

9 March 2020

### **Tunisia: Intensified intimidation and surveillance of human rights defender Badr Baabou**

During the first week of March 2020, human rights defender **Badr Baabou** was subjected to intensified intimidation and surveillance by the police. His colleagues, friends and family were also harassed and questioned by the police.

[Badr Baabou](#) is a Tunisian human rights defender, co-founder and Chairman of the organisation Damj (the Tunisian Association for Justice and Equality) and co-chair of the M-Coalition, a regional HIV/AIDS advocacy network devoted to the needs of the LGBT+ community in the Middle East and North Africa region. He is the winner of the [2019 Front Line Defenders award](#).

During the first week of March 2020, Badr Baabou was subjected to intensified surveillance by the police. Individuals wearing police uniforms were observed surveilling his apartment and location he frequents. Several of his neighbours, colleagues and friends were approached directly by the police, who questioned them about the defender's work and personal life. The police also questioned the owner of Badr Baabou's apartment about security cameras located inside.

Badr Baabou has been subjected to police surveillance and other forms of harassment and threats in the past as a result of his work. In November 2019, unknown individuals approached him on the streets of Tunis and threatened that he would be killed and his apartment would be burnt down. The defender was forced to relocate as a result. In July 2018, his house was raided and vandalised, and his belongings and property containing sensitive Damj information were stolen. After the incident, he lodged a complaint with the police but no action was taken to investigate. Moreover, his family has been repeatedly harassed and questioned by the police about his human rights work.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the intensified police surveillance and harassment of human rights defender Badr Baabou as it believes that he is being targeted solely as a result of his peaceful and legitimate human rights work.

### **Front Line Defenders urges the Tunisian authorities to:**

1. Immediately cease all further harassment of Badr Baabou, as well as of the members of his family, his colleagues and friends;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Badr Baabou;
3. Carry out immediate, thorough and impartial investigations into the threats made against Badr Baabou as well as the raid at his house, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Tunisia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.