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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 express my grave concern over the prolonged arbitrary detention of 60-year-old journalist Mohamed Boughalleb since March 2024 solely for peacefully exercising his human rights**. Security forces arrested him on 22 March based on a complaint submitted by a senior official of the Ministry of Religious Affairs after Mohamed Boughalleb publicly questioned the ministry’s spending.

On 26 March 2024, the public prosecutor at the Tunis Court of First Instance charged Mohamed Boughalleb with «attributing illegal acts to a public official without providing evidence» and «insulting others or disturbing their comfort through public telecommunications networks» under Articles 128 of the Penal Code and 86 of the Telecommunications Code, respectively. On 17 April, Mohamed Boughalleb was convicted and sentenced to six months in prison; his sentence was increased to eight months by the Tunis Court of Appeal on 28 June 2024. On 5 April 2024, an investigative judge at the Tunis Court of First Instance charged Mohamed Boughalleb in a separate case under article 24 of Decree-Law 2022-54 on Cybercrimes for using telecommunications networks to produce, send, or disseminate «fake news» or «rumours»; to harm, defame, or «incite violence against others» following a complaint from a professor claiming that Mohamed Boughalleb «insulted» her on Facebook. Mohamed Boughalleb has maintained that the comments she claimed were «insulting» were not made from his account. The judge issued a pre-trial detention order in connection to these charges.

Mohamed Boughalleb’s health has severely deteriorated during his unjust detention. He suffers from chronic illnesses such as diabetes and high blood pressure; and developed prostate problems. His diabetes has worsened in prison, triggering repeated infections. His eyesight and hearing were severely impacted. Despite this, he has not been granted access to adequate medical care in prison, including his daily medicine and regular medical examinations. On 4 November 2024, Mohamed Boughalleb was transferred from his prison cell to another wing of El Mornaguia prison where conditions are worse due to overcrowding.

**I urge you to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of Mohamed Boughalleb as he is detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights. Pending his release, I call on you to ensure that he is held in conditions meeting international standards for the treatment of prisoners and granted regular access to adequate healthcare. Moreover, I call on the Tunisian authorities to cease targeted arrests of critics, journalists and political opponents for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression.**

Yours sincerely,

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**Copie**

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