

## CCBE statement on the situation of lawyers in Tunisia

17/05/2024

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The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) represents the bars and law societies of 46 countries and, through them, more than 1 million European lawyers.

On 17 May 2024, on the occasion of its Plenary Session, the CCBE strongly condemns the recent violent arrest of lawyers Sonia Dahmani and Mehdi Zagrouba, as well as the acts of torture perpetrated against him, and the attempted arrest of lawyer Nidhal Salhi.<sup>1</sup>

On the one hand, the CCBE is seriously concerned about the violence of these arrests while both lawyers had taken refuge in the office of the Tunisian Bar. Moreover, the CCBE is all the more shocked by the fact that lawyer Mehdi Zagrouba was the victim of torture following his arrest.

On the other hand, the CCBE is equally concerned about the fact that these arrests are connected to, and serve to unlawfully curb the exercise of their freedom of expression and their legitimate activities as lawyers, including those related to legal assistance in the field of migration and asylum law.

In this context, the CCBE urges the competent authorities in Tunisia to restore the freedom of those arrested lawyers. Additionally, the CCBE urges the competent authorities to ensure that a full and impartial investigation into the torture of lawyer Mehdi Zagrouba is carried out, with a view to bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards.

Furthermore, the CCBE unanimously expresses the solidarity of the entire legal profession in Europe and invites the competent authorities at EU, Council of Europe and international level to take the necessary measures to support our Tunisian colleagues.

Finally, the CCBE recalls that all lawyers should be able to carry out their professional activities without fear of reprisal, hindrance, intimidation or harassment in order to preserve the independence and integrity of the administration of justice and the rule of law.

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<sup>1</sup> See also the CCBE letter addressed to the Tunisian authorities: <http://ccbe.link/x6qnw>