

## — Press Release —

Tunisia has been undergoing a severe crisis that affected the foundations of the state on many levels and seriously threatened it. July 25th, 2021, the date in which Tunisians celebrate the Republic Day, represented yet another episode of this crisis, as the country witnessed popular demonstrations in several regions. These demonstrators expressed the widespread outrage against the country's poor situation, as well as the deterioration of standards of living, and the increasing death toll due to the Government's failure in managing the Covid-19 epidemic.

Following these developments, the Head of State took a series of extraordinary measures, invoking Article 80 of the Constitution. In light of this, Al Bawsala:

- Considers that the crisis affecting the country at this point is the direct result of the unprecedented deterioration of social, economic, and sanitary conditions of all Tunisians, and that it is caused by a culmination of successive and continuing choices and policies that do not serve public interest. These policies have deepened socio-economic rifts, increased poverty, and contributed to the spread of corruption and clientelism, the confiscation of the people's sovereignty, and the utilisation of the security and judicial bodies to quell social movements and protests.

- Reiterates its previous principled statements and repeated warnings concerning the delays in establishing the Constitutional Court. These delays are a result of the political class' fear of this high authority and the prerogatives it holds, which include monitoring the constitutionality of laws and adjudicating conflicts of jurisdictions between the

President of the Republic and the Head of Government, as well as intervening with regard to the State of Exception. The absence of the Constitutional Court has contributed to the deterioration of the political climate due to perpetuated non-democratic practices within and outside Parliament seeking to safeguard narrow political interests.

- Confirms that Article 80 of the Constitution enables the President of the Republic to take all necessary measures they deem suitable within the State of Exception resulting from an imminent threat to the country, its security, or its independence, which hinders normal proceedings of state institutions.

- Estimates that the President of the Republic's decision to suspend Parliament's activities does not fit within the possible extraordinary measures, considering that Article 80 clearly indicates that Parliament should remain in a state of permanent session which is de facto not possible in the case of its suspension.

- Expresses its concerns regarding the concentration of powers at the hands of the President of the Republic, especially their heading of public prosecution, and invites all stakeholders in the Judicial Authority, namely the High Judicial Council, to safeguard the judiciary from quarrels and to guarantee fair trials for all. Al Bawsala also invites the President to clearly determine the measures to be taken as well as the objectives they aim to achieve during this State of Exception, and highlights the necessity that all measures respect republican values and protect rights and freedoms.

- Invites the President of the Republic to elaborate a clear roadmap for the period that will follow these extraordinary measures, to be drafted in a participatory framework based on transparency and utter respect for the State's institutions and its authorities.

- Insists and confirms that, in light of the absence of institutional tools of constitutional oversight, it will continue to closely follow all developments pertaining to this State of Exception, and to express its related positions in coordination with civil society organisations in all integrity and objectivity whenever it is required.