

Tuesday, 16 April 2013

## New jail term, 3.5 million euros fine for Tunisia's Ben Ali



Tunisia's deposed president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was given a five-year jail term in absentia and fined 3.5 million euros for corruption, adding to two life sentences he has already received, judicial sources said on Tuesday. The former strongman was convicted of having exploited his position "to provide for himself or a third party unfair advantages, causing harm to the administration," according to a Tunis court ruling. Ben Ali currently lives in gilded exile in Jeddah, having fled to Saudi Arabia with his wife during the mass uprising against his regime in January 2011. For his part in the same case, Khaled Kobbi, a businessman detained in July 2011, was sentenced to two years in jail and also fined seven million dinars (3.5 million euros). The case relates to the acquisition of more than 20 hectares of land to build an industrial zone with public funds, before it was sold on in controversial circumstances. Ben Ali has already been sentenced twice to life in prison for presiding over the bloody crackdown on the uprising that eventually unseated him and ignited the Arab Spring. He has also separately been sentenced to decades in prison along with his wife Leila Trabelsi for embezzlement, illegal possession of narcotics, housing fraud and abuse of power. Ben Ali's clan, and his wife's family in particular, had a stranglehold on business in Tunisia, and are accused of having run a mafia-style state. The couple regularly claim they are the victims of post-revolution score settling.