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PRESS RELEASE

The International Jurists Union has been following with great concern the human rights situation in Tunisia since late June 2021.

The International Jurists Union has sought to arrange a visit to Tunisia in to monitor closely the situation, but the visit was postponed due to health conditions and the spread of the Corona pandemic. Meanwhile, the IJU seeks to send a human rights delegation to meet with state officials and follow the enforced disappearance file and discuss the trial of civilians before military courts.

On Friday morning, December 31, 2021, civilian men intercepted the car of the former Minister of Justice and Member of Parliament, Mr. Nouredine Al-Buhairi and his wife, Mrs. Saeeda Al-Akrimi, forcing him to ride the car as he refused to ride it without being shown any warrant or IDs proving their affiliation to an official body. The arrest amounted to kidnapping.

Al-Buhairi's wife, Lawyer Al-Akrimi, later stated that she and her husband were subjected to verbal violence and physical abuse, and their phones were seized. Mr. Al-Buhairi has been taken to an unknown destination and the Ministry of Interior did not issue any statement on his arrest.

After a huge protest campaign, a team from the "National Authority for the Prevention of Torture" and "the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights" were able to visit Mr. El-Bhairi in a hospital in Bizerte Governorate - northern Tunisia - under heavy security guard, after his health deteriorated due to entering into a hunger strike.

On the same day, and in similar circumstances, Mr. Fathi Al-Baldi, who worked for the Ministry of Interior, was arrested. Subsequently, the Ministry of Interior announced the arrest of two other persons, whose identities have not been verified and without disclosing their place of detention.

The International Jurists Union reminds the officials of the Republic of Tunisia of the international obligations signed by the Tunisian international community, and that no person should be subjected to enforced disappearance or detained in an unknown destination according to the international agreements signed by Tunisia and which do not allow any exceptional circumstance to be invoked, including internal political instability.

Enforced disappearance is the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by state agents, persons or groups of individual acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the state, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or concealing the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, thus depriving him of the protection of the law. Also, no order or instruction issued by any authority may be invoked to justify the crime of enforced disappearance.

The IJU calls on the Tunisian authorities to respect their international obligations and to immediately release Mr. El-Behairi and Mr. El-Baladi, especially given the deterioration of Mr. El-Beheiri's health condition and his need to medical care. It also calls for preserving the dignity and rights of the detainees and opening an investigation into these incidents, especially as the judicial authorities confirmed being unaware of the matter.

It is important to obtain testimonies of witnesses of the forced disparate ve and arbitrary detention, and to enable victims to have access to the information or reasons for their arrest.

Finally, the IJU reminds Tunisia of its international obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, which imposes obligations on states to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in a practical and effective manner, and recalls the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and all other relevant covenants, including of course Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

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