

URGENT ACTION

WOMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER FACING BOGUS CHARGES

Tunisian human rights defender Saloua Ghrissa, executive director of the Association for the Promotion of the Right to Difference (ADD), is facing a criminal trial along with seven other staff and members of the association. They are being prosecuted on unfounded financial criminal and other charges stemming from their human rights work. On 19 March 2026, Tunisian authorities granted Saloua Ghrissa's request for provisional release after she spent more than 15 months in arbitrary pretrial detention. She was arrested in December 2024 amid a broader crackdown on civil society. Tunisian authorities must immediately drop all charges against Saloua Ghrissa and her co-defendants. The next hearing in their case is scheduled for 30 April 2026.

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

President of the Republic Kais Saied

Route de la Goulette

Site archéologique de Carthage, Tunisie

Email: contact@carthage.tn

X: @TnPresidency

Your Excellency,

I write to urge you to ensure that all the charges brought against woman human rights defender Saloua Ghrissa and her colleagues are dropped. Saloua Ghrissa is the executive director of the Association for the Promotion of the Right to Difference (ADD) – a Tunisian association founded in 2011 to defend minority rights.

Saloua Ghrissa, along with four other staff and three members of the ADD, is being arbitrarily prosecuted for her human rights work. They face a criminal trial before the Bizerte Court of First Instance on unfounded financial criminal and other charges infringing on their rights to freedom of expression and association and to defend human rights. The next hearing in their case is scheduled for 30 April 2026.

I welcome Saloua Ghrissa's release from prison after more than 15 months of arbitrary pretrial detention following the judicial authorities' decision to grant her request for provisional release during a trial hearing on 19 March 2026. However, she is still being prosecuted alongside other ADD staff and members for money laundering and violating currency exchange regulations. These charges are unsubstantiated, centred around vague allegations of "suspicious" foreign funding. The authorities are also abusing the criminal justice system to prosecute all eight individuals for falsification of computer data which may cause harm, a charge equally unsubstantiated and lacking in precision and clarity.

Other charges against these individuals include allegedly receiving funding from states that do not have diplomatic relations with Tunisia or from organizations defending these states' interests. This provision infringes on the right to freedom of association to seek, receive and use any resources of their choice, including foreign funding, without undue impediments, as guaranteed by Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 10 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, to which Tunisia is a state party.

I urge you to ensure that all charges against Saloua Ghrissa and the seven other ADD staff and members are immediately dropped. I also call on you to ensure that the Tunisian authorities end the arbitrary arrests and prosecutions of human rights defenders and civil society workers, and that they guarantee human rights in the country, including the rights to freedom of expression and association.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In May 2024, the Tunisian government launched a [repressive clampdown](#) against civil society organizations, first targeting those working on migration then [extending](#) the crackdown to a broader range of organizations. Tunisian President Kais Saied has since 2023 repeatedly accused civil society of meddling in Tunisia's internal affairs, financing corruption, using foreign funding and colluding with foreign parties to smear Tunisia.

ADD is a Tunisian human rights organization which seeks to defend the right to equality and non-discrimination, with a focus on ethnic, racial and gender minority groups. Its work centred around advocacy for legal reform, awareness-raising and trainings about the right to equality. The NGO also distributed subgrants – including to antiracist organization [Mnemyt](#) – and monitored violations of the right to equality through its Observatory for the Defense of the Right to Difference (O3DT).

On 9 December 2024, Tunis police summoned Saloua Ghrissa and the secretary general of ADD for questioning. They interrogated them about the association's work and funding and about their political opinions. Police informed them of the opening of an investigation against them based on a December 2023 report from the Tunisian Financial Analysis Committee (CTAF), a body under the Tunisian Central Bank. The report highlighted the receipt by the ADD of high amounts of foreign funding deemed "suspicious". In September 2023, the Tunisian president [called](#) on the CTAF to "hunt associations", claiming NGOs were receiving foreign funding to finance political activity and could be laundering money. The day after she was questioned, on 10 December 2024, Saloua Ghrissa was detained by the police.

On 12 December 2024, an investigative judge at the Bizerte Court of First Instance opened an investigation against Saloua Ghrissa and seven other employees and members of the association on criminal charges of money laundering (Articles 92 to 94 of Law 2015-26 on Combatting Terrorism and Preventing Money Laundering); violations of currency exchange regulations (Articles 6, 7, 20, 21 and 35 of the Exchange and Foreign Trade Code) and falsification of computer data which may cause harm (Article 23 of Decree 2022-54 on Cybercrime). They were also investigated for receiving funding from states that do not have diplomatic relations with Tunisia or from organizations defending the interests of these states (Article 35 of Decree 2011-88 on Associations), which is not a criminal charge and can only be sanctioned by a suspension or dissolution of the association. The judge placed Saloua Ghrissa in pretrial detention for six months. Her detention was renewed for another four months in June 2025 and then again in October 2025. Saloua Ghrissa's lawyer's multiple requests for provisional release were consistently denied until 19 March 2026.

On 28 January 2026, the investigative judge transferred the case to trial for seven out of eight defendants, maintaining the four charges. On 3 February 2026, an indictment chamber partially overturned this decision, indicting all eight defendants. The trial opened on 5 March 2026 and was followed by a second hearing on 19 March. A third hearing is scheduled for 30 April 2026.

The charges brought against the defendants are unsubstantiated and appear to be politically motivated, centred around vague "suspicions" solely based on the amounts and sources of foreign funding, which include international NGOs and a public aid agency. To support the financial criminal charges, the investigation alleged that a number of "unjustified" transfers were made between the association's and the defendants' bank accounts and that the association has been transferring funds to a high number of other organizations and individuals. The defendants claim that these transfers were salaries and payment fees for their staff or reimbursement for expenses, and that the association also issued subgrants to other organizations and hired service providers. The investigation has not presented evidence of the existence of any crime which would have been covered by allegedly laundered funds. The third charge of "falsification or erasure of computer data which may cause harm, with the intention of exploiting it as if it were authentic" lacks clarity and has similarly not been substantiated. Under international human rights law and standards including Article 14(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Principles on Fair Trial in Africa, a court may not convict an individual of a criminal charge unless guilt has been proved beyond reasonable doubt and the burden of proof rests on the authorities. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association [stated](#): "In no cases may the pursuit of [Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Terrorism Financing] be used as a pretext to crack down on civil society groups which the government disfavors."

The charge related to the receipt of foreign funding has not been substantiated either and infringes on the right of association, and to seek, receive and use any resources of their choice, including foreign funding, protected under international human right law. The investigation itself concluded that the ADD's foreign funding was lawful but did not conform with its bylaws and therefore raised "suspicion", a claim interfering with its right to access resources.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic, French, ~~English~~

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: [September 2026]

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

NAME AND PRONOUN: Saloua Ghrissa (she/her).

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: First UA