

Advocacy dossier

Mourad Zghidi

مراد الزغيدي

Imprisoned (serving sentence) **Tunisia**

Mourad Zghidi is a Tunisian journalist held since May 2024, first under Decree-Law 54 for his radio commentary and then on money laundering and tax charges widely seen as retaliation for his journalism. His sentence of three years and six months was upheld on appeal in May 2026.

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The case at a glance

Mourad Zghidi is a Tunisian journalist held since May 2024, first under Decree-Law 54 for his radio commentary and then on money laundering and tax charges widely seen as retaliation for his journalism. His sentence of three years and six months was upheld on appeal in May 2026.

Status **Imprisoned (serving sentence)**	Arrested **11 May 2024**	Country **Tunisia**

Sentence Three years and six months in prison (January 2026), upheld on appeal on 12 May 2026, cassation appeal pending; earlier eight months under Decree-Law 54, served.

Charges Spreading false news under Decree-Law 54 (2024 case: one year, reduced to eight months on appeal, served)
Money laundering (January 2026 judgment: three years)
Tax offences (January 2026 judgment: six months)

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Release Mourad Zghidi 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.

04 Immediately unfreeze the personal and organisational accounts of Mourad Zghidi.

02

Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

Arbitrary detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9

Asset freeze UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 13

Judicial harassment UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12

Press freedom violation International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19

Prolonged pretrial detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9(3)

Unfair trial International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

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How the case unfolded

11 May 2024

Arrest

Arrested over his radio commentary

Mourad Zghidi was arrested together with fellow Radio IFM host Borhane Bessis over his radio commentary and questioned for spreading false news under Decree-Law 54.

15 May 2024

Pretrial detention ordered

Placed in pre-trial detention under Decree-Law 54

An investigating judge placed him in pre-trial detention for spreading false news under Article 24 of Decree-Law 54.

22 May 2024

Conviction

First conviction under Decree 54 for political commentary

On 22 May 2024, the Tunis Court of First Instance sentenced Mourad Zghidi and fellow IFM radio host Borhane Bessis to one year in prison for "spreading false news" under Tunisia's Decree Law 54 against cybercrime. Zghidi was questioned about a Facebook post and nine video clips from his IFM radio show in early 2024 supporting journalist Mohamed Boughaleb.

30 July 2024

Appeal: sentence reduced

Appeal court cuts Decree 54 sentence to eight months

The Tunis Court of Appeal upheld the conviction and reduced the sentence to eight months in prison.

7 January 2025

Pretrial detention ordered

New detention warrants in money laundering case on his release day

On the day he was due for release, an investigating judge issued new detention warrants against him in a money laundering and tax investigation.

22 January 2026

Conviction

Fresh 3.5-year sentence on money-laundering and tax charges; assets confiscated

On 22 January 2026, a Tunis court sentenced Zghidi and Bessis to three years in prison for money laundering and six months for tax offences. The ruling also imposed fines, ordered the confiscation of their assets, and provided for the seizure of their shareholdings and associated rights in companies in which they hold shares, for the benefit of the public treasury.

14 April 2026

Hearing

Appeal trial opens at the Tunis Court of Appeal and is postponed to 28 April

28 April 2026

Hearing

Appeal court refuses provisional release and sets a hearing for 12 May

12 May 2026

Appeal: judgment upheld

Tunis Court of Appeal upholds the three-and-a-half-year sentence

The Tunis Court of Appeal upheld the sentence of three years and six months in prison on money-laundering and tax charges. A cassation appeal is pending.

June 2026

Appeal lodged

Cassation appeal lodged

A cassation appeal against the appeal ruling was lodged, and an expedited review was requested.

4 June 2026

Hunger strike begins

Begins hunger strike over appeal ruling

He began a hunger strike in prison in protest at the appeal ruling.

16 June 2026

Hunger strike ends

Suspends hunger strike after eleven days

Mourad Zghidi suspended the hunger strike he had begun on 4 June 2026, in response to appeals from public figures and organisations in Tunisia and abroad. He said the decision did not mean giving up his demand for release.

30 June 2026

Other act

Open letter to the President asking for release

In an open letter to President Kais Saied, published on a Facebook page supporting him, he asked to be released, stating that he had reached a settlement with the Ministry of Finance in January 2026 and paid all the sums due.

10 September 2026

Context

Still held in Mornaguia prison

He was still held in Mornaguia civil prison.

11 November 2026

Context

Still in prison two and a half years after his arrest

Mourad Zghidi and Borhen Bsaies remained in prison two and a half years after their arrest on 11 May 2024. Their lawyer, Ghazi Mrabet, said the combined sentences in their two cases total four years and two months.

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The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: This record was checked against current sources. Mourad Zghidi remains in Mornaguia prison, two and a half years after his arrest on 11 May 2024, serving a sentence of three years and six months that the Tunis Court of Appeal upheld on 12 May 2026; no ruling on his cassation appeal has been reported.

Background and Work

Mourad Zghidi is a journalist based in Tunisia. He is a political and sports commentator on Radio IFM in Tunis. His arrest and prosecution align with a well-documented pattern of judicial harassment targeting the Tunisian press since 2021.

Tunisia's media environment has deteriorated sharply in recent years. Journalists who report on corruption, governance failures, or political repression face arrest under charges unrelated to the content of their work. Financial crimes, money laundering, tax evasion, and foreign-currency violations, have replaced direct censorship as the preferred legal mechanism for silencing the press.

The Arrest

Zghidi was arrested on 11 May 2024 over his radio commentary and charged with spreading false news under Decree-Law 54. On 22 May 2024 a Tunis court sentenced him to one year in prison, reduced to eight months on appeal on 30 July 2024. On 7 January 2025, the day he was due for release, an investigating judge issued new detention warrants against him in a money laundering and tax case. The charges followed the pattern established in dozens of other cases: prosecutors invoke financial statutes that shift the burden of proof onto defendants and carry sentences heavy enough to deter others in the profession.

No evidence has been made public linking Zghidi to criminal financial activity. The inclusion of a false-information charge suggests that the prosecution was at least in part a response to his journalistic work, though the state has not acknowledged that connection.

Legal Proceedings

Zghidi was held in pretrial detention in the money laundering case from January 2025. On 22 January 2026, a Tunis court sentenced him to three years for money laundering and six months for tax offences, with fines and asset confiscation. Journalist Borhane Bessis, tried alongside him, received an identical sentence. On 12 May 2026 the Tunis Court of Appeal upheld the sentence, and a cassation appeal is pending. On 4 June 2026 he began a hunger strike in protest at the ruling, which he suspended on 16 June 2026. On 30 June 2026 he wrote an open letter to President Kais Saied asking to be released, stating that he had reached a settlement with the Ministry of Finance in January 2026 and paid all the sums due.

The trial took place in a judicial system that has been systematically instrumentalised to prosecute journalists. Defendants in such cases are frequently denied access to evidence, held in prolonged pretrial detention, and sentenced in proceedings that lack the procedural safeguards required under international fair-trial standards.

Detention Conditions and Health

Zghidi is held in Mornaguia prison. No detailed information is currently available regarding his conditions of detention or his health. Tunisian prisons are severely overcrowded, and political detainees, including journalists, are often held in facilities where medical care is inadequate and family visits are restricted.

International Response

The case has drawn attention from international press-freedom organisations as part of the broader crackdown on independent journalism in Tunisia. Human rights groups have called for Zghidi's release and for an end to the use of financial and administrative charges as tools of political repression.

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

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