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First UA: 93/25 Index: MDE 30/9433/2025 Tunisia of October 3, 2025

TUNISIA

LAWYER ARBITRARILY DETAINED FOR DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

Ahmed Souab, a 68-year-old lawyer and human rights defender, has been arbitrarily detained since April 21, 2025, for his work defending victims of human rights violations and for exercising his right to freedom of expression.

He now faces trial on unfounded terrorism charges, brought solely because he criticized the lack of due process and fair trial standards in the so-called “*conspiracy case*,” where he served as defence counsel for several defendants.

Tunisian authorities must immediately release Ahmed Souab, drop all charges against him, and stop using terrorism laws to silence peaceful dissent and opposition voices.

Write to the President of Tunisia urging his government to:

- ensure the immediate release of Ahmed Souab as he is detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights.

Write to:

President of the Republic Kais Saied
Route de la Goulette
Site archéologique de Carthage, Tunisie
Email: contact@carthage.tn
Twitter: @TnPresidency – Facebook
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: tunisianembassycanada@diplomatie.gov.tn

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmed Souab is a well-known Tunisian lawyer and human rights defender. He has long spoken out against violations of fair trial rights, political interference in the judiciary, and the decline of the rule of law under President Kais Saied. A former judge at the Administrative Court, he later represented several high-profile clients, including Sonia Dahmani and opposition figures Ghazi Chaouachi and Ridha Belhaj in the “*conspiracy case*.”

On April 19, 2025, Souab addressed a press conference after the “*conspiracy trial*,” in which 37 defendants were unjustly convicted on baseless terrorism and conspiracy charges. Drawing on his role as defence counsel, he criticized due process violations, executive interference, and the lack of judicial independence.

Two days later, the Counter-Terrorism Brigade arrested him in direct retaliation for these remarks. He was held incommunicado for 48 hours without access to his lawyer or family. On April 23, he was brought before the investigative judge, who ordered six months of pre-trial detention despite no evidence of a recognisable crime.

On June 30, 2025, the investigative judge charged Souab under several articles of Tunisia’s counter-terrorism law, accusing him of spreading information that could allegedly benefit a terrorist organisation. Additional charges under Decree Law 54 and the Telecommunications Code accused him of sharing false or harmful information.

His defence team appealed, but on July 17 the accusation chamber upheld the charges and sent him to trial, scheduled to begin on October 31, 2025.

Souab’s prosecution is a clear attempt to punish him for his human rights work and his lawful exercise of freedom of expression. International standards affirm that lawyers must be able to perform their professional duties without intimidation or interference and must not be identified with their clients or punished for public commentary on justice or human rights.

His case reflects a broader crackdown in Tunisia, where counter-terrorism laws are increasingly used to silence peaceful dissent. Amnesty International has documented repeated targeting of lawyers who defend political opponents, activists, and human rights defenders. These actions violate the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers and regional fair trial standards, further eroding judicial independence and shrinking civic space in Tunisia.

Please take action as soon as possible until April 03, 2026. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.