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Tunisia

# Political Initiative of the Popular Front

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**We reproduce here the statement by the Popular Front\* adopted after the mobilization that followed the assassination on February 6 of Chokri Belaïd, leader of the Party of United Democratic Patriots and a leader of the Popular Front. Chokri Belaïd was one of the lawyers who had defended the accused in the Gafsa mining basin under the dictatorship of Ben Ali.**

Our country is living today under the impact of the assassination of the general secretary of the Party of United Democratic Patriots and founder of the Popular Front, the militant Chokri Belaïd.

This murder confirms the severity of the crisis facing our country at all levels: political (crisis of the institutions of governance, whose legitimacy and credibility are falling into disrepute), economic, social, cultural and security. This crisis results from the failure of the ruling coalition, led by the "Ennahda movement," and its inability to resolve the fundamental problems facing the Tunisian people, who are experiencing serious consequences: a rising unemployment rate, the exacerbation of poverty and of the number of people in need, increased marginalization and repression. The government of the troika has shown that it is even unable to carry out a cabinet reshuffle, after consultations that have lasted more than seven months, due to the predominance of the mentality of quotas and of plunder, far removed from the interests of the people and the country.

In this situation, the head of the provisional government has recently announced his decision to carry out a cabinet reshuffle in order to form what he calls a "government of national competence" while stressing his determination to move in that direction regardless of the position of the political parties within and outside the government, paying no attention to the popular rejection of the government and to the protests which have affected all regions of the country and which reached their peak after the martyrdom of Comrade Chokri Belaïd, whose funeral was a referendum against the government and for its resignation.

Faced with these developments, we salute the masses of the Tunisian people for their dynamism and their sympathy with the martyred comrade and for their rejection of political crimes, as well as policies, attitudes and practices that have led to or created a climate conducive to the commission of such crimes.

Accepting our historical responsibilities, we:

- 1) Consider that the initiative of the head of the provisional government has not broken with the logic of having the sole right to have an opinion, whereas it has no political and socio-economic programme, direct and clearly able to carry out what remains of the transition period. We also believe that the head of the government himself, along with his governmental team, is responsible for the complete fiasco of the government;
- 2)
- 3) We stress that the current situation requires a new government, a government of crisis, to save the country, a government limited in size, at the service of the people and the homeland, with the support of the population and of national and progressive and democratic forces, composed of people with the national competence to manage what remains of the transition period, whose members will not stand in the next elections, a government which acts in the framework of the following emergency programme:
- 4)
  - a) Set a clear agenda for the remainder of the transitional period:
  - b) ~~â€œ~~ complete the drafting of the Constitution, enshrining the aspirations of our people to freedom, dignity, social

justice and equality between Tunisians;

â€¢ resolve the dossier of the martyrs and the wounded of the revolution;

â€¢ draft the electoral law;

â€¢ draft a transitional justice law;

â€¢ launch regulatory authorities: the electoral commission, the commission of the judicial magistracy and the media commission;

â€¢ fix a precise date for the holding of the next elections;

â€¢ implement mechanisms to fight corruption and political money;

â€¢ organize a national seminar on immigration.

â€¢ Take economic and social emergency measures which include:

â€¢ preventing the liquidation of domestic enterprises and of the main wealth of the country;

â€¢ suspending the repayment of the debt and setting up an audit committee on the question;

â€¢ recovering the rights of the state concerning tax evasion;

â€¢ establishing an exceptional tax on large fortunes;

â€¢ supporting and encouraging small and medium farmers and exempting them from the payment of the debt which is crushing them;

â€¢ freezing prices to protect the purchasing power of the people and encourage consumption;

â€¢ implementation of the decree on the prohibition of subcontracting (temporary work) and regularization of workers on construction sites;

â€¢ reducing unemployment and considering the introduction of an unemployed allowance;

â€¢ modifying and restructuring the industrial and agricultural minimum wage;

â€¢ reducing imports of luxury goods and expenditure on public administration.

c) And immediately:

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â€¢ opening an urgent investigation into the murder of comrade Chokri Belaïd;

â€¢ investigating all attacks which have targeted political activists, intellectuals, artists, journalists, and the sanctuaries, tombs and *zawiyas* [1] and prosecuting those responsible;

â€¢ dissolving the so-called "leagues for the protection of the revolution" and all parallel bodies;

â€¢ criminalizing the exploitation of mosques for incitement to violence and political and partisan propaganda;

â€¢ criminalizing "excommunication" (*takfir*) [2]

â€¢ cancelling all administrative and political denominations that have been assigned on a partisan basis.

We propose this initiative to all political and social forces and to the Tunisian people and we consider that its implementation will require a national salvation conference, including all parties and individuals who want to avoid the country sliding towards chaos, to restore security, stimulate the economy and develop production, to preserve the reputation of the revolution and the country, in the country and abroad and to ensure the best conditions for the upcoming elections.

We call the upon the masses of our people to maintain the mobilization in order to foil all plots and all internal and external political manoeuvres aimed at undermining the security and stability of our country, plundering its wealth and denigrating its revolution.

We express our unwavering commitment in the fight for the achievement of the objectives of the revolution and the defence of national sovereignty and the unity of our people.

### **Tunis, February 12, 2013**

*The Popular Front, which held its first national conference in September, 2012 and adopted a draft political charter, groups together many independent activists and organization coming from different traditions:*

*Marxist-Leninist: Parti des travailleurs (Workers' Party, the former PCOT, led by Hamma Hammami), Parti des patriotes démocrates unifiés (Party of United Democratic Patriots, resulting from the recent merger of the MOUPAD led by Chokri Belaïd and the Jmour current of the PTPD), the Parti patriotique socialiste révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Socialist Patriotic Party, led by Jamel Lazhar), and the Parti de la lutte progressiste (Party of the progressive struggle, PLP – led by Mohamed Leban);*

*Trotskyist: Ligue de la gauche ouvriere (Workers' Left League - LGO);*

*Socialist: Parti populaire pour la liberté et le progrès (People's Party for Freedom and progress, PPLP, led by Jalloul Ben Azzouna);*

– Marxist Pan-Arab: Front populaire unioniste (Popular Unionist Front, led by Amor Mejri);

Nasserite Arab nationalist: Mouvement du peuple (Movement of the people - Hrakat Echaab, led by Mohamed

Brahmi);

Baathist Arab nationalist: Mouvement Bath, led by Othmane Belhaj Amor, Parti de l'avant-garde arabe et démocratique (Party of the Arab and Democratic Vanguard, PAGAD, led by Khereddine Souabni);

Others: Tunisie verte (Green Tunisia, led by Abdelkader Zitouni), Mouvement des démocrates socialistes (Movement of Socialist Democrats), RAID (ATTAC and CADTM).

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[1] Muslim religious buildings

[2] A fatwa depriving someone of the status of Muslim, and therefore becoming *kafir*, i.e. miscreant