

Unjust Sentences Against Sihem Ben Sedrine A New Step in the Dismantling of Transitional Justice and the Persecution of Political Opponents

The organization Free Voice has received, with profound shock and condemnation—along with the broader human rights and political community—the judgments handed down by the Tunis Court of First Instance late yesterday evening. The court sentenced human rights defender and former President of the Truth and Dignity Commission, Sihem Ben Sedrine, to twenty-five years in prison. Additional sentences were also imposed on former Truth and Dignity Commission member Khaled Krichi, as well as a number of businesspeople and former public officials, in connection with cases relating to the Commission's work and the French-Tunisian Bank (BFT) file.

Free Voice wishes to place on record that these unprecedented and manifestly unjust rulings can only be understood, in our view, as a new and dangerous step in the systematic dismantling of the legacy of the Tunisian Revolution and its institutions. They represent a direct attack on the architects of transitional justice and on all those who contributed to uncovering the truth about decades of authoritarianism, corruption, and gross human rights violations.

As we follow this alarming development with deep concern, we reaffirm the following:

* These judgments form part of a broader pattern of manipulating the judiciary to target political opponents and human rights defenders, turning it into a tool of retaliation and repression, thereby undermining its independence and eroding public confidence in the justice system.



* The targeting of the Truth and Dignity Commission and its members is nothing less than an attempt to erase the collective memory of Tunisians and to exact revenge on the transitional justice process, which exposed serious violations and brought to light files that had remained politically and judicially untouchable for decades.

* The disproportionate prison sentences, issued in a context of escalating politically motivated prosecutions, once again demonstrate a systematic determination to silence independent voices and dismantle everything associated with the achievements of the Revolution for Freedom and Dignity.

* The continued fabrication of cases and the relentless subjection of opposition figures and human rights defenders to successive judicial proceedings constitute a flagrant violation of the principles of a fair trial and of Tunisia's international human rights commitments.

Accordingly, we:

1. Strongly condemn these unjust verdicts and the dangerous deviation they represent from the judiciary's fundamental mission of protecting rights and freedoms.

2. Call for the annulment of these judgments, an end to the political manipulation of the judiciary, and the immediate cessation of the targeting of political opponents, human rights defenders, and leading figures of Tunisia's transitional justice process.

3. Urge national and international human rights organizations, as well as the relevant United Nations mechanisms on the independence of judges and lawyers and on human rights defenders, to take immediate action in response to this dangerous escalation, which threatens what remains of the rule of law and democratic institutions in Tunisia.

4. Reaffirm that attempts to suppress the truth and retaliate against the leaders of transitional justice will neither erase the memory of the Tunisian people nor extinguish the demands for freedom, dignity, and justice for which the Revolution was fought.

Freedom for the unjustly imprisoned.

Justice must never be used as an instrument of political revenge.