

Urgent Action Office 3-1992 Yonge Street Toronto ON M4S 1Z7 Phone: (416) 363-9933 Fax: (416) 363-3103 urgentaction@amnesty.ca
First UA: 8/25 Index: MDE 30/8971/2025 Tunisia of January 24, 2025

TUNISIA

JOURNALIST MOHAMED BOUGHALLEB UNFAIRLY JAILED

Journalist Mohamed Boughalleb has been unfairly jailed since March 22, 2024. Security forces arrested him after a senior official from the Ministry of Religious Affairs filed a complaint. The complaint targeted comments Boughalleb made on social media, TV, and radio, where he questioned the Ministry's spending. He was later convicted of defamation and sentenced to eight months in prison. In a separate case, he is being held without trial under a cybercrimes law, also because of his public comments. Boughalleb's health has gotten much worse while in jail. Authorities have not given him the medical care he needs, making his situation even more serious.

Write to the President of Tunisia urging him to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Mohamed Boughalleb, as he is detained solely for peacefully exercising his human rights.
- Ensure that, until his release, he is held in conditions meeting international standards and has regular access to adequate healthcare.
- Stop targeting critics, journalists, and political opponents for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Write to:

President of the Republic Kais Saied
Route de la Goulette
Site archéologique de Carthage, Tunisie
Email: 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: tunisianembassy canada@diplomatie.gov.tn

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mohamed Boughalleb, a prominent Tunisian journalist, has seen his health deteriorate severely during his unjust detention. He suffers from chronic illnesses, including diabetes and high blood pressure, and has developed prostate issues. His diabetes has worsened in prison, leading to repeated infections. Both his eyesight and hearing have been severely impacted. Despite his worsening condition,

authorities have denied him access to proper medical care, including daily medication and regular check-ups.

On November 4, 2024, Boughalleb was moved to a more overcrowded wing of El Mornaguia Prison, worsening his living conditions. Although he completed an eight-month sentence for defamation, he remains arbitrarily detained in connection to a separate case. In April 2024, a judge ordered his pre-trial detention under Article 24 of Decree-Law 2022-54 on Cybercrimes. He faces baseless charges of spreading false news and could receive a five-year prison sentence and a fine of 50,000 Tunisian Dinars (about \$16,000). His lawyers argue he is not the author of the post in question. On February 11, 2025, the Tunis Cassation Court will decide whether to take this case to trial or drop the charges.

Since May 2024, Tunisian authorities have intensified their [crackdown on journalists and media freedom](#). Several prominent journalists, media figures, and activists have faced prosecution under Decree-Law 2022-54 on Cybercrimes for exercising their right to free speech.

On May 22, the Tunis First Instance Court sentenced journalists Borhen Bsaies and Mourad Zeghidi to one-year prison terms in separate cases under the decree. The following day, [media founder Houssein Hajlaoui](#) received a nine-month suspended sentence for his online posts after being detained for 11 days. On May 11, [lawyer and media commentator Sonia Dahmani](#) was arrested under the same law for comments made on a TV show. She was sentenced to one year in prison, later reduced to eight months on appeal, and an additional two years in a separate case for criticizing discriminatory practices in Tunisia.

These cases are part of a larger pattern of repression. Since its introduction in September 2022, [Decree-Law 2022-54](#) has been weaponized against individuals exercising their right to freedom of expression. The law's vague definitions of offenses such as "fake news" violate international human rights standards and fail to meet requirements for legality, necessity, and proportionality.

Since President Kais Saied claimed emergency powers in July 2021, [Tunisia's human rights situation has worsened](#) dramatically. Waves of arrests have targeted political opponents, journalists, activists, and critics of the government. Over 70 people have faced arbitrary detention or prosecution since late 2022 for exercising rights protected under international law, including freedoms of expression, assembly, and association.

The crackdown is a direct attack on the rule of law and fundamental rights. Articles 19, 21, and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Articles 9, 10, and 11 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights guarantee these freedoms. Tunisia, as a state party to both treaties, has an obligation to uphold them.

This growing repression threatens not only individuals like Mohamed Boughalleb but also Tunisia's democracy and its commitment to human rights.

Please take action as soon as possible until June 24, 2025! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.