opposition figures, critics, and perceived adversaries, jeopardizing rights to free expression, association, and assembly as recognized by international and African human rights treaties.

After President Saied's discriminatory statements in February 2023, there was a surge in violence against migrants and refugees, including evictions and arbitrary arrests. Security forces have since conducted widespread, arbitrary expulsions of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees to neighboring countries, leading to at least 28 deaths in the desert region along the Libyan border from July to August.

***Please take action as soon as possible until May 23, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.***