

Tunisia: The international legal community condemns the detention of lawyer and human rights defender Ayachi Hammami

16 December, 2025

The 21 undersigned legal organisations express their deep concern following the arbitrary detention and conviction on 2 December 2025 in Tunisia of lawyer and human rights defender Ayachi Hammami, sentenced to five years in prison solely for representing defendants in the so-called “conspiracy” case.

For several decades, lawyer Ayachi Hammami has been a central figure in the Tunisian legal and human rights movement, working to defend victims of abuse, promote the independence of the judiciary and protect fundamental freedoms. Since 2023, Ayachi Hammami has been the target of persistent judicial harassment in retaliation for his work as a lawyer. Although he initially acted as a defence lawyer in the so-called “conspiracy case”, which began in February 2023, in May 2023, he was charged in the case and was subjected to various restrictive measures, including a ban on travelling and appearing in public.

In April 2025, the Tunis Court of First Instance convicted him on two counts and sentenced him to a total of eight years’ imprisonment: five years for taking part in a terrorist organisation and three years for failing to report terrorist activities according to the counter-terrorism law. On appeal, the conviction for failing to report terrorist activities was overturned.

On 27 November 2025, the Tunis Court of Appeal [handed](#) down extremely heavy sentences against many of the defendants (politicians, lawyers, civil servants and security officers) in this case, following proceedings marked by an unjustified decision to prevent the twelve detained defendants from appearing in court and to require their remote participation from prison instead. During the hearings, Mr Hammami refused to answer the judge's questions out of solidarity with the detainees who were prevented from appearing in the courtroom. He was subsequently sentenced to five years' imprisonment and two years' administrative control, based on the conviction upheld on appeal for taking part in a terrorist organisation.

On 2 December 2025, Mr Ayachi Hammami was [arrested](#) at his home to start serving the five-year prison sentence. Following his arrest, a video posted on his social media accounts showed him denouncing the above-mentioned decision as arbitrary and announcing that he would go on hunger strike to protest against the ongoing repression in Tunisia.

In addition to his conviction in the so-called conspiracy case, which several UN Special Procedures [called](#) ‘shocking’, Ayachi Hammami is the subject of two separate proceedings under cybercrime Decree-Law 54 for statements made in the course of his professional activities, for which he faces up to ten years in prison: the first for having [spoken](#) on the radio about the situation of the dismissed magistrates he represented and criticised the Minister of Justice, who had failed to comply with a reinstatement decision ordered by the administrative court; the second related to a video he made to draw attention to the case of a political prisoner, Jaouher Ben Mbarek, who had gone on hunger strike and whose health deteriorated significantly while the Minister of Justice and prison authorities publicly denied the strike.

This persecution is taking place in a broader context of shrinking civic space in Tunisia, marked by arbitrary detentions, financial blockades, suspensions of associations and prosecutions targeting human rights defenders and, increasingly, lawyers themselves. Several people are currently being detained without legitimate grounds. The escalating pattern of reprisals against lawyers, through criminal proceedings, intimidation, and misuse of counter-terrorism legislation, signals a deliberate attempt to undermine the independence of the legal profession and restrict access to justice.

The obligation to protect lawyers' freedom, judicial independence, and the right to a fair trial are set out in international treaties to which Tunisia is a party, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and African Charter on Human and People's Rights, as well as the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers and the Tunisian Constitution.

The signatories of this statement:

- Strongly condemn the arrest of Ayachi Hammami, which constitutes a reprisal for the exercise of his profession and right to freedom of expression, and his peaceful commitment to human rights and the rule of law;
- Call for Ayachi Hammami's and other imprisoned lawyers' immediate and unconditional release and an end to the unfounded legal proceedings against them;
- Urge the Tunisian authorities to respect the fundamental guarantees protecting the legal profession and to ensure that lawyers are able to perform their professional duties and express themselves freely, without intimidation, harassment, or fear of reprisals.

The signatories:

- International Observatory for Lawyers in Danger (OIAD)
- International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL)
- Arab Lawyers Association (UK)
- Progressive Lawyers' Association (ÇHD), Turkey
- Indian Association of Lawyers
- The Foundation day of the endangered lawyer
- Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE)
- Law Society of England and Wales
- Republican Lawyers' Association, Germany
- Lawyers for Lawyers
- Lawyers for the Rule of Law (LFRL), United States of America
- Avocats Sans Frontières
- PEN Norway
- Behatokia, Basque Country
- Defense Commission of the Barcelona Bar Association
- International Association of Russian Advocates
- MEDEL (Magistrats Européens pour la Démocratie et les Libertés)
- National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL)
- German Bar Association (DAV)
- Lyon Bar Association
- International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)