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President of the Republic

Kais Saied

Route de la Goulette, Site archéologique de Carthage,Tunisie

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Your Excellency,

**I write to you and your government to express my grave concern over the unjust conviction and arbitrary detention of senior Ennahdha leader and former justice minister Noureddine Bhiri.**

The Criminal Chamber of the Court of First Instance in Tunis convicted and sentenced him to a harsh ten-year in prison on politically motivated and bogus charges for a social media post he denied writing. Following a technical expertise requested by the accusation chamber, a court appointed committee concluded that he did not write the post. However, Noureddine Bhiri should never have been arrested or charged or detained in the first place, even if he had written the social media post, as it relates to the exercise of his right to freedom of expression, which is guaranteed and safeguarded by international human rights law, including Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (IC-CPR), and Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, to which Tunisia is a state party.

According to Noureddine Bhiri’s defence committee, the verdict issued against him followed an unfair judicial process that violated the rule of law and fair trial guarantees. For instance, his lawyers filed a complaint against the investigative judge who interrogated Noureddine Bhiri after his arrest and who initially refused Noureddine Bhiri’s transfer to hospital despite apparent traces of beatings. On 13 February 2023, security forces violently arrested Noureddine Bhiri, severely injuring him on the shoulder. He spent several days in various medical facilities including for surgery on his shoulder, to treat fractured ribs and respiratory issues. The public prosecution disregarded the reports of torture raised by Noured-dine Bhiri’s lawyers, including the judge’s denial of medical care.

**I therefore urge you and your government to ensure that Noureddine Bhiri is immediately released from arbitrary detention, and that his conviction and sentence are quashed. Pending his release, I urge you and your government to ensure that he receives any medical treatment he may require and continue to allow him regular access and visits from his family and lawyers. Moreover, I call on you and your government to cease your targeted arrests of critics for the peaceful exercise of their human rights including the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.**

Yours sincerely,

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**Copie**

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