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Statement of ICOR about the people's uprising in Tunisia

23 January 2011

1 - On Friday 17 December 2010, a young unemployed graduate of 26 years, Mohamed Bouazizi, committed self-immolation. He sacrificed himself after the local police of Sidi Bouzid confiscated his sole means of support, which was a cart to sell fruit and vegetables from it. This was the start for a national uprising having its provisional turning point on Friday 14 January 2011 with the escape of the dictator Ben Ali to Saudi Arabia. The uprising was against hunger, misery and unemployment which is particularly hitting the youth and against the undemocratic Ben Ali regime.

2 - All over the country, street demonstrations, meetings and strikes have spontaneously broken out protesting against the regime of Ben Ali under the leadership of local revolutionary working class activists. The protesters are demanding bread, work for the young and the right to live in dignity.

3 - Faced with this revolt of the exploited and youth deprived of a future, the ruling class has responded with a hail of bullets in which more than 100 people lost their lives.

4 - Faced with this carnage, the bourgeoisies of the "democratic" countries have not raised a finger to condemn the barbarity of the regime and demand that the repression stops. Instead, various imperialist and comprador governments are complicit in this carnage! Even the bourgeois media is releasing only an incomplete and distorted picture about the crimes of Ben Ali.

5 - After the bloody weekend of 8 and 9 January 2011, the French state was still openly offering support to this ruthless dictator. The French foreign minister, Michèle Alliot-Marie, in her speech to the National Assembly on 12 January 2011, offered to lend a hand to Tunisia's security forces: "We contend that the savoir-faire of our security forces, which is recognized throughout the world, would make it possible to resolve the security situation in this country."

6 - This bloody terror of the state could not prevent the masses any more to fight for democratic conditions. Meetings and demonstrations of solidarity developed throughout the country: at Sfax, Kairouan, Thala, Bizerte, Sousse, Meknessi, Souk, Jedid, Ben

Gardane, Medenine, Siliana... Despite the repression, despite the absence of freedom of expression, demonstrators brandished placards reading: "Today, we are no longer afraid!"

7 – The forces of repression have greeted the protests with a hail of bullets. On 24 December 2010, a young demonstrator of 18, Mohamed Ammari, was killed by police bullets. Another, Chawki Hidri, was seriously wounded and died on the first of January 2011. At Kasserine, Thala and Regueb, the repression on demonstrations turned into a massacre. Cold-blooded the police fired into the crowd killing more than 25 people. Through Friday, 14 January 2011 the provisional list of deaths by bullets exceeded 90 killed!

8 - From 3 January 2011, schoolchildren mobilized themselves and used mobile phones and the internet, notably Facebook and Twitter, to call for a general strike of all pupils. They demonstrated on 3 and 4 January 2011 and were joined by unemployed graduates at Thala. The young demonstrators were faced with truncheons and tear gas. During the course of these confrontations the seat of government was invaded and the centre of the party in power was set on fire. The call for a national strike of pupils, relayed through the internet, was followed in several towns. At Tunis, Sfax, Sidi Bouzid, Bizerte, Grombalia, Jbeniana, Sousse, schoolchildren joined up with the unemployed. Meetings of solidarity also took place in Hammamet and Kasserine.

9 – On 27 and 28 December 2010 lawyers joined in the movement of solidarity with the population of Sidi Bouzid. Faced with the repression meted out to them, arrests and being beaten up, the lawyers called for a general strike on 6 January 2011. Strike movements also affected journalists in Tunis and teachers in Bizerte.

10 - A total blackout of information was organized. In the region of Sidi Bouzid, several localities were placed under a curfew and the army was mobilized. At Menzel Bouzaiane, the wounded could not be transported to hospital and the population lacked provisions. Schools were used as lodgings by police reinforcements.

11 - In order to try to restore calm, Ben Ali gave a public declaration. He promised to create 300,000 jobs in 2011-12 and to free all the demonstrators except those who had committed acts of vandalism. He dismissed his interior minister using him as a scapegoat and at the same time denounced the "orchestrated" politics of a minority of "extremists" and "terrorists". They were trying to harm the interests of the country.

12 – The anger of working class and oppressed people grew to such heights by Friday, 14 January 2011 that everybody was in the streets of Tunis. The demonstrators started to walk towards the Interior Ministry and the Palace of the dictator Ben Ali, who escaped to Saudi Arabia.

13 – The protests succeeded in chasing the dictator Ben Ali, but his party and his staff tried to hoodwink the masses. The Prime Minister Mahamed Ganoushi put Fouad Lambazae the president of the second chamber of parliament in the place of Ben Ali, and formed a government which promises elections after two months. But the masses have rejected this manipulation and have started to form their popular committees in each town and in each village. They have struck every day against this government.

14 – ICOR supports the struggle of working class and oppressed masses in Tunisia. It supports the right of the people to be able to decide their own political and economic future.

15 – ICOR supports the demand of the people's movement for withdrawal of the government and demands the formation of a democratic government by the people. Already councils are being set up in every village, town and city. ICOR supports such councils as a form of a direct democracy.

16 – ICOR also notes that there is a compromising trend, led by some opposition parties. They want to strike a compromise by changing the persons in power while leaving the

exploitative system and policies without any change. ICOR supports the struggle of the local, regional and other people's councils against this trend.

17 – The struggle of the working class and oppressed people of Tunisia is a beacon to other countries in the Arab world and even outside it. It shows how people can overcome a dictatorial regime and determine their own future. ICOR calls upon all its members to support this attempt of the people in every manner possible.

- **In solidarity with the working class and oppressed masses of Tunisia and the Maghrib,**
 - **in solidarity with the youth, wherever they struggle against hunger and unemployment,**
 - **in solidarity with the struggle for a democratic people's power in Tunisia!**