

URGENT ACTION

OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS UNJUSTLY JAILED

On November 28, the Tunis Court of Appeal upheld the convictions and prison sentences of 34 defendants ranging from five to 45 years in the politically motivated “conspiracy case”. Authorities swiftly implemented the court’s unjust verdict against two of those sentenced who were not already in detention. On November 29, plainclothes police officers violently arrested political activist Chaima Issa while she was at a peaceful demonstration in Tunis denouncing the crackdown on peaceful dissent in the country. Three days later, on December 2, police officers arrested human rights lawyer Ayachi Hammami from his home in Tunis. On December 4, police arrested prominent opposition figure Ahmed Nejib Chebbi from his home. Tunisian authorities should immediately quash the unjust convictions and sentences of all defendants in the unjust “conspiracy case” and immediately and unconditionally release all those detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter to the government official(s) listed. Use the sample letter below as a guide or use your own words.
- [Click here](#) to report your action(s) on **Third UA 90.24**. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

President of the Republic Kais Saied

Email: contact@carthage.tn

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Presidence.tn>

Twitter/X: @TnPresidency

Send a copy of your letter to the address below

**CC: Tunisian Embassy in the United States
Ambassador Hanène Al-Tajouri Bessassi**

1515 Massachusetts Avenue, NW,
Washington DC 20005

Email: AT.Washington@Tunisianembassy.org

Your Excellency,

I am gravely concerned over the arbitrary arrest and detention of political activist **Chaima Issa**, human rights lawyer **Ayachi Hammami**, and prominent opposition figure **Ahmed Nejib Chebbi**. They were arrested following the decision by the Tunis Court of Appeal to uphold the unjust convictions in the so-called “conspiracy case” against 34 defendants. Chaima Issa and Ayachi Hammami announced hunger strikes to protest their arbitrary arrest and detention.

Among the 34 individuals sentenced in this trial, six opposition political figures – **Khayyam Turki** (sentenced to 35 years) **Jaouhar Ben Mbarek**, **Issam Chebbi**, **Ghazi Chaouachi**, **Ridha Belhaj** (20 years) and **Abdelhamid Jelassi** (10 years) have been held in arbitrary detention since the investigation began. Other defendants in this case include individuals who had been sentenced or held in pretrial detention in relation to other politically motivated cases, such as senior opposition figures **Noureddine Bhiri** (20 years), **Sahbi Atig** (10 years), and **Said Ferjani** (10 years) from the former ruling Ennahdha party. The court also sentenced in absentia 20 individuals living abroad, including prominent human rights defender **Bohra Bel Haj Hmida**, who was sentenced to 33 years.

I urge you and your government to quash the unjust convictions and sentences of all defendants and to immediately and unconditionally release those who are detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights. Finally, I urge you and your government to cease the politically motivated prosecutions of critics, political opponents, human rights defenders and activists.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The 'conspiracy case' in Tunisia involves the prosecution of 37 opposition figures, lawyers, and activists on politically motivated charges, primarily "conspiracy against state security," which carry severe prison sentences with them. In April 2025, the Tunis Court of First Instance handed down harsh prison terms, ranging from four to 66 years, following a trial widely condemned for its grave fair trial violations, lack of transparency, and executive interference. Defendants were not allowed to be present for their trial, based on the court's decision to hold all terrorism trials remotely since April 2024, citing "imminent danger" without any justification. The trial was undermined by a lack of transparency and due process of law. Evidence was neither publicly presented nor subjected to cross-examination, and access to the courtroom was denied to several independent journalists, civil society representatives, and members of the diplomatic community. The defendants were not allowed to attend in person or to speak, and their lawyers had no opportunity to present their arguments before the court delivered its verdicts.

Those sentenced included political opposition activists from across the political spectrum, businessman, lawyers, human rights defenders and activists over two years after the investigation started in February 2023. The defendants were sentenced based on unfounded charges of conspiracy under 10 provisions of the Tunisian Penal Code including Article 72, which mandates the death penalty for trying to "change the nature of the state." They were also sentenced on bogus terrorism related charges. The charges and evidence presented were based solely on the defendants' involvement in organizing political opposition or meetings including with foreign nationals — none of which constitute a criminal offense.

Authorities had arbitrarily detained eight of the defendants in pre-trial detention since their arrest in February 2023 exceeding the legal limit of 14 months set out in the Code of Criminal Procedure: including politician **Khayyam Turki**, businessman **Kamel Ltaeif**; politician **Abdelhamid Jelassi**; opposition activist **Issam Chebbi**; opposition activist **Jaouhar Ben**; and lawyers and political activists **Ghazi Chaouachi** and **Ridha Belhaj**. Security forces arrested **Chaima Issa** and **Lazhar Akremi** in February 2023, but they were provisionally released on July 13, 2023 after nearly five months of arbitrary detention. Following their release, authorities banned them from travelling abroad and "appearing in public spaces".

On March 4, 2025, the appeal trial opened, yet again without defendants being permitted to attend in court in violation of their fair trial rights. It was subsequently postponed to April 11 and then April 18. On October 24, 2025, defense lawyers learned that the initial appeals hearing had been scheduled for October 27 and would be held remotely via video conference for the 12 defendants in detention, in violation of their due process rights. The detained defendants were notified only on the day of the hearing, while the others received no summons. On October 27, the hearing was adjourned until November 17 and then until November 27.

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

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: June 5, 2026

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/urgent-actions/tunisia-mass-convictions-of-opposition-activists/>