

Vice President Josep Borrell
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium
Brussels, 21 April 2020

THE EUROPEAN RESPONSE TO DEEPENING POLITICAL TENSION IN TUNISIA

Dear Vice-President Borrell,
Dear Commissioner Várhelyi,

We, the members of the European Partnership for Democracy, are writing to you to express our deep concern about President Kais Saied ongoing dismantling of the legitimate and legally constituted constitutional order in Tunisia.

On 30 June 2022, the President of Tunisia published a draft constitution that would further expand the powers of the president and limit the legislative and judicial branches, raising fears of a return to authoritarianism in the country. The draft will be voted on in a referendum on 25 July 2022. The process set in place by the President to replace the country's existing consensus-based constitution of 2014 is **devoid of any solid legal basis or explicit democratic legitimacy**.

Although we welcome the recent Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union, we consider it essential that the severe deterioration of the political conditions in Tunisia is met by concrete measures from the EU that help return Tunisia towards a pro-democratic path.

Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are central elements in the EU-Tunisia partnership. This is demonstrated by the reiteration of the EU's commitment to stepping up its efforts to promote democracy in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, adopted by the Council in November 2020. In line with these commitments, the EU and its member states should devise a unified, coherent and strategic policy towards Tunisia. This must use all instruments at your disposal to address the deepening political crisis in the country including the recent use of legal measures to target opposition forces.

For these reasons, we call on the EU to address the following questions:

- The EU needs an internal strategy to encourage Tunisia to return to its democratic path after the referendum. This should be declared publicly as a show of solidarity with the country's democratic actors. Does the EU have any plans to do this? And if not, why?
- The violations of the Tunisian constitution and of international law call into question the legitimacy of the current government. What concrete and precise steps will the EU and European Union member states take to respond to further deteriorations of that legitimacy?

We trust that you will give your utmost and urgent attention to these important questions and welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue with you further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Godfrey', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ken Godfrey
Executive Director
The European Partnership for Democracy

CC: Secretary General Stefano Sannino (EEAS)
Acting Director General Maciej Popowski (DG NEAR)