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## **Tunisia: Urgent need for investigation into Chokri Belaid's killing**

The killing today of Tunisian opposition politician, Chokri Belaid, outside his home must prompt a thorough, independent and impartial investigation by the Tunisian authorities, Amnesty International has said.

Chokri Belaid, a leading figure of the leftist opposition in Tunisia, was shot in the neck and head as he was leaving his home in Tunis this morning. He was the Secretary General of the Democratic Patriots party, and a vocal critic of the government. He denounced political violence and called for democratic values to be upheld in Tunisia.

It is the first time that such a killing has taken place in Tunisia. So far, no one has claimed responsibility.

Chokri Belaid's death has occurred in a context of increasing polarization between political parties in Tunisia. Members of the opposition have reported they are targeted in attacks by individuals and that the authorities are not doing enough to protect them.

In recent months, there have been a number of incidents of violence against political activists, premises of political parties and gatherings, including a meeting which Chokri Belaid attended as recently as last Saturday. He had reportedly been receiving threats.

"The Tunisian authorities should be under no illusion that they can condemn the killing and move on. Only a fully independent and transparent investigation can help shed light on the circumstances of the killing of Chokri Belaid. There is a need, today more than ever, for justice to be done and to be seen to be done", said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Middle East and North Africa Deputy Director at Amnesty International.

"Two years after the ousting of former President Ben Ali, there is an increasing mistrust in the institutions that are supposed to protect human rights and Tunisians will not be satisfied with a sham investigation".

"Today's shocking killing must serve as a wake-up call to the authorities. It is their duty to protect all individuals, including those who criticize the government or Tunisia's leading Ennahda party, from violence. No group, regardless of its affiliation, can be above the law".

Amnesty International has raised serious concerns over the lack of independence of the judiciary and the need for reform of the security sector.

As news of the shooting spread, thousands marched in Tunisia to express their shock and condemnation. Amnesty International is calling on the Tunisian security forces to refrain from unnecessary or excessive use of force, and to ensure that people can express their views peacefully and freely.

Four opposition parties have reportedly called for a general strike on Thursday and for a suspension of their participation in the National Constituent Assembly.