

URGENT ACTION

LGBTI RIGHTS DEFENDER VIOLENTLY ATTACKED

Badr Baabou, a human rights defender and LGBTI rights activist, was violently assaulted by police officers on the night of 21 October 2021 in downtown Tunis. Security forces have been targeting Badr Baabou for his work and activism in promoting the rights and freedoms of LGBTI people in Tunisia. This attack is the latest in a long series that spans several years. Several complaints have been filed but to no avail. The authorities must conduct an investigation into the attack, bringing those responsible to account.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Minister of Justice
Leila Jaffel
Email: info@e-justice.tn
Fax: +216 71 568 106

Dear Minister,

*I write to you to draw your attention to the case of human rights defender and LGBTI activist **Badr Baabou**, who was insulted and violently assaulted, apparently in connection with his work as an activist.*

According to testimony that Badr Baabou provided to Amnesty International, around 9:00pm on 21 October, Badr Baabou left a cafe in downtown Tunis and was looking for a taxi when two men whom he believes were members of the security forces, and who identified themselves as 'cops' when asked by the activist, insulted him, accosted him, and beat him severely. As Badr Baabou lay on the ground, his head bleeding, the men stole his laptop and mobile phone, and told him the beating was retaliation against him for filing complaints against the police and "defending whores and [a derogatory term in Tunisian Arabic for homosexuals]." The remarks appear to be a clear indication that Badr Baabou is being targeted for his LGBTI rights activism.

Badr Baabou suffered numerous injuries during the assault, including to his head, face, chest, spine, and upper limb, as described in a medical report he provided to Amnesty International. He also has multiple bruises and oedemas on his face, neck and shoulder, and suffers from pain in his neck, back and right shoulder that limits his movements.

Badr Baabou is the chairman of 'DAMJ, the Tunisian association for justice and equality', one of the Tunisia's most prominent LGBTI rights groups. In past years he has been frequently assaulted and harassed by the security forces. On 25 October, the activist filed a complaint with Tunis' Court of First Instance directed against Tunisia's General Director of National Security, General Director of Public Security, Regional Head of Public Security, and the two men who assaulted and robbed him and whom he alleges to be members of security forces. The complaint has yet to be responded to.

In light of the above, I call on you to ask the public prosecutor to open an effective and impartial investigation into Badr Baabou's violent assault and the ones that preceded it, bringing all those found to be responsible to account in fair trial proceedings. These repeated attacks must end immediately. I also call on you to end the impunity enjoyed by police officers. Il-treatment and violence against citizens remain rampant in Tunisia today. The overwhelming majority of investigations into members of the security forces hardly ever make it past the investigative phase and none have led to successful sentencing of perpetrators.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Badr Baabou (41) is a Tunisian LGBTI rights activist and co-founder of DAMJ, one of the country's most prominent LGBTI rights groups. Around 9:00pm on 21 October 2021, Badr Baabou left a cafe in downtown Tunis after socialising with friends and was walking toward the area's main roundabout, known as "Monguella," to find a taxi when two unknown men accosted him in the street. The first man to appear, walking beside Badr Baabou, wore T-shirt and dark trousers labelled "Public Security," and taunted Badr Baabou about filing complaints against police officers. Badr Baabou asked the man who he was, and the man replied loudly with a phrase in Tunisian Arabic indicating "The cops!" The second man, wearing civilian clothes, appeared a moment later and grabbed hold of Badr Baabou by his backpack, as the first man struck Badr Baabou repeatedly on the head. The two men forced him into a dark side-street called Rue Kemal Ataturk, where he fell to the ground as they repeatedly struck him with their fists and kicked him with their boots on the head, neck, and legs, yelling insults and the phrase "the cops" until he nearly lost consciousness. Finally, the man in civilian clothing took Badr Baabou's laptop from his backpack and his phone from his pocket, confiscating them. The two men told him the beating was retaliation for filing complaints against police and left with parting words that Badr Baabou said he recalls as a warning not to defend "whores and [a derogatory term in Tunisian Arabic for homosexuals]." After a few minutes Badr Baabou got to his feet, bleeding from his head, returned home by taxi, and used a phone there to call a fellow DAMJ activist and the association's lawyer, who accompanied Badr Baabou to the emergency room of Tunis' Rabta Hospital, where a doctor examined him, as attested by a copy of a medical report shared with Amnesty International.

According to DAMJ and HRW, Badr Baabou was harassed, assaulted and threatened several times. In 2018 his home in Downtown Tunis was burglarized by people who stole personal and work laptops containing sensitive DAMJ information. In November 2019, he was approached by unidentified individuals in the streets of Tunis who threatened to kill him and burn down his apartment. The threat was reiterated in March 2020, when police officers questioned his neighbours about his work as an activist. Following these incidents Badr Baabou has been forced to relocate frequently.

On the evening of 10 March 2021, four men in civilian clothes allegedly assaulted Badr Baabou in downtown Tunis as he left a bar after socialising with friends. After a bystander intervened to separate the men from Badr Baabou, the men joined a group of policemen nearby who had watched the incident without intervening. Badr Baabou filed a complaint over the alleged incident with the prosecutor's office at the Tunis Court of First Instance. To date, the prosecutor has not informed them of any progress on this complaint.

LGBTI activists in Tunisia have [alleged various forms of harassment](#) by authorities in recent years, including verbal harassment during protests, assault, surveillance, as well as [arrests under broadly-worded laws](#) such as those that criminalise insulting police and harming public morals.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic, French or English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 28 December 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Badr Baabou (he/him)