

ASF in Tunisia suspended for 30 days

6 May 2026

Avocats Sans Frontières in Tunisia received, on Tuesday, May 5, 2026, a decision to suspend its activities for a period of 30 days, pursuant to Article 45 of Decree-Law 88-2011 relating to associations. This decision follows a formal notice sent to the organization in October 2024 and a request for additional file information in February 2026, both of which ASF fully complied with within the required deadlines.

Avocats Sans Frontières considers that this decision is not legally founded and does not fall under any legitimate and democratic control of associative work, but constitutes on the contrary a manifest attack on the freedom of association. It is part of a series of restrictive measures targeting civic space in Tunisia, similar to the suspensions that have recently targeted several civil society organizations, including emblematic actors such as the Tunisian League for Human Rights, the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights, and the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women.

This decision comes in a context marked by a continuous degradation of the environment in which civil society evolves. For several years, organizations have faced arbitrary detentions of their members and employees, severe banking restrictions, defamation campaigns, as well as repeated attempts to challenge Decree-Law 88-2011, one of the major achievements of the democratic transition.

ASF deeply regrets this decision and its multiple consequences. It directly affects the morale and safety of its team in Tunisia, who work in an increasingly constrained context, but also the people benefiting from its legal aid, often in situations of great precariousness and for whom civil society organizations sometimes constitute the only recourse. This suspension will also impact the many partners with whom ASF has collaborated for nearly 15 years to promote a more just, inclusive, and human rights-respecting society.

ASF opened its doors in Tunisia in 2012, following the 2011 revolution that led to the fall of the dictator Ben Ali and sparked immense hope for freedom, dignity, and democratic reforms for the country and the region. Since then, the organization has worked without interruption within a democratic transition marked by many challenges, for the promotion of justice, the right to a fair trial, and respect for human rights, through innovative projects carried out in partnership with national institutions, such as the Tunisian National Bar Association, as well as with several ministries, including those of Justice, Health, and Social Affairs.

ASF has also set up a legal aid mechanism that is now widely recognized, which has allowed thousands of vulnerable people to be supported, thanks to the commitment of its teams and its partner lawyers.

Since July 25, 2021, ASF has observed with deep concern the political developments in Tunisia and their consequences on rights and freedoms. Civic space has gradually shrunk, while increasing attacks target human rights defenders, journalists, associative actors, political opponents, and engaged citizens. In this context, ASF has continued its action in favor of the right to a fair trial and the independence of justice.

The suspension of its activities today imposes a temporary interruption of this work. ASF intends to exercise its right of appeal in order to contest this decision, with the support of the lawyers who have volunteered to ensure its defense.

ASF finally salutes the courage and commitment of its teams, as well as the solidarity expressed by many lawyers, organizations, and citizens. Faced with pressure, its determination remains intact: ASF will continue, relentlessly, to defend justice and the rule of law.

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