

Committee: Disarmament and International Security Committee

Issue: The aftermath of the Arab Spring in Tunisia

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Position: Co-chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Anda Timoleontos, I am an 11th grade student at Anavryta Model Lyceum and I am beyond excited to be serving as the co-chair of the GA1 committee in this year's ACG MUN. Seeing as how this is our first introduction, I want to formally welcome you to the International Security and Disarmament committee. Taking into consideration that this committee was formed as a forum for members of the international community to debate upon and discuss issues of peace and security among them, I cannot wait to hear how this specific topic will be approached from all the different points of view and what clauses will result from the committee work in general. Last but not least, this study guide is in no way all the research that must be done on this topic but it should be a good starting point.

For any further information and questions please feel free to e-mail me at arhontia.timoleontos@gmail.com

Can't wait to meet you all and good luck with your studying!

Best regards,

Anda Timoleontos

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The first exact application of the term “Arab Spring” representing the Arab uprisings was originated from the political academic journal called “Foreign Policy”. Arab Spring was a movement of anti-government protests and civil wars starting from the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia. On December the 18th 2010 a street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi lit himself on fire after having been harassed by a police officer for selling fruit without a permit; this desperate act of protest against the oppression he had been facing prompted demonstrations in his hometown Sidi Bouzid and then the rest of the Arab world. When Eric Goldstein, Deputy Director of Human Rights Watch’s Middle East and North Africa Division was asked about the situation before the Arab Spring, he stated that: “Even though we human rights workers spent much time scrutinizing the Middle East and North Africa from the bottom up, talking to the disenfranchised, the oppressed, and the stubbornly defiant, the timing and extent of the popular revolts that shook the region in 2011 surprised us as much as they did policy-makers, scholars, diplomats, and journalists. We tended to see mainly the authoritarian governments, whose grip was never in doubt, even when they tolerated a controlled pluralism, cautiously independent print media, and a fragile civil society. What we undervalued were rising expectations on the demand side, which subsequently fired the 2011 upheavals, during which thousands of peaceful demonstrators gave their lives in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain”¹. Arab Spring’s impact on the world is of great importance even though its aftermath tends not to be as successful and clear as wanted, with Tunisia being the only country that managed a relatively peaceful transition and the rest reverting to authoritarianism and chaos. Almost a decade of change after the revolution, Tunisia is still the only democratic state in North Africa according to the Democracy Index 2016 study. Despite all the progress that seems to have been made, many Tunisians remain unconvinced that the revolution has delivered real change and are very worried about the growing influence of conservative Islamists.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Autocracy

“Government in which one person possesses unlimited power”. After decades of entrenchment of autocracy in the Arab world, demonstrations during 2011 aimed at a shift in opinion and organisation of the country. ²

Arms embargo

“A restriction or a set of sanctions that applies solely to weaponry, and may also apply to dual-use technology. An arms embargo may serve one or more purposes: to signal disapproval of

¹ Goldstein, Eric. “World Report 2012: Rights Trends in Before the Arab Spring, the Unseen Thaw.” Human Rights Watch, 16 Aug. 2016, www.hrw.org/world-report/2012/country-chapters/global-middle-east/north-africa.

² “Autocracy.” Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/autocracy.

behavior by a certain actor, to maintain neutrality in an ongoing conflict, as a peace mechanism that is part of a peace process to resolve an armed conflict, to limit the ability of an actor to inflict violence on others, or to weaken country's military capabilities before foreign intervention".³An arms embargo was imposed on Libya based on UN's S/RES/1970 resolution.

Coup

A sudden, violent, and illegal seizure of power from a government. In 1987, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali became the president of Tunisia in a bloodless coup d'état. Moreover, in 1969 after a bloodless coup against Libya's King Idris I Gaddafi came to power.

Regime

"A form of authoritarian government".⁴ The amount of freedom and restriction that citizens of a country have can change from regime to regime. During the Arab Spring, regime change was one of the basic requests of the protestors.

Revolution

"A fundamental change in political organization".⁵ One could also define 'revolution' as attempts by subordinate groups to transform the social foundations of political power. "Regardless of the theoretical debate over the term 'revolution', the events that started in Tunisia and spread to other Arab states constituted the first successful attempt in the Arab world to topple authoritarian regimes through popular uprisings".⁶

State of emergency

"A temporary system of rules to deal with an extremely dangerous or difficult situation".⁷ Something very common across the Arab world during its Spring.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical and Political Background in Tunisia

In March 1956 Tunisia obtains its independence, the Republic is announced and Habib Bourguiba becomes its first president. More than 30 years later Bourguiba is dismissed by Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who is then elected and re-elected in rigged elections. Ben Ali ruled Tunisia for years until he was forced to step down by protests and fled the country during the Arab Spring.

³ "Arms Embargo." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 28 Jan. 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arms_embargo.

⁴ "Regime." Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/regime.

⁵ "Revolution." Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/revolution.

⁶ <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/09609.pdf>

⁷ "STATE OF EMERGENCY: Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." Cambridge Dictionary, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/state-of-emergency.

The Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East, when analysing Arab Spring's causes through the Arab world in general was met with many differences between countries affected especially in socio-political dynamics. "In Tunisia, the 1959 Constitution was suspended, Ben Ali's Constitutional Democratic Rally Party was abolished, and the country began its political transition. At this point, the greatest challenge for Tunisia is responding to the demands for democratic representation and freedom, the calls for improved living conditions as well as social and economic equality. As far as security issues are concerned, the Tunisian army is relatively small and poorly equipped. Even if its defense budget were increased, Tunisia is very unlikely to become a threat in

terms of weapons of mass destruction proliferation. In regional dialogues on disarmament issues, Tunisia's major concerns are illegal trafficking in conventional weapons and the situation in the Sahel area rather than in the Middle

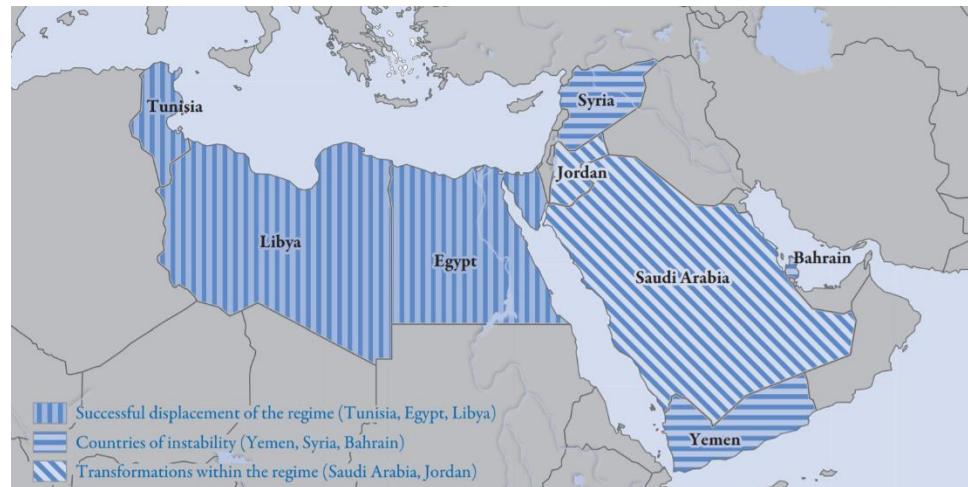


Figure 1 Transformation map across the Arab world

East. The Arab world witnessed regime changes solely through military coups, mainly during the 1950s and 1960s. And though these changes were depicted as revolutions, the fact of the matter is that they usually represented only a change in the governing elite. The Arab Spring has shown that the 'impossible is possible' and that even in places where popular protests traditionally have not been tolerated, a bottom-up transformation process can be launched from the streets. Moreover, the dissatisfaction of Arab youths is likely to persist if not adequately addressed by the reform policies of the remaining or newly formed regimes".⁸

The first post-revolution presidential election was held in 2014 with Beji Caid Essebsi becoming the first free elected president until he died in office in 2019. During the last elections, when Kais Saied was elected, there had been parliamentary debates on whether Mr Ben Ali's former colleagues (members of RCD) should be running for presidents or not. However, a potential ban was rejected even from Ennahda, a party that had a lot of members who had been tortured under Ben Ali's regime and Nidaa Touns, a secular party that had several ex-regime officials in its ranks, rejected the notion that it represented a return of the old regime. Moreover,

⁸ <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/09609.pdf>

it seems that Tunisia has been making small progressive steps on human rights as well. Even though that in law 230 of the Tunisian criminal justice system homosexuality is defined as a crime and people convicted of being homosexual can be punished with up to three years in prison, in the 2019 elections, a longtime human rights lawyer had been running for president as the country's first gay candidate. Additionally, the country adopted the Personal Status Code, giving women unprecedented rights and in 2017 a law aiming to combat violence against women passed. However, there are many challenges that Tunisia faces and has been facing since Ben Ali was toppled such as battling militant groups in remote areas and struggling with job finding.

The profiles of all the people in power

Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali

Army officer and politician as well as the second president of Tunisia (1987-2011). After gaining reputation for suppressing riots and rooting out the Islamic Tendency movement he was appointed prime minister of Tunisia by president Bourguiba who then later was declared unfit and was disposed by Ben Ali in a peaceful coup. He was expected to be less secular than past presidents and that's why in the elections of 1989, he received more than 99 percent of the votes. However, his actions such as the ban of the Nahḍah ("Renaissance") party in 1991 caused a wave of criticism concerning his human rights policies. From that point on, even though he kept getting re-elected for many years, the aforementioned protests of 2011 started targeting Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali and demanded his resignation while protestors kept getting killed when met with security forces. In early 2011, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali attempted to express regrets for these deaths mainly by making vows for increased political freedom, more controlled food prices and job creation. These vows didn't help in calming the protests down so Ben Ali then proceeded to promise to step down as president at the end of his term in 2014 or to conduct legislative elections in the following months. Again, these promises only seemed to intensify the revolution so Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali was forced to step down as president and flee to Saudi Arabia. After that, Tunisian courts charged Ben Ali and his family for serious crimes against the country, however, Saudi Arabia, refused Tunisia's request to extradite the former president.

Bashar al-Assad

Syria's current president since 2000. Bashar al-Assad has survived not only the uprising but also the still ongoing war and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate by ISIS even though revolt against his rule begun in 2011. Back then, during the Arab Spring, Syrian pro-democracy activists started hoping for Bashar al-Assad's toppling along with Tunisia's and Egypt's presidents. After a group of boys were tortured for writing graffiti in support of the Arab Spring and one of them even ended up dying from the brutal

torturing, protests started in Syria and the government replied with killing and imprisoning protestors. The formation of the Free Syrian Army aiming to overthrow the government was announced and Syria's civil war started. The next elections will be taking place in 2021 and al-Assad stated that everyone will be able to run for president; "last time we were three and this time of course we are going to have as much as they want to nominate. There are going to be numerous nominees".

Muammar Gaddafi

Libya's Arab spring ended with the killing of Gaddafi and a civil war raging on. The toppling of Gaddafi was definitely not as quiet as Ben Ali's escape. Muammar Gaddafi was not like any other typical autocrat; from backing terrorist groups to funding wars and last but not least committing acts of cruelty against his own people, he developed a unique political philosophy and ruled Libya by it for more than 40 years.⁹



Figure 2 Gaddafi was a huge admirer of Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser, who led the Egyptian Revolution of 1952

In 2011, protests started in Libya as well as the rest of the Arab world and they soon turned to armed rebellion with military joining the protests and diplomats quitting their jobs while Gaddafi blamed protests on "drug fueled foreign terrorists" and vowed to "purify Libya again".

Hosni Mubarak

Military officer and president of Egypt from 1981- following Sadat's assassination- to 2011 when he was forced to step down. He was known for actions such as developing Egypt's relationship with Israel and USA, helping mediate agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and generally pressing for peace in the Middle East. However, political and economic instability motivated many Egyptians to protest against Mubarak in 2011. The president decided not to make many public appearances during the first days of the uprising and when he did, on the 4th day of clashes, he announced that he intended to remain in office. During that speech he acknowledged the demands and made promises for reforms. Seeing as these statements didn't calm the protesters, in the 1st of February he decided to indicate that he wouldn't participate in the scheduled

⁹ Asser, Martin. "The Muammar Gaddafi Story." BBC News, BBC, 21 Oct. 2011, www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12688033.

presidential elections. Within 10 days of continued pressure for his immediate step down, Mubarak left Egypt, leaving the Supreme Council of Armed forces to govern the country. After he stepped down, the Egyptian government started investigating allegations of corruption, abuse of power and killings of protesters which didn't end until 2014.

Beji Caid Essebsi

Winner of the country's first free presidential elections in December 2014, died in office in July 2019. A major figure for Tunisia since he represented democracy and change after the Arab Spring. Before becoming president, he had served as Bourguiba's foreign minister and didn't come back from his political break until he decided to launch his own party and won the presidency after Ben Ali fled the country in 2011.

Kais Saied

Retired law professor and current president of Tunisia. Criticized for his conservative views on homosexuality and women's rights. Nevertheless, it's been said that it was his honesty, his openness and his often appearances on Tunisian television in order to explain matters of public interest, what made him connect with the youth and people in general. He is quite popular and has been making important promises such as decentralization of the government and the process of the elections.

The requests of the people during Arab spring

¹⁰Based on the reports and the people's requests during the uprisings, the revolution was against the long-term authoritarian rules and corruption, the continuous state of emergency in which police had excessive power, the widespread discontent at economic hardship leading to unemployment, poverty etc. All the regimes which were affected by the Arab Spring used all their powers to suppress the demonstrators only leading to even more violence. One of the most common slogans throughout the Arab Spring was "the people want to bring down the regime". Moreover, media's influence on the revolution has been debated upon since the Arab Spring begun. Covering and communicating events as they happen, brings a lot of attention to the problem that can



Figure 3 Boys hold a banner during a demonstration in the Syrian port city of Baniyas on April 17, 2011. (Str/Reuters)

¹⁰Dehghan, Saeed Kamali. "Tehran Supports the Arab Spring ... but Not in Syria | Saeed Kamali Dehghan." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 18 Apr. 2011, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/apr/18/iran-arab-spring-syria-uprisings.

motivate groups of activists to be organized and react to what's happening. The most commonly supported conclusion is that, even though social media helped facilitate organization, they didn't by any means cause the revolution, seeing as many people protesting did not have access to the internet in the first place.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Tunisia

The country that was mostly involved in the Arab Spring since it is where it was born in. After Ben Ali fled the country the situation changed for the better and there was a rather successful displacement of the regime. However, many issues remain to be fixed in order for stability to be achieved.

Egypt

Widespread economic and political uncertainty was left in the country after the revolution managed to topple Mubarak. From one political extreme to another the hope of Egyptian protesters faded to chaos and uncertainty.

Libya

The refusal of authorities to recognise governments is one of the problems Libya faces many years after the Arab Spring. The revolution in Libya begun shortly after it did in its neighbouring Arab countries after it had been ruled for 42 years by the longest-reigning leader in the Arab world, Gaddafi. Today, many talks for "a permanent and lasting ceasefire to replace an uncertain truce"¹¹ have been taking place by the UN aiming to help Libya overcome all the economic instability going on in the country.

NATO

After United Nations' call to the international community to protect the Libyan people, NATO and its allies enforced an arms embargo and maintained a no-fly zone under Operation Unified Protector (OUP) which ended on the 31st of October 2011.

Arab League

With ministerial meetings and emergency summits having no actual impact on the lives of the people of the Arab world, in 2011 the Arab League voted to suspend Syria from its work in order to stop the violence in the country. After the Arab Spring occurred, the division between democracies and Arab autocracies was even more obvious.

¹¹ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/02/1056642>

United Nations Development Programme

UNDP helps countries develop policies to reduce poverty and inequalities across the world, sustaining development along the way.¹² It conducted an evaluation in Tunisia in 2018 helping the country respond to its need for change.¹³

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

OHCHR dispatched an assessment mission to Tunisia so as to support national efforts to establish democracy in Tunisia. Subsequently, an OHCHR Country Office was established in Tunisia in April 2011.¹⁴

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies

The Young Leaders of Civil Society Program aimed to train people on digital security and information safety. Moreover, it included a forum for participants to share their experience when it comes to international advocacy and human rights instruments of the UN.¹⁵ Also many reports of the institute evaluate the state of human rights raising awareness and updating the transition and the aftermath of the Spring.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
December 17, 2010	Mohamed Bouazizi self immolation outside of a local government office as an act of protest after being arrested and assaulted by police for not having a permit to run his fruit stall
January 14, 2011	Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's resignation and fleeing to Saudi Arabia
January 25, 2011	First coordinated mass protests held in Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt

¹² "About Us." UNDP, www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/about-us.html.

¹³ "Independent Country Programme Evaluation: Tunisia." *United Nations Development Programme -Evaluation*, web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/adr/tunisia.shtml.

¹⁴ "OHCHR in Tunisia." OHCHR, www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/MENARegion/Pages/OHCHRTunisia.aspx.

¹⁵ "15 Youth Leaders from 7 Countries Complete CIHRS' Third Annual Young Leaders of Civil Society Program in Tunisia." *Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies*, 30 Jan. 2020, cihrs.org/15-youth-leaders-from-7-countries-complete-cihrs-third-annual-young-leaders-of-civil-society-program-in-tunisia/?lang=en.

February 2011	“Days of Rage” staged by protestors to oppose authoritarianism and push for democratic reforms. Egypt’s Mubarak steps down
March 15, 2011	Pro-democracy protests begin in Syria
May 22, 2011	Police violence against protesters in favor of democracy in Morocco
July 1, 2011	Voters in Morocco approve constitutional changes that limit the power of the monarchy
September 23, 2011	Yemenis holds a large-scale pro-democracy protest called “Million Man March”
October 20, 2011	Muammar Gaddafi in Libya is tortured and killed by rebels
October 23, 2011	1 st democratic parliamentary elections in Tunisia
November 23, 2011	Dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh signs a power-sharing agreement in Yemen. He resigns in February 2012 and is later killed, in 2017, while the country is still going through civil war
November 28, 2011	1 st democratic elections for parliament in Egypt. In June 2012, Morsi is elected president, but is removed by coup in July 2013

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Arab Human Development Reports

“The central theme of this report is young people in the Arab region. Over the past five years, more and more young people in the Arab region have been raising their voices against their economic, social and political exclusion”.¹⁶

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 65/265

A resolution suspending Libya from the Human Rights Council as requested by the Geneva-based body on 25 February; the first time a sitting member was removed.¹⁷

¹⁶<https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rbas/report/AHDR%20Reports/AHDR%202016/AHDR%20Final%202016/AHDR2016En.pdf>

¹⁷<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Libya%20A%20RES%2065%20265.pdf>

Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹⁸

1951 Refugee Convention

The 1951 Refugee Convention defines the term 'refugee' and outlines the rights of the displaced, as well as the legal obligations of States to protect them.¹⁹

S/RES/1970

Imposes an arms embargo, a travel bans as well as an asset freeze in connection with the situation in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.²⁰

S/RES/1973

Imposes additional measures concerning the situation in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and establishes a Panel of Experts in order to assist the monitoring of the relevant measures.²¹

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

From NATO's quite questioned involvement back in 2011 to "Increasing Preparedness Capacities Across Mediterranean 2 (IPCAM2) project that resulted from Tunisia's collaboration with the European Union, many attempts to solve the issue have been made. Members of the Syrian opposition - activists whom the Arab League members had ignored or repressed for years- were invited to the Arab League headquarters by Qatar by its prime minister and chairman of the ministerial committee dealing with Syria, for the League to help them co-ordinate their efforts. Moreover, many humanitarian focused organizations such as International Amnesty have been trying to raise awareness across the globe and "bring justice to the people responsible for human rights crimes"²² and agreements such as the Arab Peace Initiative²³ have been achieved. However, the situation across the Arab world and Tunisia as well hasn't changed as drastically as protestors have hoped with most of the other countries being rather skeptical about whether and how they should intervene.

¹⁸ https://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf

¹⁹ United Nations. "The 1951 Refugee Convention." UNHCR, www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html.

²⁰ [https://www.undocs.org/S/RES/1970%20\(2011\)](https://www.undocs.org/S/RES/1970%20(2011))

²¹ "UN Security Council Resolution 1973 (2011) on Libya – Full Text." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 17 Mar. 2011, www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/17/un-security-council-resolution.

²² "The 'Arab Spring': Five Years On." Amnesty International, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2016/01/arab-spring-five-years-on/.

²³ Hamilos, Paul, and Oliver King. "Timeline: the Road to War in Iraq." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 2 Feb. 2006, www.theguardian.com/politics/2006/feb/02/iraq.iraq.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

When talking about possible solutions, we must look from ways that the UN can help the country overcome unemployment and poverty, ways to educate the youth properly in order for them not to turn to extremism and know their rights to ways to face the damages of all the natural disasters that have affected Tunisia over the years and have only worsened the situation. Solving corruption is something also very important and something people have been aiming at before, during and after the Arab Spring as well. Law breaking should be more efficiently punished and pilot projects should be given to young people in order for local economic development to be created. United Nations' members should be encouraged to support these attempts through means such as but not limited to: funding and sticking to their principles so as to set an example for all the democratic voices trying to be heard. Supporting democracy and human rights in the Arab world is of major importance; policies that can help governments be more respectful towards their people should be pursued and all aspects of democracy such as unfettered elections and free press should be encouraged.

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