

PRI MENA welcomes the signing of a MoU by the Tunisian Ministry of Justice

Penal Reform International, Middle East and North Africa Office signed on the 25 February a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Justice in Tunis. The MoU stipulates direct cooperation and partnership with Tunisian government and non government institutions, and with the Tunisian Organization for Penal and security Reform, as a local partner representing Tunisian civil society institutions. This MoU comes in the context of PRI's project funded by the Swedish International Development Agency to strengthening Tunisian system of human rights, and support the efforts of reform programs in prisons to ensure respect and protection of the rights of vulnerable groups (women and children) and the development of the capabilities of penitentiary staff. The MoU includes the implementation of many activities within the coming three years that will focus on reviewing the legislative system and administrative practice of the Department of Prisons, leading to the adoption of an action plan and a strategy for the development of the criminal justice system in Tunisia. The signing also promotes the participation of local civil society organizations working with vulnerable groups and ensures the protection and promotion of their rights.

The MoU came as a result of multiple meetings with newly appointed ministers of justice and human rights, the prison director and officials and field visits conducted by the PRI-MENA team to prison facilities. PRI- MENA regional director, Taghreed Jaber expressed her satisfaction with the start of the cooperation, with the newly elected government which

reflects, after many years of oppression, the aspiration of the Tunisian people for a new era of dignity and respect for human rights. Mrs. Jaber, expressed her hope that Tunisia, the 'flambeau' of the Arab Spring, will set the example of ratifying the international conventions such as Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which calls on states to abolish the death penalty, and the implementation of The Optional Protocol to the Convention on Torture (OPCAT) through the creation of an independent National Preventive Mechanisms (NPMs), with a mandate is to inspect all places of detention.

