



INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

Commission internationale de juristes - Comisión Internacional de Juristas

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COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE - COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

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IMMEDIATE

TUNISIA: Lawyer's Hunger Strike Fails to Move Authorities

The Center for the Independence of Judges and Lawyers (CIJL) of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) urges the Tunisian Government to stop the persecution of a distinguished Tunisian human rights lawyer who is on a hunger strike to denounce repeated Government attacks.

Radhia Nasraoui, who is on the 25th day of her hunger strike, represents numerous clients in sensitive human rights cases, including political detainees. This has caused her to suffer repeated harassment over several years at the hands of the authorities, including:

- assault and battery;
- threats against her family, clients, and colleagues;
- ransacking of her office;
- confiscation of her computers and clients' files;
- restrictions on her movements and freedom of speech;
- surveillance of her residence and office; and
- tapping of her telephone line.

"Over the years, the Government of Tunisia has demonstrated its complete disregard for fundamental international human rights principles and has turned attacks on lawyers into a hobby," said Linda Besharaty-Movaed, ICJ/CIJL legal advisor. "This is especially disappointing as Tunisia purports to be a beacon of human rights in the region."

Nearly 40 lawyers observed a hunger strike on 22 October in support of Ms. Nasraoui. Attacks on lawyers in Tunisia have been mounting in the past few years and many lawyers suffer the same treatment as Ms. Nasraoui, yet complaints filed against the police or security services are not investigated, leading to a situation of complete impunity.

The ICJ/CIJL has addressed several interventions to the Tunisian Government concerning attacks on lawyers. The ICJ/CIJL monitored the politically motivated trial of the Bar Association in April 2003 in which the Court ruled that a strike by the Bar Association to denounce the malfunctioning of the justice system was illegal. Furthermore, in 2002, upon the invitation of several NGO's and lawyers, the ICJ/CIJL organized two fact-finding missions to Tunisia but was turned back each time at the airport in Tunis without any explanation.

For further information, please contact Linda Besharaty-Movaed, Legal Advisor at 41 22 979 38 09. End.

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

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