

ADVOCACY DOSSIER

BADR BAABOU

بدر بعبو

Co-founder of Damj and advocate for LGBTI+ rights in Tunisia, Badr Baabou was attacked and robbed by police and security officers in October 2021. The officers threatened him with death and cursed him for his human rights work.

HuMENA.

Prepared by HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement · 8 November 2026

Case reference HM-TN-2026-010

01

THE CASE AT A GLANCE

Co-founder of Damj and advocate for LGBTI+ rights in Tunisia, Badr Baabou was attacked and robbed by police and security officers in October 2021. The officers threatened him with death and cursed him for his human rights work.

COUNTRY	**Tunisia**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Disclose the current legal situation of Badr Baabou, including whether any proceedings or restrictions remain in force.

02 Drop any charges related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights.

03 Guarantee that Badr Baabou faces no reprisal for peaceful human rights work.

04 Comply with international human rights obligations, including the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Latest updates on this case
Scan the code or visit:
https://humena.org/defenders/badr-baabou/

02

DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
Physical assault	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 7, 9
Threats and intimidation	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Unlawful surveillance	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 17

03

HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

2018

CONTEXT

Repeated burglaries of his home

From 2018, his home was broken into four times and work laptops and other devices were stolen. The Damj office and the homes of some members were also entered.

March 2020

CONTEXT

Police watch his home and threaten to burn it

Police watched his apartment and questioned his landlord and neighbours. They reportedly said that next time they would burn the house down.

21 October 2021

PHYSICAL ASSAULT

Attacked by police and security officers

At approximately 9:00 PM in Tunis, Baabou was stopped, assaulted, and robbed by a plain-clothes police officer and a uniformed internal security officer. The officers took his wallet, phone, identification documents, and work laptop, threatened him with death, and cursed him for his LGBTI+ rights work.

25 October 2021

COMPLAINT FILED BY THE PERSON

Filed complaint with public prosecutor

Baabou registered a complaint at the Public Prosecutor's Office in the First Instance Court in Tunis against the two officers involved in the attack, the director general of national security and the director of the Tunis security region.

November 2021

CONTEXT

No progress on his complaint

Amnesty International issued an urgent action on the attack and reported that the prosecutor had made no progress on his complaint.

04

THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Badr Baabou co-founded Damj, the Tunisian Association for Justice and Equality, and served as its chairman. The organization provides legal aid, health services, and advocacy for LGBTI+ people in Tunisia, operating in a context where same-sex relations remain criminalized under Article 230 of the Penal Code. Damj has documented police abuse, arbitrary detention, and the use of anal examinations as evidence in prosecutions, a practice condemned by United Nations human rights bodies as torture.

Baabou also co-chairs the M-Coalition, a regional network focused on HIV/AIDS advocacy for LGBTI+ communities across the Middle East and North Africa. The coalition addresses the intersection of health access, stigma, and legal vulnerability in countries where both HIV status and sexual orientation expose individuals to criminal prosecution and social exclusion. In 2019, Front Line Defenders honored Baabou with its annual award for human rights defenders at risk.

The Attack

On 21 October 2021, at approximately 9:00 PM, Baabou was walking home in Tunis when he was stopped by two officers. One was a police officer in plain clothes; the other was an internal security officer in uniform. They took his wallet, mobile phone, identification documents, and work laptop, which held confidential data on Damj's beneficiaries. They threatened him with death and verbally abused him, explicitly referencing his work defending LGBTI+ rights.

The officers continued to assault Baabou in public. As bystanders gathered, the officers announced that they were police and that what Baabou was experiencing was the penalty for those who insult the police and file complaints against them. The statement suggested that the attack was retaliatory, connected to his previous advocacy and complaints against security forces.

Legal Action and Response

On 25 October 2021, Baabou filed a complaint at the Public Prosecutor's Office in the First Instance Court in Tunis. He named the two officers involved in the attack, the director general of national security, and the director of the Tunis security region. The complaint documented the assault, the theft of his belongings, and the threats he received.

The attack on Baabou is part of a broader pattern of violence, harassment, and intimidation faced by LGBTI+ rights defenders in Tunisia. Despite constitutional protections for freedom of association and expression adopted after the 2011 revolution, LGBTI+ individuals and advocates continue to face arrest, prosecution under Article 230, and violence from both state and non-state actors. The explicit reference by the officers to his human rights work underscores the targeted nature of the assault.

05

SAMPLE LETTER

Copy it, adapt it and send it from your own address.

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my deep concern about the situation of Badr Baabou, co-founder and Chairman of Damj (Tunisian Association for Justice and Equality); co-chair of the M-Coalition, a regional HIV/AIDS advocacy network for LGBTI+ communities in the Middle East and North Africa in Tunisia, whose current situation has not been publicly confirmed.

In brief: Co-founder of Damj and advocate for LGBTI+ rights in Tunisia, Badr Baabou was attacked and robbed by police and security officers in October 2021. The officers threatened him with death and cursed him for his human rights work.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Disclose the current legal situation of Badr Baabou, including whether any proceedings or restrictions remain in force;
2. Drop any charges related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights;
3. Guarantee that Badr Baabou faces no reprisal for peaceful human rights work;
4. Comply with international human rights obligations, including the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

I will follow this case closely until Badr Baabou's situation is clear and no reprisal remains.

Respectfully,

[Your name]
[Your city, country]
8 November 2026