

President of the Republic Kais Saied

Route de la Goulette,

Site archéologique de Carthage, Tunisie

Email: contact@carthage.tn

Twitter: @TnPresidency

Your Excellency,

I write to you to express my grave concern over the prolonged arbitrary detention of opposition figures Jaouhar Ben Mbarek, Khayyam Turki, Issam Chebbi, Ghazi Chaouachi, Ridha Belhaj and Abdelhamid Jelassi on unfounded “conspiracy” accusations. Over a year after their arrests, authorities have failed to release them from arbitrary detention. Under [international human rights law](#), everyone is entitled to their right to liberty. Also, the presumption of innocence is one of the requirements of the right to fair trial (Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 7 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights).

Since their arrest in February 2023, none of the detainees have been questioned in relation to acts that would amount to recognizable crimes under international law, and the charges against them are therefore unfounded. They were questioned about their relationship with each other and with foreign diplomats as well as on meetings they undertook together and messages they exchanged about the political situation in Tunisia. Their prosecution violates articles 19 and 21 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) and articles 9 and 11 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights which together guarantee the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Tunisia has ratified these human rights treaties.

Despite their release in July 2023, political activists Chaima Issa and Lazhar Akremi who spent nearly five months arbitrarily detained in the same case have been banned from travelling and from “appearing in public spaces”.

I therefore urge you to ensure that Jaouhar Ben Mbarek, Khayyam Turki, Issam Chebbi, Ghazi Chaouachi, Ridha Belhaj and Abdelhamid Jelassi, are immediately released from arbitrary detention. I also urge you to ensure that the restrictions against Chaima Issa and Lazhar Akremi immediately lifted, and all the charges against them dropped, as the charges stem solely from the peaceful exercise of their human rights. Pending the release of the detained individuals, ensure that they have access to adequate healthcare, in compliance with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy, and informed consent. Moreover, I call on you to cease your targeted arrests of critics for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Yours sincerely,