

11 December 2020

Tunis: Charge against human rights defenders Saif Ayedi and Hamza Nasri

On 8 December 2020, the Tunisian police arrested human rights defenders **Saif Ayedi** and **Hamza Nasri** during a peaceful demonstration in front of the Tunisian parliament. The Public Prosecutor charged Saif Ayedi and Hamza Nasri with 'damaging properties'. On 10 December the two human rights defenders were conditionally released until their next hearing which has not yet been scheduled.

[Saif Ayedi](#) and [Hamza Nasri](#) are Tunisian human rights defenders and members of the Tunisian Association for Justice and Equality (Damj). Both human rights defenders work as programme coordinators with the association. Saif Ayedi works on promoting justice and equality for the LGBT+ community in Tunis.

On 8 December 2020, several Tunisian human rights defenders and activists participated in a peaceful demonstration in front of the Tunisian Parliament. The demonstrators were protesting against the hate speech made by a member of the Parliament on 3 December 2020. In his speech, the MP reportedly discriminated against the LGBT+ community and the feminist movement in Tunis, and singled them out as people who are challenging and disrespecting Islamic rules and Tunisian traditions. According to members of Damj, a parliament member from Ennahda Party attempted to run over some of the protesters with his car during the peaceful demonstration. In their defence, the protestors attempted to stop the car. Saif Ayedi and Hamza Nasri were arrested by the Tunisian Police and were firstly taken to a local police station and then moved to Bouchoucha prison. The Public Prosecutor subsequently charged the two human rights defenders with 'damaging properties'. According to their lawyer, if the human rights defenders are convicted by the Court they could be imprisoned for up to three years. On 10 December 2020, the Court of First instance in Tunis ordered the conditional release of the two human rights defenders, their next hearing session is not scheduled yet.

Damj staff members and LGBT+ human rights defenders in Tunis have been frequently harassed and targeted by the Tunisian police. In March 2020, human rights defender and the chairman of Damj [Badr Baabou](#) was subjected to intensive intimidation and surveillance by the police.

Front Line defenders is extremely concerned regarding the detention and charging Saif Ayedi and Hamza Nasri as it believes these human rights defenders were solely targeted regarding their peaceful human rights work.

Front Line Defenders urge the Tunisian authorities to:

1. Immediately drop the charge against human rights defenders Saif Ayedi and Hamza Nasri as it is believed that they are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Take measures to ensure that government officials or other public figures refrain from making statements or declaration stigmatising the legitimate work of human rights defenders;

3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Tunis are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions [including judicial harassment].

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