



Tunisia Country Report
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By Sophie Silva

Tunisia has seen a democratic backslide in the past five years following the election of President Kais Saied. Since taking office in 2019, Saied has [suspended](#) the Tunisian Parliament, dissolved and restructured the Supreme Judicial Council, [arrested critics and opposition leaders](#), and centralized power in the office of the Presidency. Saied has also used inflammatory language when speaking about critics and opposition members, referring to them as [traitors and terrorists](#).

Tunisia is currently [facing an economic crisis](#) due to debt, rising inflation, and a lack of available jobs, spurring outmigration of Tunisians and Tunisian residents of African origin. Over [90,000](#) migrants and refugees have crossed the Mediterranean from Tunisia to Europe in 2023.

Tunisia has become a primary country of transit for migrants and refugees [from sub-Saharan Africa and Syria](#). Most migrants departing from Tunisia head for the Italian island of [Lampedusa](#). Not only is Tunisia a transit country, but many migrants and asylum seekers who fail to successfully cross at sea, regardless of where they launched from, are [disembarked](#) in Tunisia.

This surge in migration has resulted in a harsh backlash from the Tunisian government. President Kais Saied has on multiple occasions accused African migrants and asylum seekers of attempting to change Tunisia's [demographic makeup](#) from Arab to African. President Saied made a racist and inflammatory speech accusing hordes of African migrants of [bringing violence and crime](#) to Tunisia.

Following this speech there was an [increase in racist mob attacks](#) against Black Africans regardless of their legal status. Attacks by police and arbitrary arrests also increased. There have also been incidents of migrants being [detained and forcibly returned](#) to their countries of origin.

There have also been reports of National Guard officers [beating migrants and forcibly expelling them](#) into the desert along the Algerian border, as well as [confiscating their documents such as passports](#), and threatening to kill those who attempt to return.

In October President Saied [rejected an installment of the €1 billion deal with the European Union](#) due to accusations of the EU failing to follow through on promises of assisting Tunisia with border patrol and reducing smuggling.

Genocide Watch considers Tunisia to be at **Stage 1: Classification, Stage 3: Discrimination, Stage 4: Dehumanization, Stage 6: Polarization, and Stage 8: Persecution.**

Genocide Watch recommends that the government of Tunisia:

- Stop expelling migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers into the desert between Tunisia and Algeria.
- Stop harassing and arbitrarily arresting Black Africans by enforcing Law 50 which criminalizes racial discrimination.
- Release detained opposition politicians and government critics.
- Protect the 2011 NGO law by rejecting the current draft bill which would remove safeguards from government interference with civil society organizations.