

To: President of the Republic of Tunisia, Kais Saied

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Copy to: Embassy of the Republic of Tunisia

H.E. Mr. Skander Denguezli

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Driebergen-Rijsenburg,

Your Excellency,

I write to express my grave concern following the unjust sentencing of 37 individuals to harsh prison sentences of up to 74 years following a sham trial on bogus charges of "conspiracy" in relation to their legitimate political activities or affiliations. Among them is opposition figure Chaima Issa, who has been handed a prison sentence of 18 years.

The trial of the 37 individuals was marred by egregious fair trial violations, including the physical absence of defendants in the courtroom. On 18 April, during the third and last hearing session, observers from civil society, embassies, national civil society, international NGOs and independent media were barred from attending, with only one family member per defendant allowed entry. Despite the lawyers' objections against the procedural violations and absence of the defendants, the judge proceeded to open the trial by reading the indictment in the absence of the detainees. The actual hearing lasted only a few minutes, with no opportunity for the defendants to be heard, no cross-examinations and no statements from the lawyers.

I therefore urge you to quash the unjust convictions and sentences of Chaima Issa and all other defendants and to immediately and unconditionally release those who are detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights. Finally, I urge you to cease the politically motivated prosecutions of critics, political opponents, human rights defenders and activists.

Yours sincerely,

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The Netherlands