



CONCEPT NOTE

"Human Rights in Tunisia: Sliding into Authoritarianism "

Side event at the 63rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

September 17, 12:00 – 13:00 CEST

Room XI, Palais des Nations

Organised by Human Rights Watch

Context

Five years after President Kais Saied [seized extraordinary executive powers](#) in 2021, the human rights situation in Tunisia has severely deteriorated and the country is sliding into authoritarianism.

Tunisian authorities have intensified repression of [political opponents](#), [lawyers](#), [journalists](#), [activists](#), and other critical voices, by carrying out mass arrests on vague charges including on terrorism or conspiracy against state security and bringing abusive prosecutions within a judicial system under executive control. Much of civil society and the political opposition is now behind bars or in exile.

The government has turned [arbitrary detention](#) into a cornerstone of its repressive policy, aimed at depriving people of their civil and political rights.

Civic space has closed rapidly as authorities harassed activists and systematically targeted [civil society organizations](#) through arbitrary arrests, detentions, unfounded financial and criminal investigations and administrative suspensions. This campaign threatens to collapse one of the last remaining checks on Saied's one-man rule.

Tunisia's deepening authoritarian drift is having an increasingly severe impact on the country's most vulnerable groups. Detainees face deteriorating conditions and suspicious deaths in custody; people on the move are exposed to torture, ill-treatment and other serious human rights violations; and an increasing number of individuals are subjected to arbitrary security measures and coercive practices of control. Several [UN bodies and experts](#), including the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies, have repeatedly raised the alarm, particularly in the past few years, over the human rights situation in Tunisia.

This side event will provide a space for civil society to brief HRC member and observer states on the human rights situation in Tunisia and to present recommendations to both the Tunisian government and international partners to ensure accountability for on-going human rights violations and stop the downward spiral into authoritarianism.

Speakers:

- HRW
- ICJ
- OMCT
- Intersection

Format:

Timing	Speaker	Organisation/ affiliation	Topic	Comments
12:00- 12:10	Nicola Paccamiccio (Moderator)	HRW	Welcome & introductions	In-person 5 minutes (allowing for delayed start)
12:10- 12:16	Saïd Benarbia	ICJ	Independence of the judiciary	In-person 6 minutes
12:16- 12:26	Idriss Sebai	Intersection	Freedom of expression	In-person MAX 5 minutes Consecutive interpretation FRE>ENG (consider 10 minutes)
12:26- 12:32	Salsabil Chellali	HRW	Crackdown on civil society	In-person 6 minutes

12:32-12:38	Marie Salphati	OMCT	The Impact of Increasing Authoritarianism on Vulnerable groups	In-person, 6 minutes
12:38	Q & A [Amnesty to take the floor – focus on situation of prisoners]			
<i>IF WE HAVE TIME/NO QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR</i>			Floor back to panelists – for final remarks and recommendations to states	MAX 2 MINUTES EACH
12:55	Close - Moderator		Advocacy calls to states and the HRC	

Co-sponsors (TBC):

- ICJ
- NPWJ
- ASF
- OMCT
- AI
- EUROMED RIGHTS