

## TUNISIA

- **TUN-06:** Abir Moussi (Ms.)
- **TUN-COLL-01:** 63 parliamentarians



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.

## Tunisia

*Decision adopted by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians at its 179th session (Geneva, 2 to 18 February 2026)*



Abir Moussi (centre), President of the Parti destourien libre (Free Destourian Party) (PDL), at the Tunisian Assembly headquarters in the capital Tunis on 26 January 2021. FETHI BELAID/AFP

### TUN-06 – Abir Moussi

#### Alleged human rights violations

- ✓ Threats, acts of intimidation
- ✓ Arbitrary arrest and detention
- ✓ Lack of due process at the investigation stage and lack of fair trial proceedings
- ✓ Violation of freedom of opinion and expression
- ✓ Violation of freedom of assembly and association
- ✓ Violation of freedom of movement
- ✓ Abusive revocation or suspension of the parliamentary mandate
- ✓ Failure to respect parliamentary immunity
- ✓ Other acts obstructing the exercise of the parliamentary mandate
- ✓ Impunity

#### A. Summary of the case

Ms. Abir Moussi, former member of the Assembly of People's Representatives of Tunisia, was the victim in 2019 and 2021 of acts of verbal and physical violence and sexist, degrading insults, directly linked to the exercise of her parliamentary mandate. The abuse suffered by Ms. Moussi is allegedly based on the one hand, on the fact that she is the leader of an opposition political party and, on the other, on her gender. Ms. Moussi also received serious death threats, which she reported to the police, who provided her with security when she was still a member of parliament.

#### Case TUN-06

**Tunisia:** Parliament affiliated to the IPU

**Victim:** Former female opposition member of parliament

**Qualified complainant(s):** Section I.1(a) of the Committee Procedure (Annex I)

**Submission of complaint:** October 2020

**Recent IPU decision:** April 2025

**IPU mission(s):** - - -

**Recent Committee hearing:** Hearing with the Tunisian delegation at the 149th IPU Assembly (October 2024)

#### Recent follow-up:

- Communications from the authorities: Letter from Speaker of the Assembly of People's Representatives (May 2024)
- Communication from the complainant: December 2025
- Communications to the authorities: Letter to the Speaker of the Assembly of People's Representatives (December 2025)
- Communication to the complainant: December 2025

Although the complainant's allegations were supported by videos and excerpts from social media posts that helped identify the alleged perpetrators, including two former members of parliament, Mr. Seifedine Makhlouf and Mr. Sahbi Smara, these two members were sentenced only on 26 March 2025 to one year and to six months in prison, respectively. The complainant lodged an appeal against the judgment, arguing that the gravity of the offences warranted a more severe sentence.

In addition to the verbal and physical violence to which she was subjected, Ms. Moussi was also stripped of her parliamentary mandate on 30 March 2022 when the President of the Republic decided to dissolve the Tunisian parliament. Since that date, the violations of Ms. Moussi's rights to freedom of expression and to demonstration have continued to increase.

On 3 October 2023, a few days after expressing her interest in the presidential elections, Ms. Moussi was arrested while attempting to lodge an appeal against the presidential decrees on the organization and conduct of local elections scheduled for December 2023, citing a lack of transparency in the electoral process. On 5 October 2023, the investigating judge ordered that she be remanded in custody on charges of "attempting to change the form of government", "inciting violence on Tunisian territory" and "aggression with the aim of provoking disorder", as stipulated in article 72 of the Tunisian Criminal Code, and of "processing personal data without consent of the person concerned" and "interfering with freedom of labour", as stipulated in articles 27 and 87 of the Data Protection Act and article 136 of the Tunisian Criminal Code, respectively.

On 30 January 2024, the investigating judge allegedly decided to drop the proceedings relating to article 72 but continued to remand Ms. Moussi in custody on the basis of the two other charges. On 24 December 2024, the indictment division of the Tunis Court of Appeal closed the investigation and referred Ms. Moussi to the criminal division to be tried. The criminal division of the court of first instance found her guilty in this case on 12 December 2025 and sentenced her to 12 years in prison.

Ms. Moussi is also the subject of two complaints filed in 2022 and 2023 by the *Instance supérieure indépendante pour les élections*, ISIE (Independent High Authority for Elections), accusing her of having criticized both the process for organizing the legislative elections of 2024 and the functioning of the electoral body. In respect of the ISIE 2022 complaint, on 6 August 2024 Ms. Moussi received a two-year non-suspended prison sentence under article 24 of Decree-Law No. 54. On 22 November 2024, the appeal court reduced the prison sentence to 16 months. The case was brought before the Court of Cassation to contest this ruling. Ms. Moussi's conviction appears arbitrary, as it is based on the legitimate exercise of her right to freedom of expression.

In respect of the second ISIE complaint, the Court of Cassation allegedly rejected Ms. Moussi's cassation appeal on 30 January 2025, and the case was therefore referred to the criminal division of the court of first instance. The trial was supposed to take place on 25 March 2025, but the former member of parliament and her lawyers boycotted the hearing, denouncing numerous judicial irregularities. On 12 June 2025, Ms. Moussi was sentenced to two years in prison. The appeal process in this case is ongoing.

The complainant also stated that Ms. Moussi's detention conditions are deplorable, with limited access to medical care and constant supervision, including during her meetings with her lawyers. On 12 February 2025, Ms. Moussi started a hunger strike to protest against her detention conditions, resulting in a brief hospital stay.

In their letter to the IPU received on 20 December 2023, the parliamentary authorities stated that they did not have official information on the judicial cases in progress, as these proceedings fell within the remit of the judicial authorities, in accordance with the principle of the separation of powers. The parliamentary authorities also refuted the allegations that the proceedings brought against Ms. Moussi were political in nature, stating that these allegations were unfounded, without, however, providing any arguments to that effect.

At the Committee's request, it met with the Tunisian parliamentary delegation twice in 2024, during the 148th and 149th IPU Assemblies. During these two meetings, the Tunisian delegation did not provide any substantial information on the situation of Ms. Moussi, her conditions of detention or the status of her legal proceedings, citing the same arguments about the separation of powers. The IPU's request to send a mission has remained unanswered by the authorities.

In November 2024, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued an opinion in

which it concluded that Ms. Moussi's detention was arbitrary, since it resulted from the exercise of her political rights and freedoms, and that the charges against her were not supported by any factual or legal evidence. Like the IPU, the Working Group called for Ms. Moussi's immediate release.

## **B. Decision**

The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

1. *Deeply regrets* the continued lack of concrete information from the Tunisian authorities on the case of Ms. Abir Moussi;
2. *Deplores* the new sentence of 12 years in prison imposed on Ms. Moussi for having criticized the presidential decrees on the organization and conduct of local elections scheduled for December 2023; *notes with concern* that this is Ms. Moussi's third conviction within the span of two years; and *firmly recalls* that the right to freedom of expression is one of the pillars of democracy and encompasses not only speech, opinions and statements that are favourably received or considered as being inoffensive, but also those that may offend, shock, or disturb;
3. *Still fails to understand* how mere criticism could give rise to accusations of an attack aimed at altering the form of government and to such severe sentences; and *reaffirms* that the acts of which Ms. Moussi is accused fall within the scope of her right to freedom of expression;
4. *Notes* the opinion issued in 2024 by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concerning the situation of Ms. Moussi, in which it concluded that her detention was arbitrary and called upon the authorities to release her immediately; *concur*s with these findings and *urges* the Tunisian authorities to release Ms. Moussi and discontinue all proceedings against her;
5. *Stresses* once more that, while respecting the independence of the judiciary and the principle of separation of powers, the parliamentary authorities have both the duty and the authority to exercise their oversight role by monitoring the case of Ms. Moussi as a former member of parliament, and ensuring that her right to a fair trial is respected;
6. *Reiterates* its request to the Tunisian authorities to welcome a mission from the Committee in order to promote constructive dialogue between the parties and facilitate the definitive resolution of Ms. Moussi's case, as well as those of several former Tunisian members of parliament;
7. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the Speaker of the Assembly of People's Representatives, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information;
8. *Decides* to continue examining this case.



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.

## Tunisia

*Decision adopted by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians at its 179th session (Geneva, 2 to 18 February 2026)*



Tunisian security forces guard the entrance to the national parliament in Tunis, Tunisia, on 1 October 2021. © Anadolu Agency via AFP

- |                                       |                                |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| TUN-07 – Seifedine Makhlouf           | TUN-39 – Noomane El Euch       |
| TUN-08 – Maher Zid                    | TUN-40 – Abdelhamid Marzouki   |
| TUN-09 – Maher Medhioub               | TUN-41 – Ayachi Zammal         |
| TUN-10 – Yosri Dali                   | TUN-42 – Samir Dilou           |
| TUN-11 – Fethi Ayadi                  | TUN-43 – Habib Ben Sid'hom     |
| TUN-12 – Awatef Ftirch (Ms.)          | TUN-44 – Mabrouk Khachnaoui    |
| TUN-13 – Omar Ghribi                  | TUN-45 – Bechir Khelifi        |
| TUN-14 – Faiza Bouhlel (Ms.)          | TUN-46 – Nouha Aissaoui (Ms.)  |
| TUN-15 – Samira Smii (Ms.)            | TUN-47 – Latifa Habachi (Ms.)  |
| TUN-16 – Mahbouba Ben Dhifallah (Ms.) | TUN-48 – Ferida Laabidi (Ms.)  |
| TUN-17 – Mohamed Zrig                 | TUN-49 – Mohamed Affas         |
| TUN-18 – Issam Bargougui              | TUN-50 – Abdellatif Aloui      |
| TUN-19 – Samira Chaouachi (Ms.)       | TUN-51 – Mehdi Ben Gharbia     |
| TUN-20 – Belgacem Hassan              | TUN-52 – Rached Khiari         |
| TUN-21 – Kenza Ajela (Ms.)            | TUN-54 – Moussa Ben Ahmed      |
| TUN-22 – Emna Ben Hmayed (Ms.)        | TUN-55 – Oussama Khelifi       |
| TUN-23 – Bechr Chebbi                 | TUN-56 – Ghazi Karoui          |
| TUN-24 – Monjia Boughanmi (Ms.)       | TUN-57 – Mohamed Fateh Khelifi |
| TUN-25 – Wafa Attia (Ms.)             | TUN-58 – Ziad El Hachemi       |
| TUN-26 – Jamila Jouini (Ms.)          | TUN-59 – Sofiane Makhloufi     |
| TUN-27 – Mohamed Lazher Rama          | TUN-60 – Majdi Karbai          |
| TUN-28 – Nidhal Saoudi                | TUN-61 – Anouar Ben Chahed     |
| TUN-29 – Neji Jmal                    | TUN-62 – Yassine Ayari         |
| TUN-30 – Zeinab Brahmi (Ms.)          | TUN-63 – Ghazi Chaouachi       |
| TUN-31 – Mohamed Al Azhar             | TUN-64 – Ahmed Mechergui       |
| TUN-32 – Nouredine Bhiri              | TUN-65 – Mohamed Ben Salem     |
| TUN-33 – Rached Ghannouchi            | TUN-66 – Lazhar Akremi         |
| TUN-34 – Tarek Fetiti                 | TUN-67 – Ali Laraiedh          |
| TUN-35 – Imed Khemiri                 | TUN-68 – Ahmed Ameri           |
| TUN-36 – Walid Jalled                 | TUN-69 – Sayed Ferjani         |
| TUN-37 – Safi Said                    | TUN-70 – Sahbi Atig            |
| TUN-38 – Iyadh Elloumi                |                                |

## Alleged human rights violations

- ✓ Threats, acts of intimidation
- ✓ Arbitrary arrest and detention
- ✓ Lack of due process at the investigation stage and lack of fair trial proceedings
- ✓ Violation of freedom of opinion and expression
- ✓ Violation of freedom of assembly and association
- ✓ Violation of freedom of movement
- ✓ Abusive revocation or suspension of the parliamentary mandate
- ✓ Failure to respect parliamentary immunity
- ✓ Other acts obstructing the exercise of the parliamentary mandate

### A. Summary of the case<sup>1</sup>

This case concerns 63 former members of the Assembly of People's Representatives of Tunisia who, according to the complainants, are victims of arbitrary prosecutions after expressing their opposition to the exceptional measures adopted by President Kais Saïed since 25 July 2021.

More generally, the suspension of parliament in 2021 by President Saïed had an impact on the 217 members of parliament elected in 2019, who were deprived of their parliamentary immunity, allowances, medical insurance and freedom of movement, including to receive medical treatment. These violations have intensified since the dissolution of the Assembly by the President of the Republic on 30 March 2022.

According to the complainants, the Public Prosecutor ordered an investigation into the 120 former members of parliament for an attempted coup d'état and conspiracy against justice, after they took part in an online plenary session shortly before the official dissolution of the Assembly. Proceedings against these members of parliament are still ongoing, and the executive authorities confirmed in a letter dated 11 October 2022 that the individuals concerned were under investigation.

Moreover, according to the complainants, the dissolution of parliament had additional consequences for some members of parliament elected in 2019 from the *Ennahda* and *Al Karama* blocs, who were directly targeted because of their opposition to President Saïed.

Mr. Nourredine Bhiri, who had initially been arrested and detained on 31 December 2021 before being released on 8 March 2022, was again arrested on 13 February 2023 by officers from the national terrorist crimes investigation unit. On 18 October 2024, Mr. Bhiri was sentenced to 10 years in prison on charges of endangering State security, inciting civil disorder and calling for insurrection. The charges against him relate to a post on social media that was attributed to him, although Mr. Bhiri and his defence team dispute the existence of this post, claiming that it has never been proven.

On 3 July 2024, Mr. Makhlouf was arrested in Algeria for the irregular crossing of Algerian borders and was sentenced to three months in prison. While in detention, Mr. Makhlouf applied for asylum with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Algeria on 18 July 2024. On 13 January 2026, the Tunisian authorities sentenced him in absentia to five years in prison in connection with the case of conspiracy against State security. While awaiting a response from UNHCR to his asylum application, Mr. Makhlouf was returned by the Algerian authorities on 18 January 2026 to Tunisia, where he is serving his sentence.

On 3 August 2022, Mr. Rached Khiari was placed in detention for defamation against President Saïed on social media, a charge brought by the Ministry of Education that resulted in a trial by the military courts. On 3 February 2025, he was sentenced to a one-year prison term for harm caused to others via social

### Case TUN-COLL-01

**Tunisia:** Parliament affiliated to the IPU

**Victims:** 63 members of the opposition (49 men and 14 women)

**Qualified complainant(s):** Sections I.1(a) and (b) of the Committee Procedure (Annex I)

**Submission of complaints:** August, September and October 2021

**Recent IPU decision:** April 2025

**IPU mission(s):** - - -

**Recent Committee hearing:** Hearing of the parliamentary authorities at the 149th IPU Assembly (October 2024)

#### Recent follow-up:

- Communication from the authorities: Letter from the Speaker of the Assembly of People's Representatives (May 2024)
- Communication from the complainants: December 2025
- Communications to the authorities: Letter to the Speaker of the Assembly of People's representatives (December 2025)
- Communication to the complainants: December 2025

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this decision, the term "opposition" refers to members of parliament belonging to political groups or parties with limited decision-making power who are opposed to the ruling power.

media. On 22 November 2025, Mr. Khiari was released after serving his sentence.

Similarly, Mr. Mehdi Ben Gharbia was placed in detention on 20 October 2021 on money laundering charges, even though the legal period of six months had expired. In its Opinion No. 50/2023 of 26 September 2023 concerning the case of Mr. Ben Gharbia, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention considered that Mr. Ben Gharbia's detention was arbitrary, based on the information provided by the complainants. The Working Group also called on the Tunisian authorities, who have not sent their official observations to the United Nations mechanism, to release Mr. Ben Gharbia immediately and pay him compensation for the damage suffered. Between January and November 2025, Mr. Ben Gharbia was sentenced to a cumulative total of 16 years of prison for financial and administrative corruption.

As for Mr. Rached Ghannouchi, he has been charged in several cases that the complainants maintain are politically motivated. On 15 May 2023, he was sentenced by Tunisia's anti-terrorism court to a one-year prison term for public statements he had made in 2022. On 5 February 2025, Mr. Ghannouchi was sentenced to 22 years in the Instalingo case. In February 2026, he was sentenced to 20 years of prison in connection with the case of conspiracy against State security.

In their letter of 28 January 2022, the executive authorities stated that all members of parliament whose mandates had been suspended enjoyed freedom of movement and travel, apart from those subject to a legal ruling prohibiting them from leaving the country. In a letter dated 11 October 2022, the executive authorities confirmed that all requests for the release of Mr. Ben Gharbia had been rejected.

In May and June 2023, the complainants referred eight new complaints to the Committee concerning the cases of eight former Tunisian members of parliament who were subject to arbitrary prosecutions because of their opposition to the measures taken by the President of the Republic. These include Mr. Sayed Ferjani and Mr. Ahmed Mechergui, who were allegedly arrested on 27 February and 19 April 2023, respectively, in connection with the investigation against Mr. Ghannouchi in the Instalingo case. On 5 February 2025, Mr. Sayed Ferjani was sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment.

Similarly, Mr. Ahmed Ameri and Mr. Mohamed Ben Salem were reportedly arrested in March 2023 for organizing an illegal border crossing and illegally holding currency. On 11 March 2025, they were sentenced to two- and three-years' imprisonment respectively. Mr. Lazhar Akremi and Mr. Ghazi Chaouachi were reportedly arrested in February 2023 in connection with a plot against State security. In April 2025, Mr. Akremi was initially sentenced to eight years in prison. However, on 28 November 2025, the appeals court acquitted him, while upholding a 20-year prison sentence against Mr. Chaouachi.

Mr. Ali Laraiedh, the former Prime Minister, was arrested on 19 December 2022 on vague terrorism charges. The complainants state that he is being held in detention without having appeared before a judge. He was sentenced in May 2025 to 34 years in prison in connection with the so-called case of networks for transporting Tunisian fighters to conflict zones abroad, for purposes described as terrorism by the authorities. Finally, former member of parliament Mr. Sahbi Atig was allegedly arrested on 6 May 2023 and prosecuted for corruption and money laundering. In June 2025, he was sentenced to 15 years in prison for offences related to money laundering, the unlawful possession of currency, and false testimony. His sentence was upheld on appeal. According to the complainants, the aim of all these cases is to silence former members of parliament who publicly criticized the Head of State.

In their letter to the IPU received on 20 December 2023, the parliamentary authorities stated that they did not have official information on the judicial cases in progress, as these proceedings fell within the remit of the judicial authorities, in accordance with the principle of the separation of powers. The parliamentary authorities also refuted the allegations that the proceedings brought against the former members of parliament were political in nature, stating that these allegations were unfounded, without, however, providing any arguments in this regard.

At the Committee's request, a meeting was held between the latter and the Tunisian parliamentary delegation twice in 2024, during the 148th and 149th IPU Assemblies. During these two meetings, the Tunisian delegation did not provide any substantial information on the situation of the former members of parliament, their conditions of detention or the status of the legal proceedings, citing the same arguments about the separation of powers. The IPU's request to send a mission has remained unanswered by the Tunisian authorities.

Shortly before the start of the trial of those accused of plotting to undermine State security, the United Nations High Commissioner called on the Tunisian authorities to cease all forms of persecution against opponents and activists.

## **B. Decision**

The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

1. *Deeply regrets* the continued lack of concrete information from the Tunisian authorities on the situation of the former members of parliament included in this case;
2. *Deplores* the continued detention of numerous former Tunisian members of parliament in connection with cases whose circumstances and underlying facts remain unclear to date; and *also deplors* the severe prison sentences imposed on them on the basis of vague allegations of undermining State security, following proceedings marred by serious judicial irregularities;
3. *Urges* the Tunisian authorities, once again, to immediately release any former members of parliament detained for expressing opposition to the exceptional measures adopted by the President of the Republic, and to drop the charges against them; and *calls upon* the Tunisian authorities, once again, in particular the Ministry of Justice, to provide detailed information on the situation of the former members of parliament involved in this case;
4. *Takes note* of the release of Mr. Rached Khiari after serving his sentence and the acquittal of Mr. Lazhar Akremi; *stresses*, nevertheless, that these two former members of parliament were prosecuted for exercising their right to freedom of expression and should not have been prosecuted on such serious charges; and *wishes* to receive updated information on their situation from the Tunisian authorities;
5. *Emphasizes* once again that, while respecting the independence of the judiciary and the principle of the separation of powers, parliamentary authorities have both the duty and the authority to exercise their oversight role by monitoring the situations of the individuals cited in this case as former members of the Assembly of People's Representatives, and ensuring that their right to a fair trial is respected;
6. *Reiterates* its request to the Tunisian authorities to welcome a mission from the Committee in order to promote constructive dialogue between the parties and facilitate the definitive resolution of all cases involving the former Tunisian members of parliament;
7. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the Speaker of the Assembly of People's Representatives, the complainants and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information;
8. *Decides* to continue examining this case.