

Advocacy dossier

Borhen Bsaies

برهان بسيس

Imprisoned (serving sentence) **Tunisia**

Borhen Bsaies is a Tunisian journalist who hosts a morning show on the independent radio station IFM and has been in prison since May 2024. After serving an eight-month sentence in a false news case he was kept in custody on financial charges, sentenced in January 2026 to three and a half years, and the sentence was upheld on appeal on 12 May 2026; he remains held in Mornaguia prison.

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The case at a glance

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Status **Imprisoned (serving sentence)**	Arrested **11 May 2024**	Country **Tunisia**
Sentence Three and a half years in prison, with fines and confiscation of assets (22 January 2026, upheld on appeal on 12 May 2026)		
Charges Spreading false news (Decree-Law 54) Defamation Money laundering Tax evasion and financial offences		

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Release Borhen Bsaies immediately and unconditionally.

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

03 Ensure unrestricted access to legal counsel, family, and adequate medical care while in detention.

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How the case unfolded

11 May 2024

Arrest

Arrested on a highway outside Tunis

Police stopped and arrested Borhen Bsaies on a highway outside Tunis as he drove back from Hammamet with his wife. His IFM colleague Mourad Zghidi was arrested the same day.

15 May 2024

Pretrial detention ordered

Placed in detention for spreading false news

He and Mourad Zghidi were placed under detention orders for spreading false news under Article 24 of Decree-Law 54.

22 May 2024

Conviction

Sentenced to one year for false news and defamation

A Tunis court convicted him of one count of false news and one of defamation and sentenced him to six months on each count, one year in total.

27 May 2024

Investigation opened

Money laundering investigation opened

The public prosecutor opened a money laundering investigation into him and Mourad Zghidi, linked to alleged illicit enrichment.

26 July 2024

Appeal: sentence reduced

Appeal court reduces sentence to eight months

An appeals court upheld the conviction and reduced the sentence to eight months.

3 December 2024

Pretrial detention ordered

Charged with money laundering and detained pending investigation

He was charged with money laundering and ordered detained pending investigation, keeping him in custody after the eight-month sentence.

27 August 2025

Referral to trial

Referred to the criminal chamber; release refused

The Indictment Chamber of the Tunis Court of Appeal referred his case to the Criminal Chamber of the Tunis Court of First Instance and rejected his request for release.

22 January 2026

Conviction

Sentenced to three and a half years on financial charges

The Tunis Court of First Instance sentenced him to three and a half years in prison on tax evasion, money laundering and other financial charges, with heavy fines and the confiscation of assets including company shares.

27 January 2026

Detention conditions and health

Letter from prison describes restricted visits

In a letter from Mornaguia prison passed on by his lawyer Sami Ben Ghazi, he said he was held under a special classification that restricts visits, which take place behind a glass barrier without direct contact with his wife, children and grandson, and that the confiscation of the family's savings had left them without income.

14 April 2026

Hearing postponed

Appeal trial opens and is adjourned

The appeal trial opened before the criminal chamber of the Tunis Court of Appeal and was adjourned to 28 April 2026. Twenty organisations, including the National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists, called for his and Mourad Zghidi's release.

28 April 2026

Hearing postponed

Appeal court refuses provisional release

The appeal court rejected a request for provisional release and adjourned the case to 12 May 2026. Diplomats from the UN, the United Kingdom and Belgium attended the hearing.

12 May 2026

Appeal: judgment upheld

Appeal court upholds three-and-a-half-year sentence

A Tunis appeal court upheld the three-and-a-half-year prison sentence imposed in January on money laundering and tax evasion charges, which he denies. His lawyer said the defence was very disappointed. He remains held in Mornaguia prison. In September 2026 the Committee to Protect Journalists still listed him as imprisoned.

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The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: Borhen Bsaies remains in Mornaguia prison, where he has been held since May 2024. The Tunis Court of Appeal confirmed his sentence of three and a half years on money laundering and tax charges on 12 May 2026, and no later ruling or release has been reported.

Background and Work

Borhen Bsaies is a Tunisian journalist and broadcaster. He worked as a presenter and political commentator on several Tunisian television channels, including Attounissia, Nessma TV, which he left in 2016, and Attessia, which he left in September 2022. Before his arrest he presented the morning programme "L'Emission Impossible" on IFM, an independent radio station in Tunis, where the commentator Mourad Zghidi and the lawyer Sonia Dahmani also appeared. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, the authorities had questioned him over radio, television and social media statements made between 2020 and 2023, including criticism of President Kais Saied's dissolution of the High Judicial Council.

The Arrest

On 11 May 2024 police stopped him on a highway outside Tunis as he drove back from Hammamet with his wife, and arrested him. His IFM colleague Mourad Zghidi was arrested the same day, and that night masked security officers arrested Sonia Dahmani at the headquarters of the Tunisian Bar Association. On 15 May 2024 the two journalists were placed under detention orders for spreading false news under Article 24 of Decree-Law 54.

Detention Conditions and Health

He is held in Mornaguia prison near Tunis. In a letter sent from prison on 27 January 2026 through his lawyer, Sami Ben Ghazi, he said he was held under a special classification that restricts visits, which take place behind a glass barrier without direct contact with his wife, children and grandson. He said the confiscation of about 80,000 dinars in family savings had left his family without income. The Committee to Protect Journalists said it could not determine his state of health.

Legal Proceedings

On 22 May 2024 a Tunis court convicted him and Mourad Zghidi of spreading false news and defamation and sentenced each of them to one year in prison, six months for each count. An appeal court reduced the sentence to eight months in July 2024. On 27 May 2024 the public prosecutor had opened an investigation into alleged money laundering, illicit enrichment and the ownership of company shares and property. On 3 December 2024, shortly before his false news sentence ended, he was charged with money laundering and ordered detained pending investigation. The rights association Intersection said the order was issued without questioning and without giving the defence access to the case file.

On 27 August 2025 the Indictment Chamber of the Tunis Court of Appeal sent the case to the criminal chamber of the Tunis Court of First Instance and refused his request for release. On 22 January 2026 that court sentenced him and Mourad Zghidi to three and a half years in prison for money laundering and tax offences, with fines and the

confiscation of assets, including company shares. He denies the charges. The appeal trial opened on 14 April 2026; on 28 April the court refused provisional release, and on 12 May 2026 it upheld the sentence. One of the defence lawyers, Ghazi Mrabet, later said the convictions were final and that the two men would not be released before the end of June 2028.

International Response

The Committee to Protect Journalists said in January 2026 that the sentences were widely seen as retaliation for the journalists' work, and Reporters Without Borders described the case as two years of judicial harassment that moved from Decree-Law 54 to money laundering charges. Diplomats from the UN, the United Kingdom and Belgium attended the hearing of 28 April 2026. The Gulf Centre for Human Rights has documented his case. In April 2026 twenty organisations, including the National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists, called for his release and that of Mourad Zghidi. In September 2026 the Committee to Protect Journalists listed him among the journalists imprisoned in Tunisia, with Mourad Zghidi and Zied El Heni, and described Sonia Dahmani's situation as deferred imprisonment.

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