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President of the Republic

Kais Saied

Route de la Goulette, Site archéologique de Carthage, Tunisie

**Facebook:** [**https://www.facebook.com/Presidence.tn/**](https://www.facebook.com/Presidence.tn/) **Twitter/X: @TnPresidency  
Email:** [**contact@carthage.tn**](mailto:contact@carthage.tn)

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Your Excellency,

**I write to you to express my grave concern over the prolonged unjust imprisonment of Tunisian lawyer Sonia Dahmani**. **She is imprisoned for exercising her right to freedom of expression including publicly criticising conditions of detention in Tunisian prisons as well as the ill-treatment of refugees and migrants in the country.**

Following her public comments during her regular appearances on television and radio shows, Tunisian authorities have initiated five separate legal proceedings against her. She was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment in two cases. On 6 July 2024, the Tunis Court of First Instance sentenced Sonia Dahmani to a year in prison, reduced to eight months on appeal, for making an ironic comment during a TV show. On 24 October 2024, the same court sentenced her to an additional two years in prison in a separate case for highlighting racist and discriminatory practices in Tunisia. Both convictions were based on the draconian Decree-Law 2022-54 on Cybercrimes. Sonia Dahmani has three other pending cases, all relating to the exercise of her right to freedom of expression.

Sonia Dahmani is enduring cruel and inhuman conditions of detention in prison. She faces extreme temperature fluctuations, with freezing cold during the winter due to a broken window. Prison authorities refuse to allow her family to bring warm clothing or food, leading to malnutrition and significant weight loss. She has developed serious health issues, including diabetes, back pain, swelling in the legs and high blood pressure. Sonia Dahmani is also denied basic necessities and adequate healthcare like clean clothing and medication, while being subjected to humiliating treatment by prison guards. For instance, on 20 August 2024, ahead of her trial hearing, authorities subjected her to a humiliating body search and forced nudity, in violation of her physical and psychological integrity. Sonia Dahmani shares her cell with four other detainees, including toilet facilities with no privacy. Hygiene is very poor, with limited access to hot water and an infestation of rats and insects in her cell.

**I urge you to immediately and unconditionally release Sonia Dahmani, quash her unjust convictions and sentences and drop the baseless criminal investigations against her. Pending her release, she must be granted access to her family, lawyers and adequate healthcare and held in conditions that meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners.**

Yours sincerely,

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**Copie**

Botschaft von Tunesien / Ambassade de Tunisie, Kirchenfeldstrasse 63, 3005 Bern

Fax: 031 351 04 45 / E-Mail: at.berne@diplomatie.gov.tn