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### Tunisia: Arrest of human rights defender and lawyer Ayachi Hammami

On 2 December 2025, the authorities in Tunisia arrested human rights defender and lawyer **Ayachi Hammami**, an emblematic figure of the Tunisian human rights movement, at his home in Tunis to enforce a five-year prison sentence based on false accusations in the high profile ‘conspiracy case.’

[Ayachi Hammami](#) is a prominent Tunisian human rights lawyer and defender. For decades, he has been representing victims of human rights violations and leading national efforts for democracy, judicial independence, and fundamental freedoms. He has actively participated in the leadership of multiple human rights organisations in Tunisia and across the region.

On 27 November 2025, in the case known as ‘[the conspiracy case](#)’, the Court of Appeal handed down sentences ranging from 10 to 45 years in prison for defendants in custody and from 5 to 35 years for those at liberty. This case involving political figures, lawyers, former civil servants and security agents, and it has been ongoing since February 2023. During the hearing, Ayachi appeared before the judge but refused to answer questions as an act of solidarity with the detainees who were denied their right to appear in court. Ayachi Hammami was sentenced to five years in prison and two years of administrative supervision.

After his arrest, a [video](#) was released on his social media account in which Ayachi Hammami stated that his arrest is an arbitrarily political decision. He also announced that he would be starting a hunger strike to express his ongoing struggle for freedoms and democracy in Tunisia.

In 2023, Ayachi Hammami became a target of severe judicial harassment in retaliation for his legitimate human rights work. He was charged in May 2023 with “failure to report the existence of a terrorist organisation” and “belonging to a terrorist organisation” in the high-profile “conspiracy case”—a politicised investigation targeting opposition figures and human rights defenders. Initially, he had acted as a defence lawyer in this case. In October 2023, the investigating judge imposed a travel ban and a ban on “appearing in public” against him. He was convicted on 18 April 2025 by the First Instance Court and sentenced to eight years in prison. The Court of Appeal quashed the first conviction, but upheld the second one. In addition, Ayachi Hammami remains [under investigation](#) for statements made to the media in his capacity as a lawyer, under Decree-Law 54, which carries a potential 10-year prison sentence. Despite facing persistent judicial harassment, Ayachi Hammami has continued his crucial human rights work, advocating for dismissed judges, political prisoners, and the rule of law in an increasingly repressive environment in Tunisia.

In recent years, there has been a marked increase in the Tunisian government’s crackdown on civil society. This is characterised by arbitrary detention, financial restrictions—including asset freezes and bank blockades—and judicial orders to suspend independent NGOs and target their members. Several human rights organisations have been subjected to temporary suspension. While some human rights defenders and humanitarian workers [were recently released](#), others remain in arbitrary detention.

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Front Line Defenders condemns the arrest of Ayachi Hammami, believing it to be a direct reprisal by the Tunisian authorities for his legitimate and peaceful work as a human rights defender and lawyer. The prosecution and detention of Ayachi Hammami reflect a broader pattern of criminalisation of human rights defenders and politicisation of the judiciary, which undermines the right to defend and to freedom of expression, assembly and association in Tunisia.

**Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Tunisia to:**

1. Immediately release human rights defender and lawyer Ayachi Hammami;
2. Drop all the charges against Ayachi Hammami;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Tunisia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in line with Tunisia's international human rights obligations and commitments.

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