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ONG oeuvrant pour les droits de l'homme

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TUNISIA

Summer Heat and Hellish Cells Compound the Suffering of Prisoners of Conscience in Tunisia's Overcrowded Prisons

The Free Voice organization is monitoring with deep concern and condemnation the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian conditions within Tunisian penal institutions—particularly the harsh detention conditions endured by elderly political prisoners and those with chronic illnesses, which threaten their lives and violate their human dignity.

Documented Facts Recent reports by local and international human rights organizations have revealed that some Tunisian prisons are operating at over 200% of their capacity, with the total number of detainees exceeding 33,000.

Amidst this stifling overcrowding—and during the hottest season of the year—political detainees over the age of eighty are languishing behind bars, deprived of humane conditions or adequate medical care. Furthermore, there has been a near-total lack of response from the Ministry of Justice regarding these reports and recommendations.

Violated Legal Framework The findings documented by Free Voice constitute a clear violation of several international instruments ratified by Tunisia, most notably:

- * The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), which oblige states to ensure healthcare for all detainees and provide humane conditions of detention.



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- * Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which prohibits torture and cruel or degrading treatment.
 - * Article 10 of the same Covenant, which recognizes the right of every person deprived of their liberty to be treated humanely and with respect for their dignity.
 - * The United Nations Principles for Older Persons, which oblige states to safeguard their health and dignity.

In light of the foregoing, the organization calls upon the Tunisian authorities to:

- 1- The immediate and humane release of all elderly political detainees and those suffering from chronic illnesses.
- 2- Provision of urgent and appropriate medical care for all detainees reported to be in poor health.
- 3- Granting independent local and international monitoring bodies unrestricted access to visit penal institutions.
- 4- Reviewing the judicial files of all political detainees in light of fair trial standards.
- 5- Putting an end to the political instrumentalization of the judiciary and ensuring its genuine independence.
- 6- We call upon the relevant UN bodies, the European Parliament, and international human rights organizations—which have previously stated in their reports and declarations that the charges brought against the detainees lack credible evidence—to redouble pressure on the Tunisian authorities to fulfill their international human rights obligations.

Remaining silent regarding the suffering of elderly and sick individuals behind bars during Tunisia's scorching summer constitutes complicity that is unacceptable under human rights norms and intolerable to free consciences.