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## **Tunisia: Signs of Repression Began to Appear Following Kais Saied's Decisions**

The Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK) expressed its concern over the arrest of two Tunisian parliamentarians who oppose the recent decisions of Kais Saied, stressing that these practices raise fears of Tunisia turning into a new totalitarian dictatorship that suppresses freedom of opinion and expression.

Tunisian security forces in civilian clothes, who called themselves Presidential Security, had violently arrested MP Yassin Al-Ayari, representative of the "Amal and Work" (independent list), without specifying the reason for his arrest, showing IDs or judicial permit.

The Military Prosecution announced then that he was arrested to implement a "military" court ruling of two months' imprisonment, issued on December 6, 2018.

On the same day, the security forces arrested MP Maher Zaid - from the Dignity Coalition which rejects Saied's decisions - in connection with a case that had been settled since 2018, where he was sentenced in absentia to two years in prison on charges of "insulting the late President Beji Caid Essebsi", before he was released after spending only 24 hour of detention.

Immediately upon his release, units from the Judicial Police Department in Al-Qurjani arrested him again under a military rogatory. His lawyer told the media that Zaid was surprised with a security forces trying to stop him again without presenting a summons order, the ordering authority, or the charges raised against him.



One of Zaid's lawyers told the media that Zaid is now in the Crime Squad and that the court convened in the middle of the night, especially to receive a complaint against Zaid over an incident that took place last March, in which Zaid had no part in it.

The organisation stressed that the prosecution of MPs who opposed the decisions of Kais Saeed through the military judiciary, whether in old or new cases, is a grave violation of human rights, regardless of those who are being pursued in those cases, as the trial of civilians cannot take place except before their natural judge.

AOHR UK stressed that allowing the security forces to breach the law and prosecute MPs opposing to the President's decisions cannot be ignored, and will only result in more political tension and would reduce chances for national dialogue.

The organisation called on the Tunisian presidency to be responsible, respect freedom of opinion and expression, and human rights, stop trying civilians before military courts, and ensure that Tunisian security services abide by the law without any abuse and hold violators accountable.

AOHR UK called on the Tunisian political forces and civil society institutions to defend the rule of law, protect the democratic path, reject all human rights violations under any justification, and reject the use of the judiciary and security services to settle political disputes, which would eliminate all gains made by the Tunisian people in their revolution against Benn Ali's regime and eliminate the last stronghold of the Arab Spring.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK)