

ADVOCACY DOSSIER

SALWA GHRISSA

سلوى غريسة

At liberty **Tunisia**

A Tunisian human rights defender working on social inclusion and the right to difference. Arrested in December 2024, held in severely overcrowded conditions at Manouba Civil Prison, and denied a fair and transparent pretrial process. She was granted provisional release in March 2026.

HuMENA.

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

Case reference HM-TN-2024-006

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THE CASE AT A GLANCE

A Tunisian human rights defender working on social inclusion and the right to difference. Arrested in December 2024, held in severely overcrowded conditions at Manouba Civil Prison, and denied a fair and transparent pretrial process. She was granted provisional release in March 2026.

STATUS	**At liberty**
ARRESTED	**10 Dec 2024**
COUNTRY	**Tunisia**
CHARGES	**Financial transfers from suspicious and dubious foreign organizations** **Alleged tax evasion, money laundering, and misappropriation of funds**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

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

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

03 Guarantee that Salwa Ghrissa 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/salwa-ghrissa/

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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
Defamation and smear campaign	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 17 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Inhumane detention conditions	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10 UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules)
Judicial harassment	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12
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

9 December 2024

SUMMONS

Summoned for questioning about the association's funding

Questioned about alleged financial transactions with foreign entities, then released and allowed to go home.

10 December 2024

ARREST

Summoned a second time and taken into police custody

Summoned again the following day and held in police custody for forty-eight hours, then brought before a judge who issued a pretrial detention order.

12 December 2024

TRANSFER BETWEEN PLACES OF DETENTION

Transferred to Manouba Civil Prison under a pretrial detention order

Held in a cell of about fifty square metres shared by close to a hundred women, three to a bed and others on mattresses on the floor, with one shower a week.

5 March 2026

HEARING

Trial opens; release request rejected

Proceedings opened against her and seven other staff and members of the Association for the Promotion of the Right to Difference on financial and criminal charges arising from routine transfers covering salaries, expenses and grants to partner organisations. The court rejected a request for her release.

19 March 2026

CONDITIONAL RELEASE

Granted provisional release

The court granted her provisional release at the second hearing, after more than a year in pretrial detention. The prosecution continues.

30 April 2026

HEARING

Trial hearing, appearing at liberty

A further hearing in her trial was set for this date, with her appearing at liberty. Its outcome is not known.

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THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Salwa Ghrissa is a Tunisian human rights defender and the executive director of the Association pour la Promotion du Droit à la Différence, an organization focused on social inclusion, the protection of marginalized and vulnerable groups, and the promotion of the right to difference. Through peaceful advocacy, community initiatives, and human rights awareness, she worked to defend fundamental freedoms and challenge systemic discrimination in Tunisia.

The Arrest

On 9 December 2024, Ghrissa was summoned by the Economic and Financial Investigations Sub-Directorate in El Gorjani for questioning regarding alleged financial transactions with foreign entities. After an initial interrogation, she was released.

The following day, 10 December 2024, she was summoned again for a second interrogation and placed in police custody for 48 hours at the Bouchoucha detention center.

On 12 December 2024, Ghrissa was brought before the Public Prosecutor at the Court of First Instance of Bizerte. A judicial investigation was opened and assigned to an investigating judge. Following her hearing before the investigating judge, a pretrial detention order was issued, and she was immediately transferred to Manouba Civil Prison, where she was held until her provisional release in March 2026.

Detention Conditions and Health

According to her sister, Ghrissa was initially held in a cell measuring approximately fifty square meters, housing nearly a hundred detainees. Three women shared a single bed; others slept on mattresses placed directly on the floor. Detainees were permitted one shower per week, and access to the prison commissary was severely restricted.

Though Ghrissa was later moved to a less overcrowded cell, her sister reported that she continued to suffer profoundly, both physically and psychologically. Her sister emphasized that one does not adapt to injustice.

Legal Proceedings

Ghrissa has been charged in connection with alleged financial transfers from what authorities describe as "suspicious and dubious foreign organizations." Her legal defense team, including lawyers Rania Zaghdoudi and Anas Kaddoussi, notes that her case follows a broader pattern of pressure on civil society organizations in Tunisia, where charges frequently include tax evasion, money laundering, and misappropriation of funds.

Standard judicial practice in financial cases requires the appointment of an independent forensic accounting expert before the closure of investigations. In Ghrissa's case, this procedural safeguard was disregarded. No independent accountant was appointed; instead, the financial brigade itself examined the accounts. Her lawyers describe the investigation as rushed and irregular, undermining guarantees of impartiality and due process.

Article 85 of the Tunisian Code of Criminal Procedure strictly regulates pretrial detention as an exceptional measure, permitting only one extension of up to three months for misdemeanors and two extensions of up to four months each for felonies, subject to judicial justification. Ghrissa's prolonged detention exceeded these limits without sufficient legal reasoning, constituting a breach of domestic law.

Article 35 of the 2022 Tunisian Constitution guarantees that no person shall be arrested or detained except in cases of flagrant crime or pursuant to a lawful judicial order, and ensures the right to be informed promptly of charges, to legal counsel, and to procedural safeguards. The lack of transparency in Ghrissa's case contravenes these constitutional protections.

International Standards

Tunisia is a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees protection against arbitrary arrest and detention, the right to a fair and timely trial, and the rights to freedom of expression and association, rights central to the work of human rights defenders. Ghrissa's detention appears directly linked to her peaceful civil society activities.

The conditions described raise serious concerns under the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), particularly regarding overcrowding, sanitation, access to basic services, and respect for human dignity.

The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders obligates States to protect individuals who promote and defend human rights. The arbitrary detention and judicial harassment of Salwa Ghrissa represent a breach of these obligations and contribute to a chilling effect on civic space in Tunisia.

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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 Salwa Ghrissa, executive director of the Association pour la Promotion du Droit à la Différence, working on social inclusion, marginalized communities, and the right to difference 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: A Tunisian human rights defender working on social inclusion and the right to difference. Arrested in December 2024, held in severely overcrowded conditions at Manouba Civil Prison, and denied a fair and transparent pretrial process. She was granted provisional release in March 2026.

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

Respectfully,

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