

ADVOCACY DOSSIER

SAIF AYEDI

سيف العيادي

At liberty **Tunisia**

Saif Ayedi was arrested by plainclothes police in October 2022 after attending a press conference on police violence. He was released two days later, exempt from all charges. He had been arrested before, in October and December 2020 and in July 2022.

HuMENA.

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

Case reference HM-TN-2026-008

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THE CASE AT A GLANCE

Saif Ayedi was arrested by plainclothes police in October 2022 after attending a press conference on police violence. He was released two days later, exempt from all charges. He had been arrested before, in October and December 2020 and in July 2022.

STATUS	**At liberty**
ARRESTED	**19 Oct 2022**
COUNTRY	**Tunisia**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Drop any charges that remain on record against Saif Ayedi in connection with peaceful human rights work.

02 Confirm publicly that Saif Ayedi faces no residual travel, financial, or professional restriction arising from this case.

03 Guarantee that Saif Ayedi 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/saif-ayedi/

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DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
Arbitrary detention	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9
Judicial harassment	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12
Physical assault	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 7, 9

03

HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

October 2020

ARREST

Arrested and beaten at a protest

Police arrested him at a protest and beat him. The release date is not public.

8 December 2020

ARREST

Arrested at a protest outside parliament

He was arrested at a protest outside parliament, held at the Bouchoucha detention centre and charged with damaging property.

10 December 2020

CONDITIONAL RELEASE

Conditional release ordered

The Tunis Court of First Instance ordered his conditional release. The outcome of the case is not public.

22 July 2022

ARREST

Arrested at a protest against the referendum

He was arrested during protests against the constitutional referendum. The release date is not public.

19 October 2022

ARREST

Arrested after press conference

Plainclothes police officers intercepted Ayedi's taxi after he attended a press conference on police violence, forcing him into an unmarked car and taking him to the National Guard station in Cité Ettadhamoun.

20 October 2022

HEARING

Appeared before public prosecutor

Ayedi appeared before the Public Prosecutor in Ariana, who referred the case to an investigating judge. The judge ordered that questioning resume at the National Guard station, citing insufficient investigative elements.

21 October 2022

RELEASE

Released; exempt from all charges

He was released after two nights in detention.

21 October 2022

CASE UPDATE

Investigating judge exempts him from all charges

The investigating judge in Ariana exempted Saif Ayedi from all charges, ending the case against him.

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THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Saif Ayedi is a member of the Bardo section of the Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights, the country's oldest independent human rights organization. He also belongs to the Tunisian Association for Justice and Equality. Both organizations monitor state violence, document detention conditions, and advocate for legal reforms.

Ayedi is part of the national "Learn to Swim" campaign, a coalition that seeks to end impunity for police violence in Tunisia. The campaign takes its name from the 2018 death of Omar Laabidi, a nineteen-year-old football supporter who drowned in a river while fleeing police officers who had attacked a crowd with tear gas and batons. His body was recovered the following day bearing marks of violence. The campaign has pressed for prosecutions in Laabidi's case and other deaths in custody.

As an active member of the League's prison-monitoring programme, Ayedi conducts visits to detention centres across Tunisia. He interviews detainees and their families, gathers testimony from witnesses to police abuses, and coordinates with lawyers to file complaints. In mid-October 2022, he was among the first to visit the family of Melek Selimi, a young man who died after an encounter with police in Cité Ettadhamoun. He interviewed Fourat Ayari, Selimi's close friend and the sole eyewitness to the events.

The Arrest

On 19 October 2022, Ayedi attended a press conference at the headquarters of the National Union of Tunisian Journalists in Tunis. He was part of the coordination team that organized the event on behalf of Omar Laabidi's family. After the conference ended, he and two colleagues took a taxi toward his workplace. A car carrying plainclothes officers intercepted the taxi, forced Ayedi out, and drove him to an unknown location without identifying themselves or producing a warrant. His colleagues followed the vehicle and confirmed that he had been taken to the National Guard station in Cité Ettadhamoun.

Ayedi's lawyers were informed that the arrest order came from the Public Prosecutor's Office as part of a coordinated campaign targeting individuals linked to ongoing protests in Cité Ettadhamoun and surrounding areas. Residents of these neighbourhoods, especially young people, had taken to the streets to denounce the police violence that led to Melek Selimi's death. Ayedi's role in documenting that death and his membership in prison-monitoring networks appeared to have placed him on the authorities' list.

Legal Proceedings

On 20 October 2022, Ayedi appeared before the Public Prosecutor in Ariana, who referred the case to an investigating judge in the same district. The judge ordered that questioning be resumed at the National Guard station in Cité Ettadhamoun, citing a lack of investigative elements. Ayedi spent a second night in detention.

On 21 October 2022, the investigating judge in Ariana concluded the interrogation and declared Ayedi exempt from all charges. He was released the same day. Media reports said he was accused of forming a criminal association to harm property and persons, while the National Guard said he was wanted for obstructing traffic at night. No reasoning for the initial arrest was disclosed beyond the prosecutor's reference to the protest-related sweep.

Earlier Arrests

Ayedi had been arrested before. In October 2020 police arrested and beat him at a protest. On 8 December 2020 he was arrested at a protest outside parliament, held at Bouchoucha and charged with damaging property; the Tunis Court of First Instance ordered his conditional release on 10 December 2020. On 22 July 2022 he was arrested during protests against the constitutional referendum.

Context

Ayedi's arrest came amid a broader pattern of judicial harassment targeting Tunisian human rights defenders who document police violence. Since President Kais Saied assumed emergency powers in July 2021, activists monitoring detention conditions, lawyers defending protesters, and journalists covering security-force abuses have faced arrest, travel bans, and prosecutions under vaguely worded statutes. The "Learn to Swim" campaign and the Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights have both reported increased surveillance and interference with their prison-monitoring work.

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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 Saif Ayedi, human rights monitor with the Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights; programme coordinator at the Tunisian Association for Justice and Equality (Damj); member of the "Learn to Swim" campaign against police violence and impunity 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: Saif Ayedi was arrested by plainclothes police in October 2022 after attending a press conference on police violence. He was released two days later, exempt from all charges. He had been arrested before, in October and December 2020 and in July 2022.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Drop any charges that remain on record against Saif Ayedi in connection with peaceful human rights work;
2. Confirm publicly that Saif Ayedi faces no residual travel, financial, or professional restriction arising from this case;
3. Guarantee that Saif Ayedi 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 Saif Ayedi is cleared and no reprisal remains.

Respectfully,

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