

URGENT ACTION

UNJUSTLY JAILED LAWYER TREATED INHUMANELY

Tunisian lawyer and media personality, **Sonia Dahmani**, has been arbitrarily detained since security forces arrested her from the Tunisian Bar Associations' office in Tunis on May 11, 2024. She is facing five separate legal proceedings, all stemming from the exercise of her right to freedom of expression. **Sonia Dahmani** is currently held in the Manouba prison in cruel and inhuman conditions including exposure to extreme cold and lack of access to basic necessities. The Tunisian authorities must immediately and unconditionally release **Sonia Dahmani**, quash her unjust convictions, and drop the baseless criminal investigations against her.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
- [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Second Urgent Action 43.24**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

President of the Republic Kais Saied

Route de la Goulette
Site archéologique de Carthage, Tunisie
Email: contact@carthage.tn
Twitter: [@TnPresidency](https://twitter.com/TnPresidency)

Tunisian Ambassador to the United States

Mrs. Hanene Tajouri Bessassi
1515 Massachusetts Avenue,
NW, Washington DC 20005
Email: AT.Washington@Tunisianembassy.org

Your Excellency,

I write to you to express my grave concern over the prolonged unjust imprisonment of Tunisian lawyer, **Sonia Dahmani**. She is imprisoned for exercising her right to freedom of expression, including publicly criticizing conditions of detention in Tunisian prisons as well as the ill-treatment of refugees and migrants in the country.

Following her public comments during her regular appearances on television and radio shows, Tunisian authorities have initiated five separate legal proceedings against her. She was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment in two cases.

Sonia Dahmani is enduring cruel and inhuman conditions of detention in prison. She faces extreme temperature fluctuations, with freezing cold during the winter due to a broken window. She has developed serious health issues. **Sonia Dahmani** is also denied basic necessities and adequate healthcare like clean clothing and medication, while being subjected to humiliating treatment by prison guards.

I urge you to immediately and unconditionally release **Sonia Dahmani**, quash her unjust convictions and sentences, and drop the baseless criminal investigations against her. Pending her release, she must be granted access to her family, lawyers, and adequate healthcare and held in conditions that meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Sonia Dahmani is a 59-year-old Tunisian lawyer and prominent media personality who frequently appeared on radio and TV shows such as “Emission Impossible” on IFM Radio and “Denya Zida” on Carthage+. Sonia Dahmani is facing five separate legal proceedings for public comments critical of the authorities. In November 2023, she was [summoned](#) by an investigative judge following a complaint by the General Directorate of Prisons after she made critical remarks about detention conditions in prisons during a radio show. In a separate case, she was [summoned](#) by an investigative judge in January 2024 following a [complaint](#) by Minister of Justice Laila Jaffel for criticizing the Tunisian authorities and stating that “putting people in prison is not an accomplishment”.

On May 7, 2024, Sonia Dahmani made critical comments of the migration situation in Tunisia during a TV show. She said: “What extraordinary country are we talking about? The one where half of young people want to leave?” On May 9, she announced that she had been summoned by an investigative judge. She is being investigated under Article 24 Decree-Law 2022-54 which imposes five years’ imprisonment and a fine of 50,000 Tunisian Dinars (around 16,000 USD). On May 11, 2024, masked members of the security forces stormed the Tunisian Bar Association’s office in Tunis to arrest her.

After Sonia Dahmani’s arrest, the National Order of Lawyers (ONAT), Tunisia’s Bar Association, announced a [strike](#) on May 13, 2024 to protest against the arbitrary arrest of their colleague. The [French authorities](#) and the [European Union](#) have expressed their concerns regarding the wave of arrests targeting members of civil society organizations and journalists, including Sonia Dahmani.

Since the promulgation of [Decree-Law 54](#) on September 13, 2022, authorities have ramped up their targeting of individuals exercising their right to freedom of expression. Decree-Law 2022-54 contravenes human rights treaties including the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Tunisia is a state party. Both Article 9 of the Charter and Article 19 of the Covenant guarantee the right to freedom of expression. Restrictions on the right based on ambiguous, overly broad terms such as “fake news” fail to meet the requirements of legality, necessity, and proportionality.

Since his power grab on July 25, 2021, President Saied has claimed emergency powers, claiming these were granted to him by Tunisia’s 2014 Constitution. Since February 2023, the human rights situation in Tunisia has been rapidly [deteriorating](#) as several opposition figures, dissidents, perceived enemies of the president, and critics of the government have been targeted and harassed. The crackdown on opposition and critics is a flagrant attack on the rule of law and human rights including the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly in Tunisia, rights protected under Articles 19, 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic, French, English, or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: June 16, 2025

NAME AND PRONOUN: Sonia Dahmani (she/her).

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/urgent-actions/urgent-action-lawyer-arrested-over-public-remarks-tunisia-43-24/>