

UA 104/21

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TUNISIA

LGBTI RIGHTS DEFENDER VIOLENTLY ATTACKED

Badr Baabou, a human rights defender and LGBTI rights activist, was violently assaulted by police officers on the night of 21 October 2021 in downtown Tunis. Security forces have been targeting Badr Baabou for his work and activism in promoting the rights and freedoms of LGBTI people in Tunisia. This attack is the latest in a long series that spans several years. Several complaints have been filed but to no avail. The authorities must conduct an investigation into the attack, bringing those responsible to account.

Write to the Minister of Justice urging her to:

- ask the public prosecutor to open an effective and impartial investigation into Badr Baabou's violent assault and the ones that preceded it,
- bring all those found to be responsible to account in fair trial proceedings.
- end the impunity enjoyed by police officers.

Write to:

Minister of Justice

Leila Jaffel

Email: info@e-justice.tn

Fax: 011 216 71 568 106

Salutation: Dear Minister

And copy:

His Excellency Mohamed Imed Torjemane

Ambassador for Tunisia

515 O'Connor Street

Ottawa, Ontario K1S 3P8

Fax: 613 237 7939

Email: info@ambassadetunisie.ca or ambtun13@bellnet.ca

<http://ambassadetunisie.ca/>

Additional Information:

Badr Baabou (41) is a Tunisian LGBTI rights activist and co-founder of DAMJ, one of the country's most prominent LGBTI rights groups. Around 9:00pm on 21 October 2021, Badr Baabou left a cafe in downtown Tunis after socialising with friends and was walking toward the area's main roundabout, known as "Monguella," to find a taxi when two unknown men accosted him in the street. The first man to appear, walking beside Badr Baabou, wore T-shirt and dark trousers labelled "Public Security," and

taunted Badr Baabou about filing complaints against police officers. Badr Baabou asked the man who he was, and the man replied loudly with a phrase in Tunisian Arabic indicating “The cops!” The second man, wearing civilian clothes, appeared a moment later and grabbed hold of Badr Baabou by his backpack, as the first man struck Badr Baabou repeatedly on the head. The two men forced him into a dark side-street called Rue Kemal Ataturk, where he fell to the ground as they repeatedly struck him with their fists and kicked him with their boots on the head, neck, and legs, yelling insults and the phrase “the cops” until he nearly lost consciousness. Finally, the man in civilian clothing took Badr Baabou’s laptop from his backpack and his phone from his pocket, confiscating them. The two men told him the beating was retaliation for filing complaints against police and left with parting words that Badr Baabou said he recalls as a warning not to defend “whores and [a derogatory term in Tunisian Arabic for homosexuals].” After a few minutes Badr Baabou got to his feet, bleeding from his head, returned home by taxi, and used a phone there to call a fellow DAMJ activist and the association's lawyer, who accompanied Badr Baabou to the emergency room of Tunis’ Rabta Hospital, where a doctor examined him, as attested by a copy of a medical report shared with Amnesty International.

According to DAMJ and HRW, Badr Baabou was harassed, assaulted and threatened several times. In 2018 his home in Downtown Tunis was burglarized by people who stole personal and work laptops containing sensitive DAMJ information. In November 2019, he was approached by unidentified individuals in the streets of Tunis who threatened to kill him and burn down his apartment. The threat was reiterated in March 2020, when police officers questioned his neighbours about his work as an activist. Following these incidents Badr Baabou has been forced to relocate frequently.

On the evening of 10 March 2021, four men in civilian clothes allegedly assaulted Badr Baabou in downtown Tunis as he left a bar after socializing with friends. After a bystander intervened to separate the men from Badr Baabou, the men joined a group of policemen nearby who had watched the incident without intervening. Badr Baabou filed a complaint over the alleged incident with the prosecutor’s office at the Tunis Court of First Instance. To date, the prosecutor has not informed them of any progress on this complaint.

On 25 October, the activist filed a complaint with Tunis’ Court of First Instance directed against Tunisia’s General Director of National Security, General Director of Public Security, Regional Head of Public Security, and the two men who assaulted and robbed him and whom he alleges to be members of security forces. The complaint has yet to be responded to.

LGBTI activists in Tunisia have [alleged various forms of harassment](#) by authorities in recent years, including verbal harassment during protests, assault, surveillance, as well as [arrests under broadly-worded laws](#) such as those that criminalize insulting police and harming public morals.