



NAVACELLE

Focus

A year of criminal justice: major criminal trials from July 2025 to July 2026

Navacelle looks back at the criminal trials held in France that made headlines for their legal, political, social, or criminal significance.

July 2026

Appeal proceedings in the Libyan campaign financing case: the second chapter in a major state affair.

This trial concerns allegations of illegal funding of Nicolas Sarkozy's 2007 presidential campaign by Muammar Gaddafi's regime in exchange for diplomatic, economic and judicial advantages. The stakes of the appeal are considerable both personally and institutionally, given that the former Head of State was imprisoned for 20 days following the first instance judgment, despite having lodged an appeal on the merits of the case.



Investigation

- Nicolas Sarkozy was placed under formal investigation in 2018 for **passive corruption, receiving stolen goods** (concealment of the misappropriation of Libyan public funds) and **illegal election campaign financing**.
- Evidence came to light suggesting that funds had been provided by senior Libyan officials to Nicolas Sarkozy in exchange for his promise to review the arrest warrant issued against Abdallah Senoussi, a key figure in Muammar Gaddafi's regime and the mastermind behind the 1989 bombing of UTA Flight 772.
- Nicolas Sarkozy was **sentenced at first instance** to five years' imprisonment, with a deferred prison order and provisional enforcement (along with a fine of 100,000 euros, a five-year ban on holding public office, and deprivation of civil, civic and family rights, limited to the right to stand for election, for five years, to be enforced provisionally), for criminal conspiracy, for which the prosecution had sought a seven-year sentence. He was acquitted of the other offences.



Trial

March to May 2026

- **Nine co-defendants were tried** during this appeal hearing, including Nicolas Sarkozy's close associates Claude Guéant and former Interior Minister Brice Hortefeux.
- **Change of story by former aide Claude Guéant**, who claims that Nicolas Sarkozy was water of his meeting with Abdallah Senoussi.



Sentencing

Submissions by the Prosecutor General's Office (13 May 2026)

- The prosecution's submissions **relate not only to criminal conspiracy but also to corruption, illegal campaign financing and concealment of the misappropriation of public funds**.
- Nicolas Sarkozy : 7 years' imprisonment, a fine of €300,000 and 5 years of ineligibility for public office.
- Brice Hortefeux : 4 years' imprisonment, including 2 suspended years.
- Claude Guéant : 6 years' imprisonment and a €100,000 fine.



Upcoming legal proceedings

Decision expected on 30 November 2026.



Impacts

- **First time a former French President has been imprisoned under the Fifth Republic.**
- **Extensive media coverage and publication of a book by the former Head of State about his detention following his conviction at first instance.**
- **The Prosecutor General's Office has once again sought a conviction for Nicolas Sarkozy on all the charges brought against him, despite his partial acquittal at first instance.**