

Speech of Marc Schade-Poulsen, Executive Director

Euro Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN)

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure and gratefulness that I received this chance to address you today on the occasion of the Amman Centre for Human Rights Studies' Human Rights Award Ceremony honoring Kamel Jendoubi.

I believe that the ACHRS made an excellent choice in its selection of Kamel Jendoubi to receive its award, one year and one day after Ben Ali had to flee from Tunisia.

Kamel Jendoubi has since his young age been, and still is, a leading force in the European social movement defending the rights in migrants in Europe being, as he were, among the initiators of the Federation des Tunisiens pour une Citoyenneté des deux Rives and the Migrants Forum of the EU (that was well known in the 1990s). Furthermore, he developed into a key figure of the democratic movement combatting the Tunisian regime being one of the most stern adversaries of Ben Ali amongst other as the President of the Comité pour le Respect des Liberties et Droits de l'Homme en Tunisie. He also became, and is a highly respected civil society and human rights defender in the Arab world while keeping a strong base in Europe and bridging between civil societies of the shores of the Mediterranean, in particular through his engagement in the development of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network that he presides today, later the Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF) of which he is a board member, then the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies that he now presides, and being also one of the initiators of the Euro Med NGO Platform. In addition, he is also a highly valued board member of the World Organisation against Torture.

When the Tunisian revolution started Kamel Jendoubi had only one thing in mind which was to come back to his beloved Tunisia to which he had been refused access for 17 long years, in order to help his country and his friends from the human rights and democracy movement to build a new democratic and human rights abiding Tunisia.

Kamel Jendoubi soon gained the confidence of his fellow citizens who had not yet had the chance to know him during his exile in Europe, and he was elected the President of the Independent High Committee to Oversee the Elections. This was a wise choice and it was a main reason why the country now can boast with having had its first free and fair elections ever in its history, the management of which has become an example to follow in the Arab world and internationally.

In this way Tunisia benefitted from Kamel Jendoubi's many qualities and skills: an extreme devotion to human rights and democracy and a full conviction in the necessity to work in complete transparency. Kamel is highly knowledgeable of the political environment in Europe and the Arab world, its social movements and of international human rights agendas; he has great organizational skills and is a much appreciated communicator.

The EMHRN has benefitted greatly from Kamel Jendoubi's participation in its development, first as a board member, then as its Vice President before being elected as President in 2003. The EMHRN

would not have been where it is today without his contribution. In addition Kamel is a fine colleague, a good friend to many and respectful of the people with whom he works.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The nomination of Kamel Jendoubi for today's Human Rights Award is therefore indeed a highly appropriate choice.

Kamel Jendoubi personalizes the best of what the Arab world and transnational European Arab social movements offer the world. With persons like him hope is high that the 'revolutionary moments' initiated in Tunisia will lead to a genuine democracy in the Arab world.

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