ADVOCACY DOSSIER

MOHAMED IQBAL KHALED

محمد إقبال خالد

At liberty **Tunisia**

Mohamed Iqbal Khaled, former mayor of Sousse in Tunisia, was detained in May 2024 in the Terre d'Asile Tunisie case over the municipality's partnership with the refugee support group. On 5 January 2026 a Tunis court gave him a two-year suspended sentence and he was released that night.

HuMENA.

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

Case reference HM-TN-2024-002

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THE CASE AT A GLANCE

Mohamed Iqbal Khaled, former mayor of Sousse in Tunisia, was detained in May 2024 in the Terre d'Asile Tunisie case over the municipality's partnership with the refugee support group. On 5 January 2026 a Tunis court gave him a two-year suspended sentence and he was released that night.

STATUS	**At liberty**
ARRESTED	**10 May 2024**
COUNTRY	**Tunisia**
CHARGES	**Forming a criminal association to help foreigners enter and stay in Tunisia** **Abuse of office** **Obtaining an undue advantage** **Money laundering (investigation stage)**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Quash the conviction and drop any charges that remain on record against Mohamed Iqbal Khaled in connection with peaceful human rights work.

02 Confirm publicly that Mohamed Iqbal Khaled faces no residual travel, financial, or professional restriction arising from this case.

03 Guarantee that Mohamed Iqbal Khaled can resume that work without surveillance, summons, or further reprisal.

04 Provide effective remedy for the period of deprivation of liberty already served.

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

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DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
Arbitrary detention	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9
Criminalisation of solidarity	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 21, 22 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 5
Judicial harassment	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12
Prolonged pretrial detention	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9(3)

03

HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

10 May 2024

ARREST

Arrested over a Sousse municipality partnership agreement

Mohamed Iqbal Khaled, former mayor of Sousse, was summoned and placed in detention on the prosecutor's order, together with his deputy Imen Ouardani, over the municipality's partnership agreement with Terre d'Asile Tunisie.

15 December 2025

HEARING

First hearing held; release requests rejected

The first trial hearing was held before the Tunis Court of First Instance. Requests for release were rejected and the case was adjourned to 5 January 2026.

5 January 2026

CONVICTION

Convicted with a two-year suspended sentence

The criminal chamber for financial corruption at the Tunis Court of First Instance convicted him alongside civil society actors and former public officials in the Terre d'Asile Tunisie case, handing down a two-year suspended sentence.

5 January 2026

RELEASE

Released the night of the verdict

Released on the night of 5 to 6 January 2026 after the suspended sentence was handed down.

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THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Mohamed Iqbal Khaled is the former mayor (president of the municipality) of Sousse, a coastal city in eastern Tunisia. Municipal councils in Tunisia manage local services and may enter partnerships with civil society and international organisations, including on support for vulnerable people.

Under his leadership, the Sousse council approved in late 2022 a partnership with Terre d'Asile Tunisie, an organisation that supports migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. The agreement, signed in 2023, allowed the organisation to open a local office to guide migrants and refugees.

The Arrest

On 10 May 2024, Mohamed Iqbal Khaled was summoned and placed in detention on the prosecutor's order, together with his deputy, Imen Ouardani. The case against him centred on the municipality's partnership with Terre d'Asile Tunisie. Authorities treated this administrative act as a criminal offence.

At the investigation stage he faced charges including forming a criminal association to help foreigners enter and stay in Tunisia, abuse of office, obtaining an undue advantage, and money laundering. Tunisia has increasingly criminalised cooperation with civil society organisations working on migration, asylum and human rights, and municipal officials have become vulnerable to prosecution for decisions made in the course of their official duties.

Detention and Trial

He was held in pre-trial detention for about twenty months. At the first trial hearing, on 15 December 2025 before the Tunis Court of First Instance, requests for release were rejected and the case was adjourned to 5 January 2026. On that date the court's criminal chamber for financial corruption sentenced him and four other detained defendants to two years in prison, suspended. He was released that night. No appeal ruling has been reported.

Information about his access to legal counsel and his detention conditions has not been made public.

Context

His case is part of a broader wave of arrests targeting municipal officials, civil servants, and civil society actors in Tunisia. Since 2021, authorities have increasingly criminalised cooperation with international organisations and non-governmental actors, particularly in areas related to migration, asylum, and human rights advocacy.

Signing administrative agreements, acts that fall within the scope of official municipal duties, has become grounds for arrest and detention. The legal ambiguity surrounding these charges, combined with

prolonged pre-trial detention, creates an environment of fear and self-censorship among local officials and civil society partners.

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SAMPLE LETTER

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

Your Excellency,

I am writing about the case of Mohamed Iqbal Khaled, former mayor (president of the municipality) of Sousse, Tunisia in Tunisia, who has been released. I am writing to ask that the case be closed properly and that no further reprisal follows.

In brief: Mohamed Iqbal Khaled, former mayor of Sousse in Tunisia, was detained in May 2024 in the Terre d'Asile Tunisie case over the municipality's partnership with the refugee support group. On 5 January 2026 a Tunis court gave him a two-year suspended sentence and he was released that night.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Quash the conviction and drop any charges that remain on record against Mohamed Iqbal Khaled in connection with peaceful human rights work;
2. Confirm publicly that Mohamed Iqbal Khaled faces no residual travel, financial, or professional restriction arising from this case;
3. Guarantee that Mohamed Iqbal Khaled can resume that work without surveillance, summons, or further reprisal;
4. Provide effective remedy for the period of deprivation of liberty already served.

I will continue to follow this case until the record against Mohamed Iqbal Khaled is cleared and no reprisal remains.

Respectfully,

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