



Previewing

Tunisia's Parliamentary & Presidential Elections

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Daniel Tavana
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The Project on Middle East Democracy is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to examining how genuine democracies can develop in the Middle East and how the U.S. can best support that process. Through research, dialogue, and advocacy, we aim to strengthen the constituency for U.S. policies that peacefully support democratic reform in the Middle East.

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INTRODUCTION

This fall, Tunisians will mark the end of a three-year political transition with parliamentary and presidential elections. Tunisia's transition began on January 14, 2011, when President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was ousted from power following nearly a month of protests against his rule. Galvanized by the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi, a fruit vendor from Sidi Bouzid, Tunisians demanded the incumbent president's removal, an expansion of political and civil rights, and an end to economic injustice. For much of 2011, an interim government worked closely with a "High Commission for the Realization of the Goals of the Revolution, Political Reform, and Democratic Transition" to manage Tunisia's transition.

Yadh Ben Achour, a leading scholar and expert on law and Islam, chaired the commission. The "Ben Achour Commission," as it came to be known, was initially responsible for proposing new laws and reforms consistent with the goals of the Revolution. Shortly after its first meeting in March 2011, 150 representatives of political parties and civil society organizations were given a mandate to draft decree-laws through consensus. In April and May 2011, the commission passed two decree-laws that set the stage for Constituent Assembly elections. The first established the Independent High Authority for Elections, or the ISIE, an electoral management body (EMB) that would administer the transitional elections. The second was the electoral law, which set up a closed list proportional representation (PR) system.¹

In October 2011, Tunisians elected representatives to the National Constituent Assembly (NCA), a 217-member transitional institution tasked with writing a new constitution and laying the foundation for future elections. Eighty-one parties put forward candidate lists and 27 parties won at least one seat, but over 80 percent of seats went to five parties. The Islamist Ennahda party won 37 percent of the vote and was allocated 89 seats. Four secular center-left parties—Congress for the Republic (CPR), Popular Petition, Ettakatol, and the Progressive Democratic Party—filled out the top five. After protracted negotiations, Ennahda entered into a coalition with CPR and Ettakatol, forming what came to be known as the "Troika" government.²

Three features of the electoral law had a major effect on the outcome of the NCA elections. The first was the lustration clause, which excluded officials who had been politically active in Ben Ali's Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD) Party from party lists. The second was the absence of an electoral threshold, which encouraged political fragmentation, particularly among left-leaning and liberal groups. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the electoral formula (the Hare quota with largest remainders) had a significant impact on the way seats were allocated. Had Tunisia used the d'Hondt divisor system, Ennahda would have captured a supermajority of seats, which could have drastically reduced its incentive to compromise with smaller parties.³ Two of these features are still in effect under the 2014 electoral law, which uses a Hare quota with largest remainders and does not have an electoral threshold for party representation. However, the new electoral law does not have a lustration clause.

Tunisia's structural tendency towards fragmentation has had multiple countervailing effects. Though the lack of a threshold means that any party, no matter how small, can field an independent list, the use of a Hare remainder preserves structural incentives for consensus by precluding the

1. National Democratic Institute. "Final Report on the Tunisian National Constituent Assembly Elections." https://www.ndi.org/files/tunisia-final-election-report-021712_v2.pdf

2. *Ibid.*, and International Republican Institute. "Election Observation Mission Final Report." [http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/Tunisia 2011 Constituent Assembly Elections.pdf](http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/Tunisia%2011%20Constituent%20Assembly%20Elections.pdf)

3. Carey, J. "Electoral Formula and the Tunisian Constituent Assembly." May 2013. <http://sites.dartmouth.edu/jcarey/files/2013/02/Tunisia-Electoral-Formula-Carey-May-2013-reduced.pdf>

emergence of a supermajority. However, as is often the case in emerging democracies, many new political parties in Tunisia tend to be elite-based and weak. Institutionalized fragmentation has done little to encourage party maturation. This issue has been especially salient within the Tunisian left. Several parties that won seats in the NCA elections have dissolved, including Ettajdid and the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), while other new coalitions have formed, notably the Popular Front and the Union for Tunisia.

Sharp divisions marked NCA debate over the new constitution from the outset. Members weighed competing visions of what Tunisian democracy should look like, debating questions of individual rights, rule of law, and balance of power. The most contentious issue was the role of religion in political life. With Ennahda in a position of political primacy, many Tunisians from across the political spectrum invoked the specter of sharia-based governance. In March 2012, Ennahda announced that it would not include a sharia clause in the constitution. Later that summer, demonstrators gathered in Tunis to protest an article in the draft constitution that said the roles of men and women “should complement each other within the household.”⁴ Though this language did not survive in the final draft of the document, the level of contention over its inclusion reflected the distrust and suspicion plaguing the transitional government.

As political battles over religion and rights played out in the NCA, the Tunisian public continued to struggle with the same economic issues that catalyzed the revolution a year earlier: high unemployment, lack of opportunity, and financial stagnation. By January 2013, 77 percent of Tunisians polled said that the country was headed in the wrong direction.⁵ Simmering tensions and frustrations reached their peak in February 2013 with the murder of leftist opposition leader Chokri Belaid, which pushed the country to its first major crisis. Outraged mourners accused Ennahda of being too lax towards violent Islamist groups. In a climate already rife with political tension, the rhetoric over religion and governance became increasingly polarized. Protesters flooded the streets of Tunis, and the country’s most powerful labor union, the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT), called a general strike.

In response to the crisis, Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali, a member of Ennahda, tried and failed to form a new government before resigning from his position on February 19. In late February, Ali Laarayedh formed a new Ennahda-led coalition that gave more cabinet-level positions to independents and succeeded Jebali as Prime Minister. These concessions proved to be a temporary salve, but in July 2013, another political assassination triggered a political crisis so acute that it sent the transitional political system careening towards collapse.

This time, the victim was Mohammed Brahmi, who, like Belaid, was a popular secular opposition leader. Once again, demonstrators descended into the streets, prompting the UGTT to call for a general strike. The opposition would not be satisfied with a reshuffling of ministries. Sixty members of the NCA called for the body to be dissolved, a move that put the constitution-drafting process at risk. In late July, the UGTT stepped in once again, announcing the formation of a “Quartet.” The Quartet united four powerful interest groups, the UGTT, the Union for Industry, Commerce and Handicrafts (UTICA), the National Bar Association, and the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH), under a single mediating banner.

By mid-September, the Quartet unveiled a roadmap that called for a new electoral law, the adoption of a new constitution, and the appointment of a new prime minister and cabinet. In October, most

4. McNeil, S. “Wording on women sparks protest in Tunisia.” August 2012. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/08/201281981854620325.html>

5. International Republican Institute. “Survey of Tunisian Public Opinion.” February 2014. [http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2014 April 23 Survey of Tunisian Public Opinion, February 12-22, 2014.pdf](http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2014%20April%2023%20Survey%20of%20Tunisian%20Public%20Opinion,%20February%2012-22,%202014.pdf)

major political parties signed the roadmap agreement and began the national dialogue process. The contentious national dialogue, mediated by the Quartet, proceeded intermittently throughout the fall. In January 2014, Prime Minister Laarayedh resigned, handing power of the administration over to a technocratic caretaker government led by Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa. On January 26, the NCA passed a new constitution with a near-unanimous vote, effectively completing its mandate and paving the way for this fall's parliamentary and presidential elections.

To some observers of Tunisian politics, the peaceful, consensus-based resolution of a dire political crisis seemed like a miraculous turnaround after months of political deadlock and the near-collapse of the NCA and constitution-drafting process. Tunisia's comparatively successful transition was an iterative process, and both external and internal factors help explain how the country has forged a fragile consensus. Externally, the example of Egypt loomed large over Tunisian political consciousness, and escalating repression in Cairo in the summer of 2013 provided a visceral example of the consequences of intransigence and deadlock. Ongoing political crises throughout 2012 and 2013 forced the Tunisian left to come together and form the National Salvation Front, which allowed fractured coalitions to speak with an amplified voice. The Tunisian transition has also benefited from a vibrant civil society and a small, professionalized military.

The coming elections will test the hard-fought consensus forged over the past year. The emergence of a new political party, Nidaa Tounes, has created a viable counterweight against Ennahda. Many of the underlying issues that triggered Tunisia's year of crisis, from economic stagnation to security concerns to political animus, remain. In the fall, Tunisians will have the opportunity to take to the ballot box to determine who will be entrusted to tackle these challenges and guide the transition into its next phase.

THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

On May 1, 2014, the NCA passed a Basic Law on Elections and Referenda (Law no. 36), by a vote of 132 to 11, with nine abstentions. The law stipulates the system by which Tunisians will elect members of Parliament and the President. The law contains 176 articles in seven sections:

- General rules
- Voting
- Candidates
- Election period
- Polling, counting, and results
- Electoral offenses
- Transitional and closing provisions

Parliamentary elections, scheduled for October 26, will use a party-list proportional representation (list PR) system, with closed lists, to elect 217 members. This system very closely mirrors the system used to elect NCA members in 2011. Polling will take place in one round, and each voter will choose a single list.

Presidential elections will be held approximately one month later, on November 23. The President will be elected by a simple majority of valid votes. If no candidate wins a simple majority, a runoff will be held on December 28 between the two candidates who receive the highest share of votes from the first round.

ELECTION TIMETABLE

The campaign period for parliamentary elections officially began on October 4, in Tunisia and abroad. Legislative campaigning is permitted for roughly three weeks: on October 24, campaigning must end, in advance of a “day of silence” to be held just before election day. Voting will take place in country October 26 and abroad October 24-26. The ISIE plans to announce preliminary results no later than October 30. Final results must be released no later than November 24.

The campaign period for the presidential election will begin on November 1. Campaigning is permitted until November 22, which is slated as an official “day of silence.” Voting in country will take place on November 23, and voting abroad will take place November 21-23. Initial results are expected on November 26. Final results for the first round of voting will be released no later than December 21. Should there be a second round of voting, it will be held on December 28 in country and December 26-28 abroad. Preliminary results will be released by December 31, and final results will be released no later than January 25, 2015.

DISTRICTING

Tunisian citizens will vote in one of 33 electoral districts: 27 in Tunisia (199 seats), and six for Tunisians living abroad (18 seats). Each of Tunisia’s 24 governorates will serve as one district, with Nabeul, Sfax, and Tunis each divided into two. Districts abroad include: France 1, France 2, Germany, Italy, North America and the rest of Europe, and the Arab world. The number of seats reserved for electoral districts in Tunisia ranges from four to ten. The number of seats reserved for districts abroad ranges from one to five.

Ariana	8	Sfax 1	7
Béja	6	Sfax 2	9
Ben Arous	10	Sidi Bouzid	8
Bizerte	9	Siliana	6
Gabès	7	Sousse	10
Gafsa	7	Tatouine	4
Jendouba	8	Tozeur	4
Kairouan	9	Tunis 1	9
Kasserine	8	Tunis 2	8
Kebili	5	Zaghuan	5
El Kef	6	Arab World	2
Mahdia	8	America	2
Mandouba	7	France 1	5
Medenine	9	France 2	5
Monastir	9	Germany	1
Nabeul 1	7	Italy	3
Nabeul 2	6	TOTAL	217



SEATS ASSIGNED BY ELECTORAL DISTRICT

ELECTORAL FORMULA

Tunisia will again use the Hare quota with largest remainders to assign seats. Article 110 of the electoral describes the electoral formula, or the method used to translate votes into seats, in detail:

“Quotas [in each constituency] are determined by the total number of votes cast, divided by the total number of seats. Lists are then allocated seats in accordance with how many quotas they have won. Blank ballots are not taken into account when calculating quotas. Seats are allocated to candidates based on their numbers in lists. Should a number of seats remain unallocated, then they shall be assigned using the largest remainder system. Should the largest remainders between two lists be equal, then the youngest candidate shall be awarded the seat.”

If each seat cannot be assigned on the basis of a full quota, remaining seats are allocated in descending order of the remaining votes. This method of seat allocation minimizes the “seat bonus” awarded to parties performing well and is considered one of the most generous in allocating seats to small parties.⁶

6. Carey, J. “Electoral Formula and the Tunisian Constituent Assembly.” May 2013. <http://sites.dartmouth.edu/jcarey/files/2013/02/Tunisia-Electoral-Formula-Carey-May-2013-reduced.pdf>

LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

When voters head to the polls on election day in October, they will elect members of the newly created Assembly of People's Representatives (مجلس نواب الشعب). As specified in the constitution, the Assembly will hold legislative power with the ability to pass both ordinary and organic laws.⁷ Representatives will be seated for five years, with no limit on the number of terms a representative may serve. The Assembly will elect its own president, much as the NCA did.

Tunisians will have no shortage of political parties to vote for when choosing their representatives. Indeed, the choices are dizzying—voters in the electoral districts abroad will have the fewest electoral lists to choose from, ranging from 13 to 19 choices, while voters in Kasserine will have the most with 69 electoral lists on their ballots. Combined, these electoral lists contain over 9,500 candidates standing for the 217 seats in the upcoming parliament. These electoral lists include national political parties and movements, local-interest parties, alliances among smaller parties, and lists of independent candidates.

Highlighted below are six major, national parties and one coalition that have received the most support in the most recent public opinion polls. It should be cautioned, however, that the electoral results may diverge from polling for several reasons: first, public opinion polling is not permitted during the current campaign period; second, all public opinion polling has indicated a very large number of undecided voters; third, the Tunisian political scene throughout the political transition underway since 2011 has been extremely dynamic and volatile, leaving open the opportunity for relatively unknown parties to surge to electoral success; finally, considerable disparity in terms of parties' capacity for organizing supporters and mobilizing voters will likely have a strong influence on the results.

Attesting to the rapidly changing political scene in Tunisia, one of these parties, Nidaa Tounes, did not exist during the previous elections, and two additional parties, Al Joumhour and Current of Love, are successors to now defunct parties. And, although its member parties existed in 2011, the Popular Front coalition was formed in 2012. The remaining three parties are those that formed the Troika government: Ennahda, Ettakatol, and Congress for the Republic (CPR).

ENNAHDA MOVEMENT

Formed in the early 1980s as an Islamic opposition movement, Ennahda stands as one of the country's oldest and most well-organized political parties. Persecuted by the former regime, many leaders lived in exile or were imprisoned until the 2011 Revolution. As such, the party—unlike some of its rival parties—had few leaders with government experience before 2011. While this lack of formal experience presented problems for those appointed to govern after the elections, the party's firm opposition to the former regime undoubtedly helped galvanize the party's support base in 2011.

2011 ELECTIONS AND THE TRANSITION PERIOD

Due to its organization and relatively long history, Ennahda was poised to win the elections in 2011. Although most observers of Tunisia predicted this success, the extent to which Ennahda outperformed every other party surprised many. Ennahda won 37 percent of the popular vote—28 percent more than the next-highest performing party—thus exceeding pre-election polling

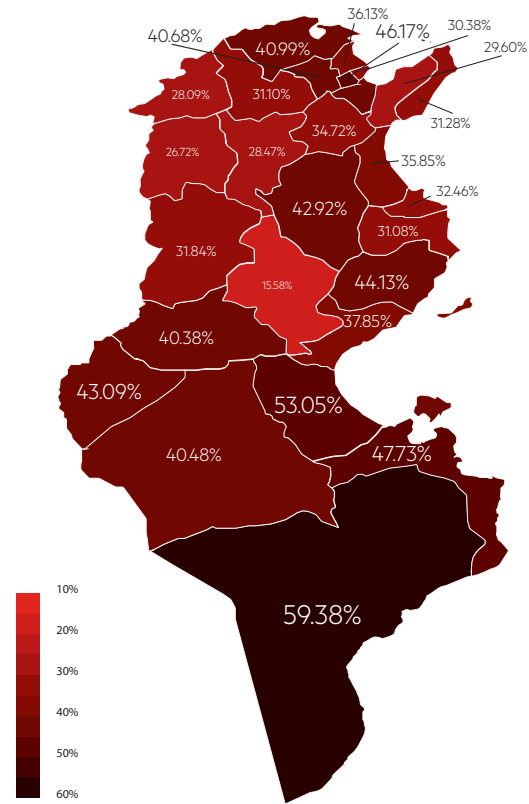
7. Organic laws as defined by the constitution are those dealing with international treaties, defense of the nation, basic rights, election law, and other issues of a fundamental nature. Ordinary laws include those relating to finance, taxation, the punitive system, and a variety of other issues of administrative nature.

predictions, which predicted the party would win around 25 percent of the popular vote. The party secured 89 seats, which placed the party short of having an outright majority in the NCA. As such, it entered into an agreement with two other parties, Ettakatol and Congress for the Republic (CPR), to form the power-sharing Troika government. Hamadi Jebali, long-time Ennahda leader and elected representative for Sousse, was nominated as Prime Minister and was charged with forming a government shortly after the elections.

With the assassination of Chokri Belaid in February 2013 came major backlash against the Ennahda-led government. As members of Ennahda defended the party and its leadership, members of other parties in the NCA blamed Ennahda and those in charge of the nation. A member of CPR noted, “The assassination of Chokri Belaid is the latest in a series of systematic incidents—proof that this government does not govern,” while an independent representative stated that “the failure of the current government comes back to a lack of competency.”⁸ Shortly after, Jebali presented his resignation from the prime ministry and as a representative in the NCA.

Jebali’s Minister of the Interior, Ali Laarayedh, was tasked with forming the next Ennahda-led government and assumed the prime ministry. Only several months later, the assassination of Mohamed Brahmi at the end of July again called into question the ability of the party to deal with extremists. Combined with the inability of the constituent assembly to produce a constitution, the second assassination sparked countrywide protests. By early August, NCA President Mustapha Ben Jaafar announced the suspension of the constitution-writing body. Ennahda accepted the suspension and stated that it would enter into dialogue with its political opponents with the hope of creating a national unity government.⁹ By October, the parties agreed to a roadmap designating the way forward in drafting the constitution, which involved the party stepping down from power. Despite signing onto the roadmap agreement, Ennahda had reservations—when the party relinquished control, there was no guarantee that its leaders would not be prosecuted for their actions while in power.¹⁰

With the promulgation of the new constitution in January 2014, the Ennahda-led government stepped down to allow a technocratic government to lead Tunisia through the election period. Although the party stepped down from leading the government, it still held the largest number of seats in the NCA, thus allowing the party to maintain a degree of control over the remainder of the transition period.¹¹



2011 POPULAR VOTE RESULTS: ENNAHDA

8. For a review of statements made in the NCA after Belaid’s assassination, see: <http://majles.marsad.tn/fr/chroniques/51547a00b197de386e2a87ed>
 9. “Tunisie: Ennahda accepte la suspension de la Constituante et appelle au dialogue.” 8 August 2013. *Huffington Post Maghreb*. http://www.huffingtonpost.fr/2013/08/06/tunisie-constituante-suspend-travaux-manifestations_n_3714876.html
 10. Bedhiafi, M. “Tunisia’s road map towards change, a political minefield.” 16 October 2013. *Al Arabiya*. <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/alarabiya-studies/2013/10/16/Tunisia-s-Ennahda-party-walking-a-thin-line-between-success-and-failure.html>
 11. “La Tunisie boucle sa Constitution.” 24 January 2014. *La Croix*. <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/Monde/La-Tunisie-boucle-sa-Constitution-2014-01-24-1096006>

2014 ELECTIONS

As the party has announced it will not field a presidential candidate, Ennahda has focused its efforts solely on winning the legislative elections in October. A spokesperson for the party noted, “We want to send a positive message to the Tunisian people and politicians... We do not want to dominate all contests, especially since Ennahda will feature strongly in the parliamentary election.”¹² The party’s campaign strategy is undoubtedly colored by its experience as the ruling party during the transition period: it must now convince Tunisians that, despite the failures that occurred during the two Ennahda-led governments, the party is deserving of re-election. In doing so, it must convince its supporters that it remains the sole guarantor of Islamic values in the country, while at the same time convincing international observers and the party’s domestic opponents that it can participate in a democratic, power-sharing political environment. By choosing not to run a presidential candidate, the party says it is signaling that it will preserve space for other parties to participate in leading the nation.

The party’s campaigning has focused on portraying the party as moderate and valuing consensus in the political process. Although Ennahda also attempted to portray itself as a moderate Islamist party in 2011, it now faces new obstacles in distancing itself from negatively viewed Islamist movements in the region, including the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic State.¹³ To this end, the party has employed a U.S.-based public relations firm, Burson-Martinseller LLC, to “provide... support on media and stakeholder outreach in advance of upcoming elections.”¹⁴ Ghannouchi also participated in a series of public events in the United States in late September and early October. During these speaking engagements, Ghannouchi stressed the coalition-building in which his party engaged during Tunisia’s transition and the necessity of consensus for the success of Tunisia’s democracy.¹⁵

Ennahda’s official political platform,¹⁶ like many other parties, places its primary focus on restoring Tunisia’s economy. The party aims for economic growth of five percent for the next three years and seven percent in 2018 and 2019, while decreasing the inflation rate to four percent. The party also aims to keep the state budget deficit under 40 percent while also lowering the rate of unemployment. The platform also emphasizes the necessity of increasing investment by creating a more amenable and transparent climate for investors. Politically, the platform makes note of its support for the Truth and Dignity Commission led by Sihem Bensredine. This may be in part because the party’s leading secular opponent, Nidaa Tounes, is widely perceived to have multiple figures from the former regime in key positions—including some who could be potential targets of a national reconciliation commission.

Pre-campaign period polling places Ennahda behind its primary competitor, Nidaa Tounes, with approximately 25 percent of the vote;¹⁷ however, it should be noted that Ennahda exceeded polling-

12. “Tunisia’s main Islamist party to stay out of presidential election.” 8 September 2014. Reuters. <http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN0H30FJ20140908>

13. Ghannouchi caused outrage in 2011 shortly after the elections by using the term “caliphate,” but in July 2014, the party leader denounced the Islamic State’s declaration of a caliphate as “reckless” and said, “Nations do not arise in this ridiculous way.” See respectively: <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/15/177378.html> and <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/muslim-leaders-reject-baghdadi-caliphate-20147744058773906.html>

14. “FARA Registration for Burson-Martinseller LLC and Ennahdha Party.” 18 September 2014. <http://www.fara.gov/docs/6227-Exhibit-AB-20140918-5.pdf>

15. “POMED Notes: MENA Region in Crisis: Islam, Democracy, and Extremism.” October 2014. Project on Middle East Democracy. <http://pomed.org/blog-post/pomed-notes-mena-region-in-crisis-islam-democracy-and-extremism/>

16. For an outline of the party’s platform, see: <http://www.businessnews.com.tn/Programme-%C3%A9lectorale-d%E2%80%99Ennahdha-Vers-1%E2%80%99application-de-r%C3%A9formes-%C3%A9conomiques-et-sociales-d%E2%80%99envergure-,520,49685,3> and for the party’s full platform, see: http://www.leaders.com.tn/uploads/FCK_files/election2014-ennahdha.pdf

17. “Rapport des resultats des intentions de vote.” June 2014. Sigma Conseil. <http://www.businessnews.com.tn/bnpdf/04-06-2014-Rapport-des-resultats-des-intentions-de-vote-juin-2014-SIGMA.pdf>

based expectations in the previous round of elections. The party continues to poll strongest in the areas where it performed best during the previous elections: greater Tunis, Sfax, and the southern governorates.

Notable candidates running as heads of Ennahda's lists include: Ali Laarayedh, former Prime Minister, running in Tunis 1; Abdelfattah Mourou, party vice president, running in Tunis 2; Sahbi Atigue, head of Ennahda's parliamentary bloc, running in Ariana; Meherzia Labidi, First Vice President of the NCA, running in Nabeul 1; Zied Laadheri, Ennahda spokesperson, running in Sousse; Mohamed Frikha, founder of Syphax Airlines, running in Sfax 2; and Amer Laarayedh, Ennahda executive bureau member and brother of Ali Laarayedh, running in Medenine.

NIDAA TOUNES

In the months following the NCA election in fall 2011, the most significant change in the Tunisian political party landscape was the emergence of the secular Nidaa Tounes party. The project of Béji Caïd Essebsi, former interim Prime Minister in 2011 and former Minister of Foreign Affairs under former President Habib Bourguiba, the party cast itself as a necessary counterweight to the political force of Ennahda and the Troika government. Despite only being legally recognized in July 2012, the party is expected to rival Ennahda in seats won during the upcoming elections.

Officially announced on April 20, 2012, Nidaa Tounes was formed in opposition to what its leaders described as "instances of disturbing extremism and violence that threaten public and individual liberties, as well as the security of the citizens."¹⁸ The party noted upon its formation that it would emphasize dialogue and consensus, as well as reforms and modernization of Tunisia's socioeconomic landscape, thus establishing Nidaa Tounes as a big tent party for the moderate left.

According to the party's platform, "Nidaa Tounes is a political movement with a popular, national spirit and a social-democratic orientation. It believes in the basic social rights of education, health, decent work for all, housing, culture, and sound environment, with a guarantee of these rights' realization on the ground."¹⁹ The party posits itself at once as an extension of Arab-Islamic culture, the reform movement of Habib Bourguiba, Tunisia's trade union movement, and the Tunisian Revolution. Among the party's founders, the presence of well-known leftist figures such as Mohsen Marzouk, former activist within the far-left El Amal Ettounsi movement, and Boujemâa Remili, former Communist Party activist, solidified the party's secular credentials. The inclusion in the party's formation committee of such political personalities as Taieb Baccouche, former Secretary-General of the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) and head of the Arab Institute for Human Rights, and Wafa Makhlouf Sayadi, head of the Center for Young Corporate Leaders (CJD), hinted at the party's attempt to appeal to both Tunisia's private sector as well as the country's powerful unions.

The party has frequently been the target of accusations that its membership contains a large number of former members of Ben Ali's ruling RCD party. Indeed, Caïd Essebsi served in both Bourguiba's and Ben Ali's governments in varying roles, as have other members of Nidaa Tounes' leadership. These include Mohamed Ghariani, the last secretary-general of the RCD, who is reported to serve currently as an adviser to Caïd Essebsi.²⁰ During a public meeting shortly after the party's formation, Caïd Essebsi was recorded as saying to a crowd containing many former regime members, "We do

18. "L'Appel de Tunisie de Béji Caïd Essebsi." 20 April 2012. Business News. <http://www.businessnews.com.tn/L%C3%82%E2%80%99Appel-de-Tunisie-de-B%C3%83%C2%A9ji-Ca%C3%83%C2%AFd-Essebsi,520,30641,3>

19. "Our Program for Ambitious Development in the Service of All Tunisians." Nidaa Tounes Social and Economic Committee, 2014, page 4.

20. "Mohamed Ghariani conseiller de BCE sans « responsabilités exécutives." 21 September 2013. Africa Manager. http://www.african-manager.com/detArticleP.php?art_id=155811

not have the right to exclude any party—it would be undemocratic. We have Destourians²¹ among us, and they have the right to serve their country. If there are things to blame on them, may justice do its job.”²² Although the inclusion of former regime members has undoubtedly allowed Nidaa Tounes to tap into the well-developed networks formed by the RCD, it has also created concern throughout Tunisia of the possible revival of the former regime.²³

THE NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Having been formed after the 2011 parliamentary elections, Nidaa Tounes began with no representation in the Constituent Assembly. Members of the NCA began leaving their respective parties to join Nidaa Tounes shortly after its legal recognition, when a member of Aridha Chaabia left on July 18, 2012. Representatives from parties including CPR, the Wafa Movement, Al Joumhour, and Ettakatol announced that they would be joining Nidaa Tounes throughout fall of 2012. The party announced in November 2012 that, with eleven representatives in the NCA, it would submit a request to become a formal parliamentary bloc in the NCA. A month later, however, party leadership chose for Nidaa Tounes’ representatives to join the Democratic Bloc to avoid possible delays in the constitution-writing process.²⁴

Party representation continued to fluctuate over the next two years, with representatives often leaving the party with no reason publicly stated. A notable exception was Mohamed Ali Nasri, who announced that he was leaving the party’s ranks due to a disagreement with party leadership over a trial of former regime officials, the result of which Nasri called “absurd.”²⁵ Current party representation in the NCA stands at six representatives.

2014 ELECTIONS

Nidaa Tounes currently ranks at the top of most opinion polls and is widely believed to be the front runner for the elections. Nationwide, the party is polling ahead of Ennahda by 11 to 17 percentage points.²⁶ Although the election results will undoubtedly differ (and possibly to a considerable degree) from recent polling results, it can be said with a degree of certainty that Nidaa Tounes will emerge from the parliamentary elections as the most powerful secular party nationwide.

Responding to the country’s urgent economic needs, Nidaa Tounes’ platform focuses heavily on resolving the current economic crisis and creating a competitive national economy.²⁷ The party’s platform includes a focus on the advancement of the technology sector and other high-growth areas of the economy; educational and vocational training reforms; financial system reform; raising Tunisia’s standing in the global economy; and building cohesion between the state and the private sector. The platform also includes plans for regional development aimed at Tunisia’s interior, building the tourism industry, as well as plans for sustainable development. While the platform

21. Referring to members of Bourguiba’s Destourian/Neo-Destourian Party, but also possibly Ben Ali’s RCD.

22. Kefi, R. “Caïd Essebsi veut rassembler tous les Tunisiens, les Nahdhaouis compris.” Kapitalis. <http://www.kapitalis.com/politique/national/10437-Caïd-essebsi-veut-rassembler-tous-les-tunisiens-les-nahdhaouis-compris.html>

23. Wolf, A. “Can Secular Parties Lead the New Tunisia?” April 2014. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. http://carnegieendowment.org/files/tunisia_secular_parties.pdf

24. A statement by a party official noted that the party assumed the constitution would be finished within the month, and thus there was little reason to create a separate bloc, which could potentially slow down the process. The constitution would not be finished for over a year. <http://www.tunivisions.net/39629/566/149/.html>

25. “Tunisie. Procès des martyrs : L’élue Mohamed Ali Nasri démissionne de Nidaa Tounes.” 15 April 2014. Le Courrier de l’Atlas. <http://www.lecourrierdelatlas.com/698615042014Tunisie.-Proces-des-martyrs-L-elu-Mohamed-Ali-Nasri-demissionne-de-Nidaa-Tounes.html>

26. IRI’s polling from June 2014 places Nidaa Tounes and Ennahda at 24 and 13 percent respectively, while Sigma Conseil’s polling from the same time places the two parties at 41.3 and 24 percent respectively. The large difference between the polls’ results most likely stems from framing of the question and the answers available to respondents (e.g. the presence of “I don’t know” or “I choose not to vote” as options).

27. “Our Program for Ambitious Development...” Nidaa Tounes Social and Economic Committee.

includes ambitious plans for economic revival, such as doubling the technological export capacity of the country by 2019, it includes few specifics as to how the party plans to achieve these goals. Ultimately, Nidaa Tounes' platform presents the party as business friendly while promising state intervention in economic affairs.

Nidaa Tounes will be contesting seats in each domestic and international district. Notable candidates who are leading the party's electoral lists include: Said Aidi, former Minister of Vocational Training and Employment under Caïd Essebsi, running in Tunis 2; Khemaïs Ksila, current NCA representative (elected for Ettakatol) and political prisoner under Bourguiba and Ben Ali, running in Nabeul 2; Salem Hamdi, former Secretary of State for Agriculture and the Environment, running in Sidi Bouzid; Mohamed Naceur, former Minister of Technology and Communication under the first transitional government in 2011, running in Mahdia; and Selma Elloumi Rekik, businesswoman and party founder, running in Nabeul 1.

The party has been criticized for presenting itself as a progressive party, but failing to run more women heads of list than its Islamic rival, Ennahda. Hafedh Caïd Essebsi, son of Béji Caïd Essebsi, was slated to head the party's electoral list in Tunis 1, but he reportedly stepped down due to disagreements within the party²⁸—including accusations by some party members that the elder Caïd Essebsi was acting without the approval of party leadership in having his son lead the party's list in a battleground district.²⁹ After Caïd Essebsi's recusal, multiple names were mentioned as replacements. Caïd Essebsi stipulated that his replacement must be a woman, most likely due to negative press the party was receiving at the time for the low number of women heads of list. Ultimately, Leila Bahri, a little known candidate, replaced Caïd Essebsi.

POPULAR FRONT

Formed in August 2012, the Popular Front is an alliance of small, leftist parties established to be a "third political axis, in opposition to the Troika... and Nidaa Tounes."³⁰ The founding parties of the Front included the Workers' Party, the Democratic Socialist Movement, the Baathist Movement, the Vanguard Party, the Tunisian Green Party, as well as others. The Front arguably constitutes the choice for voters that is the farthest left, with its member parties identifying with a wide array of leftist issues, ranging from Marxism to environmentalism. The Popular Front is led by Hama Hammami, well-known communist activist and leader of the Workers' Party.

2011 ELECTIONS AND THE NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Several of the parties that formed the Popular Front successfully gained seats in the 2011 parliamentary elections. The Workers' Communist Party of Tunisia³¹ won three seats, the Democratic Socialist Movement won two, and the Progressive Fight Party won one.³² With both Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi having been members of Popular Front parties, the coalition played a significant opposition role in the national dialogue process, refusing to allow the creation of a government until their demands were met.³³

28. "Hafedh Caïd Essebsi quitte Tunis 1, Omar S'habou décline, Faïza Kefi pressentie." 20 August 2014. Business News. <http://www.businessnews.com.tn/hafedh-Caïd-essebsi-quitte-tunis-1-omar-shabou-decline-faïza-kefi-pressentie,520,48808,3>

29. Ohier, F. "Nidaa Tounes suspends Faouzi-elloumi after Essebsi criticism." 22 August 2014. Tunisia Live. <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2014/08/22/nidaa-tounes-suspends-faouzi-elloumi-after-essebsi-criticism/>

30. "Tunisie: Naissance d'une nouvelle coalition de gauche : le front populaire." 13 August 2012. BabNet Tunisie. <http://www.babnet.net/cadredetail-53094.asp>

31. The former name of the Workers' Party

32. The elected representatives for the Democratic Socialist Party are now an independent representative and a representative for Al Massar. The Progressive Fight Party is now a representative for the Popular Progressive Party. Neither party is currently affiliated with the Popular Front for the upcoming elections.

33. "Tunisia's Ennahda blames Popular Front for obstructing dialogue." 6 December 2013. WorldNet. <http://www.worldbulletin.net/ennahda/124405/tunisi-as-ennahda-blames-popular-front-for-obstructing-dialogue>

2014 ELECTIONS

As a conglomeration of parties, the Popular Front faced particular difficulty in determining the makeup of its electoral lists.³⁴ The Workers' Party will lead the highest number of electoral lists with seven. Among the Front's notable heads of lists are Mbarka Brahmi, widow of the assassinated Mohamed Brahmi, running in Sidi Bouzid, and Zied Lakhdar, head of the Democratic Patriots Party, running in Ben Arous. The alliance has been polling with four to six percent, placing it third behind Nidaa Tounes and Ennahda.

In presenting the platform³⁵ of the alliance, Hammami stated, "The dream [of the revolution] was shattered when the Troika, the former government coalition dominated by Ennahda, took power. Safety, economy—everything—deteriorated and the dream of a new Tunisia went up in flames. Together we can rebuild that dream and make it a reality."³⁶ Under the slogan "Tunisia of labor, Tunisia of hope," the party's platform aims to create a progressive culture, achieve social justice, and establish a modern education system.³⁷

Economically, the Front's platform places emphasis on reforming Tunisia's natural resource sector, noting that the country's phosphate reserves are not sold at a fair market price, resulting in poor standards of living for the workers in phosphate mines.³⁸ Coalition officials have previously talked of a desire to nationalize major corporations.³⁹ It also emphasizes expanding the tourism sector, as well as controlling tax evasion and smuggling.⁴⁰ The alliance also supports price freezes, increases in wages, and the cancellation of debt for small farmers.⁴¹

ETTAKATOL

Ettakatol⁴² was founded in 1994 as a secular social-democratic party. The party gained legal status in 2002, thus existing as one of the few legalized opposition parties under the Ben Ali regime. While the party ran in elections in 2009, it failed to gain representation in the Chamber of Deputies. The party considers itself to be center-left and is a permanent member party of the Socialist International. Central to the party's identity is its founder and secretary-general, Mustapha Ben Jaafar.

2011 ELECTIONS AND THE NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Because of its relatively lengthy history in Tunisia, Ettakatol was well-positioned to participate in the 2011 elections. The party won seven percent of the popular vote, with the highest percentages being in the greater Tunis area. The party secured 20 seats, placing it fourth after Aridha Chaabia. Following the elections, Ettakatol entered into the Troika coalition with Ennahda and CPR as the

34. "Le casse-tête de têtes de listes du Front Populaire." 23 August 2014. WebManagerCenter. <http://www.webmanagercenter.com/actualite/societe/2014/08/23/153778/tunisie-legislatives-le-casse-tete-de-tetes-de-listes-du-front-populaire>

35. For the full party platform, see: <http://front-populaire.org/?p=4735>

36. "Front populaire: Haro sur l'évasion fiscale, la contrebande et la corruption!" 3 October 2014. Kapitalis. <http://www.kapitalis.com/politique/24994-front-populaire-haro-sur-l-evasion-fiscale-la-contrebande-et-la-corruption.html>

37. *Ibid.*

38. Leger, P. "Le Front Populaire en campagne à Marseille pour les élections législatives tunisiennes." 15 October 2014. Media Part. <http://blogs.mediapart.fr/edition/visages-de-marseille/article/151014/le-front-populaire-en-campagne-marseille-pour-les-elections-legislatives-tunisi>

39. "Tunisian left dreams of power." August 2014. Al Monitor. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2014/08/httpwwwrealitescomtn20140817entre-contestation-et.html>

40. "Front populaire: Haro sur l'évasion fiscale, la contrebande et la corruption!"

41. "Tunisie : Le Front populaire préconise une prime de recherche d'emploi." 3 October 2014. GlobalNet. <http://www.gnet.tn/actualites-nationales/tunisie-le-front-populaire-preconise-une-prime-de-recherche-demploi/id-menu-958.html>

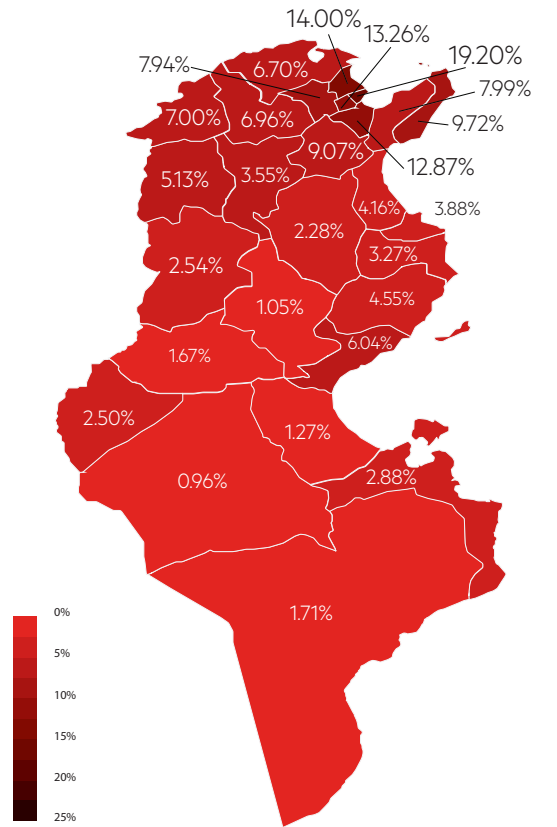
42. More fully "The Democratic Forum for Labor and Freedoms," but more commonly known by the Arabic word for "forum" or "bloc," *ettakatol*.

smallest of the three parties. As part of the agreement, Ben Jaafar was elected president of the NCA.

Since the 2011 elections, the party has lost ten of its representatives in the NCA to other parties.⁴³ Most notably, four representatives left for Al Massar, and another three left for Nidaa Tounes. In the same period, the party gained two representatives who left CPR's ranks, including the second vice president of the NCA, Arbi Abid.⁴⁴

2014 ELECTIONS

Ettakatol is currently polling considerably lower than it did prior to the 2011 elections. Previously polling at nine to 14 percent in 2011, the party has recently been polling between three and four percent. Ben Jaafar has deflected questions about Ettakatol's role in the Troika government by arguing "the coalition government [was] not charged with implementing social and economic programs but with managing the transitional period."⁴⁵ He has expressed openness to a variety of possible cross-party coalitions, noting that Ettakatol is "looking to bring together the largest democratic socialist force possible to crystallize an economic and social program. So far, we have four parties working together, but the door is open for more to join."⁴⁶



2011 POPULAR VOTE RESULTS: ETTAKATOL

The party's platform focuses on the guarantee of rights and liberties to Tunisia's citizens.⁴⁷ Notably, the platform includes plans for a prisoner rehabilitation program, support for reconciliation efforts, and expansion of the country's open governance initiatives. Like CPR, the platform supports decentralization, including the establishment of a ministry for regional development. Economically, the party is aiming for a growth rate of eight percent by 2019, while decreasing unemployment to 9.5 percent by the same year. Reflecting the party's social-democratic roots, the platform also calls for expansion of insurance coverage to 95 percent of the populous, as well as raising the minimum wage.

Notable candidates running as Ettakatol's heads of list include Khalil Zaouia, former Minister of Social Affairs under Prime Minister Jebali, running in Tunis 1, and Arbi Abid, second vice president of the NCA, running in Manouba.

43. For information on the current parties of former Ettakatol representatives, see Al Bawsala's Marsad: <http://majles.marsad.tn/fr/assemblee>

44. Abid was elected as a representative for CPR, left the party to join the Wafa Movement, and left Wafa to join Ettakatol.

45. Referring to Ettakatol's alliance with Democratic Current, Labor Party, and Popular Unity Movement. Abu Najm, M. "Mustafa Ben Jaafar: Being a consensus presidential candidate 'would be an honor.'" 27 June 2014. *Asharq Al-Awsat*. <http://www.aawsat.net/2014/06/article55333724>

46. *Ibid.*

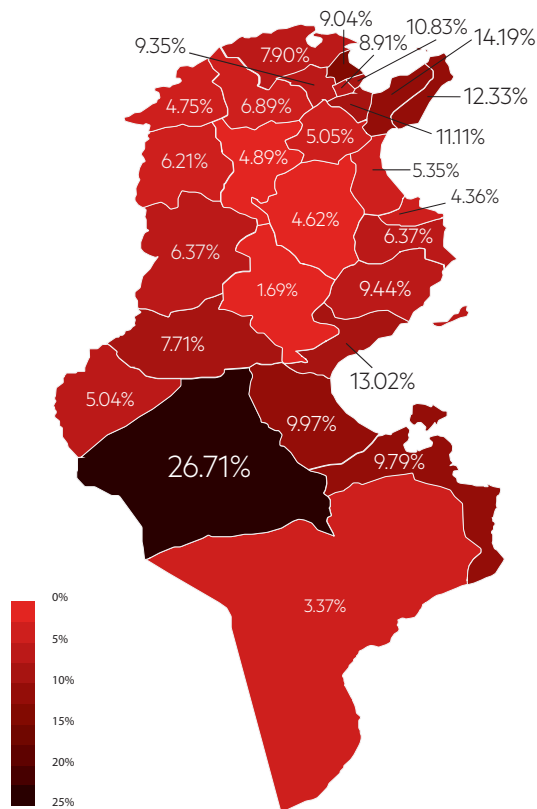
47. For a summary of the party's platform, see: <http://www.gnet.tn/temps-fort/tunisie-ettakatol-devoile-son-programme-electoral/id-menu-325.html> For the full platform, see: <http://ettakatol.org/wptktl/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Programme-Ettakatol-2014.pdf>

CONGRESS FOR THE REPUBLIC (CPR)

Founded in 2001 by well-known human rights activist Moncef Marzouki, Congress for the Republic (CPR) is a secular, center-left party that has traditionally emphasized the promotion of human rights and civil liberties. Despite its formation in the early 2000s, CPR was not legally recognized until 2011, when it participated in an election for the first time.

2011 ELECTIONS AND THE NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

In the 2011 election, the party found support in the northeast governorates of the country, as well as Sfax and Kebili in the south. Overall, CPR won 8.71 percent of the popular vote nationwide and secured 29 seats, putting the party in a distant second place behind Ennahda. The party entered into a power-sharing agreement with Ennahda and Ettakatol to form the Troika government, with CPR holding the presidency.



2011 POPULAR VOTE RESULTS: CPR

On December 12, the NCA held an election for the Tunisian presidency. Ten candidates had submitted their candidacy, but only CPR leader Moncef Marzouki was determined eligible to run.⁴⁸ Marzouki was elected President with 153 representatives voting in his favor.⁴⁹ As such, Marzouki resigned from his position as secretary-general of CPR. Despite his formal departure from the leadership, Marzouki was still seen as a symbol of the party.

Since the 2011 elections, the party has lost 17 seats as its representatives left for other parties, including the Wafa Movement, Democratic Current, Ettakatol, and Nidaa Tounes, or to become independents. The party has also suffered a lack of stable leadership without Marzouki formally as its head. The party saw three secretaries-general between Marzouki's resignation and Imed Daimi, the current secretary-general, assuming the role. Several senior officials also left the party, while others became preoccupied by their newfound role as NCA representatives, thus creating a crisis of leadership.⁵⁰ CPR leaders have publicly disagreed with Marzouki on a number of issues, the most significant of which being the roadmap for Tunisia's transition put into place in late 2013. While Marzouki supported the plan, CPR leaders refused to sign onto the document in a possible move to elevate the party's declining political significance.⁵¹

48. Eight of the candidates failed to obtain the necessary 15 signatures of support from NCA members, and the ninth did not meet the age requirement to hold the presidency. See http://www.businessnews.com.tn/details_article.php?a=28139&t=520&lang=fr&temp=3

49. Of the 202 NCA representatives who voted, 44 submitted blank ballots, two abstained from voting, and three voted against Marzouki. <http://www.ladepêche.fr/article/2011/12/12/1237880-tunisie-moncef-marzouki-elu-president-de-la-republique.html>

50. "Tunisie/CPR : Le bureau politique limoge Abderraouf Ayadi." 19 April 2012. Global Net. <http://www.gnet.tn/revue-de-presse-nationale/tunisie/cpr-le-bureau-politique-limoge-abderraouf-ayadi/id-menu-958.html>

51. Joyce, R. "CPR's decline behind refusal to sign roadmap, analysts say." 10 October 2013. Tunisie Live. <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2013/10/10/cprs-decline-behind-refusal-to-sign-roadmap-analysts-say/>

2014 ELECTIONS

Not unlike Ettakatol, CPR has been polling considerably lower than it had before 2011's elections, when it polled between four and eight percent. The party has been consistently polling around only one to two percent in 2014. Marzouki, too, has faced declining popularity over the past three years.

Running on the slogan "CPR: Loyalty and Responsibility," the party has chosen to revive its 2011 election logo: a pair of eyeglasses, meant to invoke the distinctive pair worn by Marzouki. The choice of this logo hints at Marzouki's centrality to the party's popularity. The party's campaign platform focuses on two areas: reform of the state, and social and economic improvements.⁵² The party advocates for reformation of ministries to create a more efficient bureaucracy, as well as greater decentralization. As such, the party favors holding local elections soon and giving greater authority to local elected officials. Economically, the party favors greater trade with African nations. The platform's economic plan predicts a growth rate of five to six percent by 2019 and a decrease in unemployment to ten percent by the same year. The economic plan also makes note of increased attention to the tourism and transportation sectors, as well as reform of the agricultural and energy sectors.

Among the notable candidates running as CPR heads of list are: Ezzedine Bach Chaouch, former Minister of Culture and current Mayor of Carthage, running in Tunis 2; Slim Ben Hamidane, former Minister of State Property and Land Rights in the governments of Prime Ministers Jebali and Laarayedh, running in Ariana; and Abdelwahab Maatar, former Minister of Vocational Training and Employment and Minister of Commerce under Jebali and Laarayedh respectively, running in Sfax 2.

AL JOUMHOURI

Founded in April 2012, Al Joumhourî is a secular center-left party that resulted from a merger of a number of parties, including the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), Afek Tounes, and a smaller party also called Al Joumhourî. In 2013, Afek Tounes and leaders from the former Joumhourî defected from the merger, leaving the party dominated by the leadership of the PDP.⁵³ The secretary-general of Al Joumhourî is Maya Jribi, who was previously secretary-general of the PDP. The party's most recognizable leader is Ahmed Néjib Chebbi, a longtime opposition figure who helped found the PDP. Both Jribi and Chebbi currently serve as NCA representatives, and Chebbi is running in the presidential elections.

The party describes itself as centrist and socially moderate and places a strong emphasis on justice, which the party views as "the basis of good governance between individuals and authorities."⁵⁴ Despite being newly formed, Al Joumhourî benefits from the credibility and developed networks of its predecessor parties. The party, however, is likely to inherit many of the challenges of the PDP, including establishing a distinct voter base, managing generational divisions in the party, and balancing labor and business constituencies.

In February 2013, Al Joumhourî joined the Union for Tunisia, a coalition with Nidaa Tounes and al-Massar that was intended to unite the fractured left. Al Joumhourî withdrew from the Union for

52. For an overview of the party's platform, see: <http://www.gnet.tn/temps-fort/tunisie-le-cpr-prevoit-la-reforme-de-letat-et-plus-de-decentralisation/id-menu-325.html>

53. Wolf. "Can Secular Parties Lead the New Tunisia?"

54. "About the Party." Al Joumhourî Party. <http://www.aljoumhourî.org/index.php/2012-08-27-13-11-16>

2014 ELECTIONS

As of June 2014, Al Joumhourî was polling with two percent support nationally. Ahead of the 2011 elections, the PDP polled between ten and 16 percent, and the party ultimately came in fifth place, winning around four percent of the popular vote. With expectations for low representation in the incoming parliament, the party will most likely rely on an alliance with other smaller, leftist parties to create a larger bloc with greater political force.

Notable among Al Joumhourî's heads of list are Maya Jribi, current party secretary-general, running in Ben Arous, and Issam Chebbi, brother of Ahmed Néjib Chebbi and current NCA representative, running in Ariana. The party will be running on the slogan "Tunisia in our eyes."⁵⁹ The party's platform focuses on creating a stable state, which includes such initiatives as a national unity government and a national fund for counterterrorism efforts. The party also intends to engage in efforts of "broad social reform" while also lowering corporate tax levels.

CURRENT OF LOVE / TAYYAR AL MAHABA

Founded by Hechmi Hamdi in May 2013, the Current of Love is considered the political successor to Aridha Chaabia (Popular Petition), the party Hamdi had previously founded in 2011 and later dissolved in April 2013.

2011 ELECTIONS AND THE NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Previously considered a minor party, Aridha Chaabia shocked most observers of Tunisia's 2011 elections as it won just under seven percent of the popular vote, thus placing it ahead of the more well-established Ettakatol and PDP. The party secured 26 seats, placing it just behind CPR's 29 seats. The ISIE, however, revoked seven of the party's seats based on allegations of electoral violations, including campaigning outside of designated times and paying for votes.⁶⁰ In response to the decision, Hamdi announced the withdrawal of the party's lists, saying, "It is better that we remove ourselves with full dignity and leave the seats we won to other candidates."⁶¹ The decision caused rioting in Sidi Bouzid, where the party had outperformed Ennahda by winning 38 percent of the vote.⁶² Hamdi reversed his decision in an effort to placate the voters of Sidi Bouzid. The party appealed the ISIE's decision before a court of law, and by December 2011, the party's seats were reinstated.⁶³

In April 2013, the party announced its dissolution, citing the "humiliation" it faced in the NCA. "Supporters of Al-Aridha categorically refuse to be second-class citizens," the dissolution statement read, noting that Hamdi was resigning from political activity due to the ban on dual-nationality citizens from running for president.^{64,65} Party representatives in the NCA left for a variety of other left-wing parties.

59. "Présentation hier des programmes électoraux de Nidaâ Tounès d'Al Joumhourî et du Front Populaire." 3 October 2014. *Le Temps*. <http://www.letemps.com.tn/article/86619/pr%C3%A9sentation-hier-des-programmes-%C3%A9lectoraux-de-nida%C3%A2-toun%C3%A8s-d%E2%80%99al-joumhourî-et-du-front>

60. Adetunji, J. "Tunisian elections: Al Aridha Chaabia party has some seats revoked." 27 October 2011. *The Guardian*. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/28/tunisian-elections-al-aridha-chaabia>

61. "Hechmi Hamdi annonce le retrait de ses listes." 27 October 2011. *Leaders*. <http://www.leaders.com.tn/article/hechmi-hamdi-annonce-le-retrait-de-ses-listes?id=6782>

62. "Hechmi Hamedî renonce à retirer les listes d'Al Aridha de la Constituante." 29 October 2011. *Tunisie News*. http://www.tunisie-news.com/politique/dossier_148_hechmi+hamedî+renonce+retirer+listes+al+aridha+constituante.html

63. Ajmi, S. "Aridha Chaabia Seats Reinstated." 8 November 2011. *Tunisia Live*. <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2011/11/08/aridha-chaabia-gaining-its-seats-back/>

64. Hamdi holds UK and Tunisian citizenship.

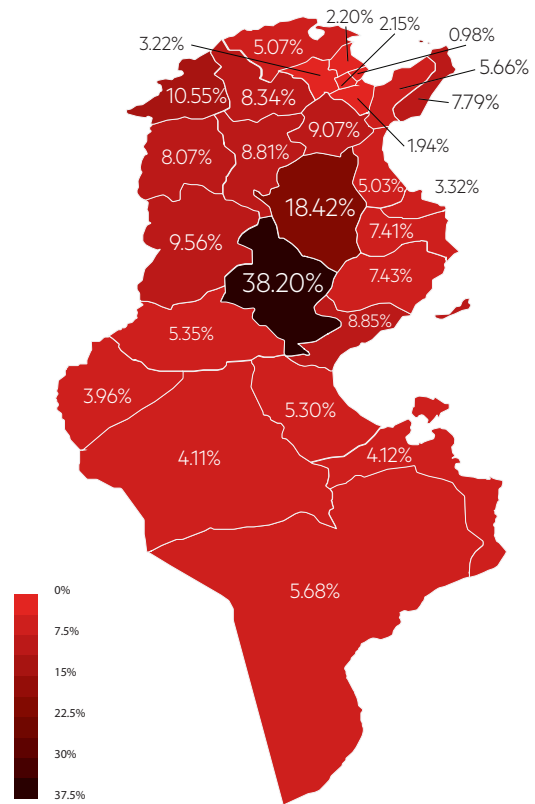
65. "Dissolution d'Al-Aridha et Démission de Hachmi Hamdi" 29 April 2013. *Politik*. <http://politik.webmanagercenter.com/2013/04/29/dissolution-dal-aridha-et-demission-de-hachmi-hamdi/>

By May 2013, however, Hamdi announced his return to politics with the creation of the Current of Love.⁶⁶ In announcing the party, Hamdi noted that the party would seek free health care for Tunisian citizens as well as better services for the unemployed. Seven NCA representatives from the former Aridha Chaabia joined the new party.

The party was noted for its vote against the constitution in January 2014.⁶⁷ Of the 12 representatives who voted against the constitution, seven were from Current of Love, the only party to vote in its entirety against the measure.

2014 ELECTIONS

The Current will most likely attempt to recreate Aridha Chaabia's success, although the party's reputation in the NCA—as well as the party's vote against the constitution—may hurt its chances. In starting the party's campaign in Sidi Bouzid, candidates reiterated the party's plan to provide free health care to every citizen. Other main points of the party's platform include free transportation for senior citizens, the creation of an office to handle zakat, and a specific ministry for Tunisians living abroad.⁶⁸ Hamdi has also made claims that the Gulf countries, the European Union, and Algeria have promised the party five billion dollars to develop marginalized areas of the country,⁶⁹ although these claims have not been verified.



2011 POPULAR VOTE RESULTS: ARIDHA CHAABIA

66. "Hachemi Hamedi revient avec 'le courant de l'amour.'" 22 May 2013. Business News. <http://www.businessnews.com.tn/Hachemi-Hamedi-revient-avec-%C2%AB-le-courant-de-l%E2%80%99amour-%C2%BB,520,38252,3>

67. "En Tunisie, le Courant de l'amour n'aime pas la Constitution." 28 January 2014. <http://maghreb.blog.lemonde.fr/2014/01/28/en-tunisie-le-courant-de-lamour-naime-pas-la-constitution/>

68. "La liste du Courant Al Mahaba à Sidi Bouzid entame sa campagne électorale à Ouled Hafouz." 9 October 2014. Politik. <http://politik.webmanagercenter.com/2014/10/09/la-liste-du-courant-al-mahaba-a-sidi-bouzid-entame-sa-campagne-electorale-a-ouled-hafouz/>

69. "Tayar al-Mahaba de Hamdi promet monts et merveilles" 8 October 2014. l'Economist Maghreb. <http://www.leconomiste-maghreb.com/2014/10/08/tunisie-elections-hamdi-tayar-al-mahaba/#sthash.nmcrS6Lq.OA0gxSvq.dpuf>

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

When Tunisians head to the polls in November, they will participate in their first nationwide presidential election, expected to be free and fair.⁷⁰ Voters will choose from 27 candidates—26 men and one woman.⁷¹ While most major political parties will be fielding a presidential candidate, Ennahda will not be. Party leaders have noted that they seek a consensus candidate,⁷² and with the party's significant following, Ennahda's endorsement of one of the candidates may be a deciding factor in the election. This section includes short biographies of seven leading candidates running for president.

As the executive of the nation, the president must formally approve all laws passed by the Assembly. The president may contest the constitutionality of a draft law or return the draft to the Assembly for a second reading. Should the president return a draft law, the Assembly may then vote to ratify the draft, with an absolute majority of representatives voting in favor for ordinary laws and a three-fifths majority for organic laws.

The president is also charged with creating and implementing policy across the defense, foreign relations, and national security sectors. The president will oversee the National Security Council, serve as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, hold the ability to declare war, and reserve the ability to dissolve the Assembly of People's Representatives. The president also holds the power of appointment for the General Mufti; senior government, military, and diplomatic officials; and the Central Bank's governor. Of these appointments, the Central Bank's governor is subject to the approval of the Assembly.

Like representatives in the Assembly, the president will be elected for a five-year term. However, a president may only be seated for two terms, regardless of whether these terms are consecutive. The president may not serve as a political party official while seated.

BÉJI CAÏD ESSEBSI

Béji Caïd Essebsi will run as the presidential candidate for his political party, Nidaa Tounes. At 87 years in age, Caïd Essebsi is a veteran of the Tunisian political scene. Under President Bourguiba's rule, Caïd Essebsi served in various roles including political advisor, Minister of the Interior, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Under Ben Ali's rule, he served as an elected representative in the Chamber of Deputies and as the Chamber's president. After the 2011 Revolution, Caïd Essebsi returned to the government to serve as the interim prime minister until an elected government was seated.

Caïd Essebsi's critics regard him as a holdover from previous regimes and thus unfit to lead post-revolution Tunisia in a new direction. For his supporters, however, it is exactly his extensive experience in government that lends him credibility as a presidential candidate and the political know-how to effectively lead the nation. Recent polling places Caïd Essebsi as the clear frontrunner

70. Presidential elections held between 1959 and 1994 were uncontested. Although elections held in 1999, 2004, and 2009 were contested, Ben Ali won with at least 89 percent of the vote each time. Marzouki's election in 2011 was by members of the NCA only.

71. Seventy individuals submitted candidacies for the presidential elections, but the ISIE determined only 27 of them to be eligible to run for election. Forty-one candidates were disqualified. Primary reasons for being disqualified were failing to obtain the necessary number of signatures of support or failing to pay a necessary deposit. Two candidates withdrew their own names before eligibility was determined.

72. "Présidentielle tunisienne: Ennahda plaide pour la désignation d'un candidat 'consensuel.'" 19 June 2014. *Liberation*. http://www.liberation.fr/monde/2014/06/19/presidentielle-tunisienne-ennahda-plaide-pour-la-designation-d-un-candidat-consensuel_1045388

for president, though likely falling short of receiving an outright majority of votes, which will result in a runoff election in December.

In recent remarks, Caïd Essebsi positioned himself and his party as “an alternative to Islamism.”⁷³ “The fundamental difference between us and [Ennahda] is that we are in a democratic process, while the Islamists take their orders from God, not the people. Voters will decide between our project—part of modernity and the 21st century—and another project—religious.”⁷⁴ In response to similar comments made earlier by Caïd Essebsi, Ennahda leader Rached Ghannouchi explained Caïd Essebsi’s rhetoric as being “under pressure from extremists on the left.”⁷⁵

Caïd Essebsi attracted negative attention over comments made in response to Ennahda representative Meherzia Labidi. Labidi had criticized Caïd Essebsi, saying his government was lax toward Ansar Sharia.⁷⁶ Responding to the accusation, Caïd Essebsi stated, “Meherzia Labidi is a woman, she is only a woman,” implying he would not respond.⁷⁷ The comment was widely regarded as inappropriate. Labidi fought back saying, “Praise be to God that I am only a woman... a woman who has been active in a party with Islamic principles... that respects women.”⁷⁸ Even as members of his own party tried to distance themselves from the comment, Caïd Essebsi reaffirmed that “this was not a lapse [in judgment]. Nobody can doubt the fact that I consider Tunisian women to have ensured the success of the democratic process.”⁷⁹

KAMEL MORJANE

Not unlike Caïd Essebsi, Kamel Morjane served in a government position under Ben Ali, and it is from this experience that Morjane draws both support and criticism. Serving as Minister of Defense and then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Morjane stepped down from his position soon after the 2011 Revolution.⁸⁰

Shortly after the revolution, Morjane formed his own political party, Al Moubadara, which shares characteristics with Nidaa Tounes, such as the inclusion of former regime affiliates. Morjane opposed the dissolution of the RCD, viewing it as an illegal measure.⁸¹ He “felt an obligation to rehabilitate and support the political legacy of the Destour Party,” and thus created his own party.⁸²

Morjane has commented that the role of the Tunisian president should be in creating consensus-based decisions, stating that, if elected president, he would break with previous behaviors of the

73. “En France, Beji Caïd Essebsi s’est posé comme ‘l’alternative à l’islamisme.’” 11 October 2014. Agence France Presse. http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2014/10/11/beji-caid-essebsi-electio_n_5970154.html

74. *Ibid.*

75. “Rached Ghannouchi : Sous la pression de la gauche extrémiste, Béji Caïd Essebsi prône la division.” 9 October 2014. Business News. <http://www.businessnews.com.tn/rached-ghannouchi--sous-la-pression-de-la-gauche-extremiste-beji-caid-essebsi-prone-la-division,520,50116,3>

76. “Tunisie : Meherzia Labidi, ‘ce n’est qu’une femme,’ selon Béji Caïd Essebsi.” 2 October 2014. Global Net. <http://www.gnet.tn/actualites-nationales/tunisie-mehrezia-labidi-ce-nest-quune-femme-selon-beji-caid-essebsi/id-menu-958.html>

77. *Ibid.*

78. Facebook Post from Meherzia Labidi. 3 October 2014. Ennahda Bloc. <https://www.facebook.com/anc.annahda/photos/a.341199926009617.1073741852.121564857973126/575981329198141/?type=1&theater>

79. “Tunisie: Béji Caïd Essebsi justifie ses propos contre Mehrezia Labidi, Bochra Bel Haj Hamida parle d’une ‘erreur.’” 3 October 2014. Huffington Post Maghreb. http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2014/10/03/beji-caid-essebsi-mehrezia-labidi_n_5926964.html

80. “Tunisian interim prime minister announces new cabinet.” 27 January 2011. CNN. <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/af-rica/01/27/tunisia.government/>

81. “Tunisia’s Kamel Morjane: Role of next president will be built on compromise.” 23 June 2014. Asharq Al-Awsat. <http://www.aawsat.net/2014/06/article55333528>

82. “Tunisie: Kamel Morjane, la force tranquille.” 10 September 2014. Jeune Afrique. <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/JA2799p039.xml0/>

Tunisian presidency.⁸³ Regarding the possibility of coalition-building, Morjane stated, “The country’s situation requires, for the months and years to come, a solid—but balanced and fair—power. And it’s hard to imagine a strong government that is not representative of the diversity of Tunisian society as a whole. This government should be able to enjoy at least a qualified majority, because we cannot get everyone from extreme left to Ennadha on the same team.”⁸⁴

MONCEF MARZOUKI

Currently serving as the President of Tunisia, Moncef Marzouki has become one of the most recognizable figures in Tunisian politics. As president of the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH) and the founder of Congress for the Republic (CPR), Marzouki had established himself as a credible, pro-human rights opposition figure before the revolution.

Marzouki will be running as CPR’s candidate under the slogan “Victory, Nothing but Victory.”⁸⁵ In announcing his candidacy, Marzouki stated that his campaign would be transparent, attempting to distance himself from the “dirty money” of the former regime.⁸⁶ Since assuming the presidency, his popularity has fallen considerably, with recent polling showing that 60 percent of respondents disapproved of Marzouki.⁸⁷ When asked about voting for presidential candidates, 9.9 percent of respondents responded favorably for Marzouki.⁸⁸

HAMMA HAMMAMI

Hamma Hammami is a well-known far-left activist, having been involved with El Amal Ettounsi and the Communist Workers’ Party for much of his life. Previously persecuted by the both the Bourguiba and Ben Ali regime for his political activity, Hammami spent significant time in jail and exile and experienced physical torture at the hands of regime members. Hammami will be running as the candidate of the Popular Front, and his polling results are similar to the party’s, ranging between four and six percent.

Hammami has noted an immediate desire to reform the nation’s security apparatus, as well as its foreign relations, specifically reestablishing diplomatic ties with Syria.⁸⁹ Hammami identified a number of dangers for Tunisia’s political scene, including “the Islamists of Ennahda, but also terrorist groups financed from abroad by the oil monarchies of the Gulf, [and] on the other side, the forces of the former regime looking to profit from the failure of the Troika.”⁹⁰ He has also expressed disapproval of the work of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and the recent “Invest in Tunisia, Startup Democracy” conference supported by the French government, referring to them as neoliberal institutions that benefit wealthy, capitalist countries.⁹¹

83. “Kamel Morjane: Moncef Marzouki est un novice!” 18 June 2014. Business News. <http://www.businessnews.com.tn/Kamel-Morjane--Moncef-Marzouki-est-un-novice-1,520,47286,3>

84. “Tunisie: Kamel Morjane, la force tranquille.”

85. “Tunisie: le président Marzouki candidat à sa réélection.” 20 September 2014. La Croix. <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/Monde/Tunisie-le-president-Marzouki-candidat-a-sa-reelection-2014-09-20-1209207>

86. *Ibid.*

87. “Tunisia’s Democratic Transition at a Crossroads.” 19 August 2014. International Republican Institute. <http://www.iri.org/news-events-press-center/news/iri-poll-tunisia%E2%80%99s-democratic-transition-crossroads>

88. “Sigma Conseil: Béji Caïd Essebsi en tête des élections présidentielles.” 5 July 2014. Mosaïque FM. <http://www.mosaiquefm.net/fr/index/a/ActuDetail/Element/39337-sigma-conseil-beji-caid-essebsi-en-tete-des-elections-presidentielles>

89. “Si je suis élu: Hamma Hammami, candidat du Front Populaire à la Présidentielle.” 21 September 2014. Le Temps Tunisien. <http://www.letemps.com.tn/article/86318/si-je-suis-%C3%A9lu-hamma-hammami-candidat-du-front-populaire-%C3%A0-la-pr%C3%A9sidentielle-%C2%ABnous-ne>

90. “Hamma Hammami: Il faut tout faire pour endiguer la montée du fascisme religieux.” 14 October 2014. On N’est Pas des Moutons. <http://fdg-info13.com/2014/10/14/hamma-hammami-il-faut-tout-faire-pour-endiguer-la-montee-du-fascisme-religieux/>

91. “Si je suis élu: Hamma Hammami, candidat du Front Populaire à la Présidentielle.”

AHMED NÉJIB CHEBBI

As founder of the Progressive Democratic Party in the 1980s and current representative of Al Joumhourî Party in the NCA, Ahmed Néjib Chebbi stands in contrast to many of his fellow presidential candidates as a firm opposition figure.⁹² Chebbi also holds the distinction of having already run for president: he submitted his candidacy against Ben Ali in 2009 but ultimately withdrew his name due to a lack of the “minimum conditions of freedom, honesty and transparency” in the elections.⁹³

Chebbi will be running as Al Joumhourî's presidential candidate. He started his campaign with optimism, noting that his candidacy “is the result of the Tunisian revolution,” crowning his “long career as an activist.”⁹⁴ Chebbi presented a nine-point electoral platform, which includes an emphasis on political stability, security, economic and social development, and development of marginalized areas.⁹⁵ Chebbi most recently polled at 5.1 percent.⁹⁶

MUSTAPHA BEN JAAFAR

Mustapha Ben Jaafar is the founder of Ettakatol and currently serves as President of the NCA. Ben Jaafar previously attempted to run for president in 2009 but was disqualified. He also briefly served as health minister in the post-Revolution government, but he quickly stepped down in protest of former regime members continuing to serve in the government.⁹⁷

When Ben Jaafar's candidacy was announced, an Ettakatol party spokesperson stated, “We believe that Mr. Ben Jaafar has been instrumental to the success of the transitional phase: his role as head of the ANC was crucial... This is the man for the job.”⁹⁸ Ben Jaafar was criticized for breaking a previous promise to step down from his position as head of the NCA should he run for president, calling into question whether Ben Jaafar would maintain an unfair advantage in holding his post while campaigning.⁹⁹ Like Marzouki, Ben Jaafar's popularity has been in decline since 2011. Recent polling indicates 3.2 percent of Tunisians support Ben Jaafar.¹⁰⁰

92. Chebbi did serve as a minister for 45 days after the Revolution, resigning due to “blunders” and “procrastination” on the part of the government. See: <http://www.afrik.com/article22181.html>

93. “Ahmed Nejib Chebbi, l'opposant.” 7 August 2012. *Le Petit Journal*. <http://www.lepetitjournal.com/tunis/societe/116667-tunis-societe>

94. “Néjib Chebbi candidat d'Al-Joumhourî à la présidentielle.” 16 September 2014. *Direct Info*. <http://directinfo.webmanagercenter.com/2014/09/16/nejib-chebbi-candidat-dal-joumhourî-a-la-presidentielle/>

95. “Ahmed Nejib Chebbi, et sa vision de la Tunisie en neuf points.” 24 September 2014. *Global Net*. <http://www.gnet.tn/actualites-nationales/ahmed-nejib-chebbi-et-sa-vision-de-la-tunisie-en-neuf-points/id-menu-958.html>

96. “Sigma Conseil: Béji Caïd Essebsi en tête des élections présidentielles.” 5 July 2014. *Mosaïque FM*. <http://www.mosaïquefm.net/fr/index/a/ActuDetail/Element/39337-sigma-conseil-beji-caid-essebsi-en-tete-des-elections-presidentielles>

97. “Tunisia ministers quit government as protests resume.” 18 January 2011. *BBC*. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12216243>

98. “Tunisie: Mustapha Ben Jaafar candidat à la présidentielle, sa démission de l'ANC n'a pas été évoquée.” 1 September 2014. *Huffington Post Maghreb*. http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2014/09/01/tunisie-mustapha-ben-jaafar_n_5747050.html

99. As would Marzouki. See: <http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/201409111387.html>

100. “Sigma Conseil: Béji Caïd Essebsi en tête des élections présidentielles.” 5 July 2014. *Mosaïque FM*. <http://www.mosaïquefm.net/fr/index/a/ActuDetail/Element/39337-sigma-conseil-beji-caid-essebsi-en-tete-des-elections-presidentielles>

MUSTAPHA KAMEL NABLI

Tunisian economist Mustapha Kamel Nabli will run for president as an independent candidate. Nabli served as Governor of the Central Bank from early 2011 to mid-2012. Under Ben Ali, he was chairman of the Tunis Stock Exchange and then Minister of Regional Planning and Development. He has also served the World Bank as chief economist for the MENA division. Despite also holding office during the Ben Ali era, Nabli appears to be a less divisive figure than Caïd Essebsi or Morjane.

In announcing his candidacy, Nabli noted the necessity of rehabilitating the country, both economically and politically. He also made note of the importance of the restoration of confidence in Tunisia's political system, with the president playing a major role in this as a symbol of the state.¹⁰¹ He stated that the institution of the presidency was devalued under the Troika government and that it was necessary to restore the independence of the institution.¹⁰² As an independent candidate, Nabli has emphasized the need to separate the presidency from political parties, arguing that the president should serve all Tunisians, not just a single party.¹⁰³

101. "Présidentielle: Pourquoi Nabli s'estime l'homme idoine." 1 October 2014. Leaders. <http://www.leaders.com.tn/article/pourquoi-nabli-s-estime-le-candidat-idoine-a-la-presidence-de-la-republique?id=15173>

102. "Mustapha Kamel Nabli réunit son équipe." 28 September 2014. Jawhara FM. <http://www.jawharafm.net/fr/article/mustapha-kamel-nabli-reunit-son-equipe/108/14892>

103. "Mustapha Kamel Nabli: 'La force montante d'un indépendant.'" 17 September 2014. Leaders. <http://www.leaders.com.tn/article/mustapha-kamel-nabli-la-force-montante-d-un-independant?id=15069>

MAJOR CONCERNS

VOTER APATHY AND DISCONTENT

Despite Tunisia's recent democratic gains relative to other "Arab Spring" neighbors, the Tunisian population remains pessimistic about the country's politics and the economy. After a drawn out transition process mired by political stalemate, infighting, and assassinations, the populous has shown signs of weariness and a desire to return to stability and normalcy. Polling completed by the International Republican Institute (IRI) throughout Tunisia's transition suggests that a considerable portion of the country's citizens do not believe Tunisia is headed in the right direction.¹⁰⁴ A lack of faith and a lack of interest on the part of the Tunisian citizenry remain major potential barriers to a robust, fully representative democratic system.

IRI's polling results also suggest Tunisians have little faith in their political parties and politicians. A majority of those polled over the past two years have responded that politicians in Tunis "don't care at all" about local problems in the rest of the country, with 70 percent of respondents answering this way in the most recent polling period. A majority of respondents answered that political parties are "only interested in power and personal gain." Nearly half of respondents answered that they never stay informed about the work of the NCA. With a disconnect between political parties and politicians and their potential constituents, voters may feel a lack of motivation to head to polling centers on election day.

The polling data also suggest weariness on the part of Tunisian citizens with regard to the democratic transition. For the first time in the transition, in June 2014, a majority of respondents answered that they would choose a stable, authoritarian-led country over an unstable, democratic country. With continuing economic woes in the country and security concerns on its borders, Tunisians have yet to see the prosperity that a democratic nation promises.

Without a sufficiently high rate of participation by voters, these elections seem unlikely to endow their winners with the electoral legitimacy required to carry out their political visions.

VOTER REGISTRATION

As part of its mandate to oversee the election process, the ISIE was charged with registering citizens to vote.¹⁰⁵ In order to facilitate the registration process, the ISIE released two new innovations for registering that were not available for the previous elections. For the expatriate population, registration could be completed online on the ISIE's website, thereby foregoing the need to visit a Tunisian consulate or embassy in person. For those in Tunisia, registration was possible by sending a citizen's national identification number by SMS to the ISIE. In return, the citizen would receive a confirmation and the location of his or her polling center.

The registration period opened on June 23 and was set to last for one month, closing on July 22. Two weeks into the registration period, only 90,000 new potential voters had registered,¹⁰⁶ prompting

104. For the latest polling results, see: <http://www.iri.org/news-events-press-center/news/iri-poll-tunisia%E2%80%99s-democratic-transition-crossroads>

105. For a complete overview of the registration process, see IRI's dispatches: http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2014%20July%2029%20Tunisia%20Elections%20Dispatch%20No.%201-Voter%20Registration_0.pdf and http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2014%20September%2011%20Tunisia%20Elections%20Dispatch%20No.%202-Voter%20Registration_0.pdf

106. "Si on atteint 1 million d'inscrits, ce sera exceptionnel, selon Chafik Sarsar" 7 July 2014. Business News. http://www.businessnews.com.tn/details_article.php?t=520&a=47716&temp=3&lang=

calls for an extension of the registration period. The head of the ISIE was quoted as saying that the low registration numbers reflected “the reluctance of citizens to participate in the upcoming elections.”¹⁰⁷

Political parties were divided on the issue of extending the registration period, with Ennahda arguing against it and newer and smaller parties arguing for it.¹⁰⁸ Given Ennahda’s successes in the last election, the party was motivated by a desire to keep voter registration lists as similar as possible to those used in the previous elections. Newer parties, such as Nidaa Tounes, would potentially benefit more from additional voters registering. Nidaa Tounes leader Hafedh Caïd Essebsi proposed an extension of three months, which would give his party ample time to increase potential voters.¹⁰⁹

The ISIE initially issued an extension of the registration period until July 29, and later announced a second registration period from August 5 to August 26. Over the two periods of registration in summer 2014, 993,696 new voters registered, with the majority registering in June and July rather than August.¹¹⁰ Combined with those who registered in 2011, 5,285,136 eligible voters have registered to vote. Of those registered, 359,530 are expatriates who registered outside of Tunisia.¹¹¹ Despite the relative success of registering nearly an additional million potential voters, a large proportion of eligible rural voters – especially in the interior regions of the country – remain unregistered.

WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

Tunisia has historically had among the highest rates of women’s participation in its legislative bodies in the Arab world. Under the Ben Ali regime, the ruling RCD party implemented a voluntary women’s quota in its electoral lists in order to maintain relatively high levels of women’s participation in the Chamber of Deputies. In its final iteration before Ben Ali’s fall, the Chamber of Deputies had 59, or just over a quarter, of its 214 seats filled by women.¹¹²

Although laudable in its goal of increasing women’s participation in government, the use of a quota system by an unpopular dictator carried the danger of linking women’s rights with an autocratic system of rule. In neighboring Egypt, after the fall of the Mubarak regime in 2011, there was a backlash against progressive pro-women initiatives spearheaded by first lady Suzanne Mubarak. Tunisia’s post-Ben Ali elections and constitution-writing process have thus far avoided a similar backlash against the progress made for women’s rights under the previous regimes.

2011 ELECTIONS AND THE NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Rather than continue the women’s quota system of the previous regime, Tunisia’s transitional government chose to implement a vertical zipper requirement for electoral lists. Article 16 of the electoral law passed in May 2011 stated that “applications to candidacy are made on the basis of the principle of equality between women and men by ranking the candidates in lists alternating

107. “Tunisie - Chafik Sarsar: La prolongation des délais d’inscription n’est pas contraire à la loi.” 10 July 2014. Huffington Post Maghreb. http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2014/07/10/isie-elections_n_5574547.html

108. “Political parties agree on extending voter registration deadline.” 22 July 2014. Agence Tunis Afrique Press. <http://www.tap.info.tn/en/index.php/politics2/19849-political-parties-agreed-on-extending-voter-registration-deadline> and “Le Front populaire demande la prorogation des délais d’inscription.” 9 July 2014. Business News. http://www.businessnews.com.tn/details_article.php?t=520&a=47783&temp=3&lang=

109. *Ibid.*

110. “Communique press du fin d’enregistrement des électeurs.” ISIE. <http://www.isie.tn/documents/communique-presse-fin-enregistrement-electeurs-fr.pdf>

111. “Communication about the final record for voters” 6 October 2014. ISIE. <http://www.isie.tn/documents/com-nbr-final-electeur.pdf>

112. See the Union Interparlementaire’s database: http://www.ipu.org/parline-f/reports/1321_E.htm

between them. Lists that do not respect this principle will be rejected, except in the case of an odd number of reserved seats in certain constituencies.”¹¹³

The vertical zipper system resulted in 57 of the NCA's 217 seats being filled by women, resulting in nearly the same percentage as the final Chamber of Deputies. While the elections did not result in a backsliding of women's representation, they failed to result in full parity. Although women represented 48 percent of candidates presented to voters, they accounted for only seven percent of heads of electoral lists.¹¹⁴ Tunisia's proportional electoral system and large number of districts result in a clear majority of seats being won by the heads of lists.¹¹⁵ 153 of the 217 elected representatives occupied the first spot on their respective electoral lists. Of these 153 elected heads of list, only 14 were women.¹¹⁶ By relegating women candidates to lower positions on electoral lists, political parties ensured compliance with the law without increasing the chances of achieving full gender parity in the NCA.

There are currently 67 women serving as representatives in the NCA,¹¹⁷ accounting for 30 percent of its membership. Of these 67 representatives, 41, or 61 percent of all women representatives, are aligned with Ennahda's parliamentary bloc. With Ennahda holding 86 seats in the NCA, these 41 women account for nearly half of Ennahda's representation.

Women also hold several positions of power within the NCA, although most executive positions continue to be filled by men:

- Ennahda's Meherzia Labidi serves as the first vice president of the assembly, while three out of seven assistants to the president are women: Afek Tounes' Samira Merai for legislative affairs and governmental relations, Ettakatol's Karima Souid for information and media relations, and Ennahda's Hela Hammi for management and budgetary oversight.
- Of the NCA's six commissions charged with overseeing the constitution-writing process, only the Commission for Rights and Liberties was headed by a woman, Farida Labidi of Ennahda. Only the Commission for State, Regional, and Local Authorities had no women present in its executive bureau.
- Of the NCA's eight legislative commissions, two are presided over by women: the Commission for Rights, Liberties, and Foreign Relations by Souad Abderrahim of Ennahda, and the Commission for General Legislation by Kalthoum Badreddine of Ennahda. The executive bureaus of the Commission for Service Sectors, the Commission for Energy and Production Sectors, and the Commission for Social Affairs have no women.
- Of the seven parliamentary blocs, only the Democratic Bloc is headed by a woman, Salma Baccar of Al Massar.

113. For the full text of the 2011 electoral law, see: <http://www.legislation-securite.tn/fr/node/30432>

114. "Visualizing Women's Political Participation during Tunisia's 2011 Elections." <http://www.fwelections.com/visualizing-womens-political-participation-during-tunisia-2011-elections/>

115. As opposed to the "winner-take-all" system used in the Ben Ali era, in which the party receiving the most votes in a district took all of the district's representation.

116. "Tunisie - Loi électorale: La parité n'est pas encore acquise" 22 April 2014. Huffington Post Maghreb. http://www.huffpost-maghreb.com/2014/04/22/tunisie-loi-electorale-parite_n_5189902.html

117. Replacement of representatives who have resigned or passed away has resulted in an increase in women in the NCA, assuaging fears that women who had been elected would be switched out in favor of men after being seated. For a summary of changes, see: http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2014/04/29/tunisie-femme-assemblee_n_5233556.html

2014 ELECTIONS

Tunisia's recently promulgated constitution makes several guarantees concerning women's rights and political participation. Beyond ensuring general equality between men and women, Article 34 asserts that "the state shall guarantee the representation of women in elected assemblies," and Article 46 notes that "the state is working to achieve parity between women and men in elected councils."¹¹⁸

When creating a new electoral law earlier in the year, there was considerable debate over gender parity in the NCA.¹¹⁹ Proposed versions of Article 23 included references to horizontal parity, which would require parties to alternate heads of lists between men and women, and an imposed quota of 30 percent representation for women. The proposals included removal of public funding or invalidation of lists as punishment for failure to follow the law.

The electoral law passed, however, continues to use language nearly identical to 2011's electoral law. Article 23 states, "Nominations to candidacy are made based on the principle of parity between women and men and the rule of alternation between them on the [electoral] list. Any list not respecting this principle will be rejected, except in the case of an odd number of reserved seats in some districts."¹²⁰ As such, fears of women failing to gain representation in the Assembly remain in place.

According to the government, 47 percent of parliamentary candidates are women.¹²¹ Among the major parties, CPR presented the highest number of women heads of list, with seven out of 33, while some major parties presented only two or three women heads of list.¹²² In response to the low level of representation of women as list frontrunners, current representative Salma Baccar stated, "I'm not happy at all... Women will be less present in the future Assembly."¹²³ For Nidaa Tounes, the low level of women as heads of the party's lists is a result the country's political realities: choosing heads of list "is not a matter of taking a specific position to make history, but instead involves caring about efficiency... we have only been concerned with competence and efficiency in order to win elections."¹²⁴

Only one woman is running for president, Kalthoum Kannou. A judge by training, Kannou previously served as the president of the Association of Tunisian Magistrates.¹²⁵ Kannou stated that her candidacy sends "a strong message to all Tunisians that Tunisian women can compete with men in policymaking positions."¹²⁶ She is running as an independent candidate and noted that she hopes to "end the conspiracy of political parties against the people."¹²⁷

118. For the full text of the constitution, see: <http://majles.marsad.tn/fr/constitution>

119. See votes taking place between April 18 and May 1, 2014: <http://majles.marsad.tn/fr/votes>

120. For the full text of the electoral law passed, see: http://majles.marsad.tn/fr/lois/loi_electorale/chapitre/1

121. "Tunisie: 47% des candidats aux législatives sont femmes." 30 September 2014. Afrique Inside. <http://afriqueinside.com/uncategorized/tunisie-47-des-candidats-aux-legislatives-sont-des-femmes-dont-seulement-12-tetes-de-listes-secretaire-detat30092014/>

122. Dami, S. "Tunisie: Femmes et listes électorales - Les 'têtes' sont ailleurs..." 4 September 2014. AllAfrica. <http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/201409040998.html>

123. *Ibid.*

124. *Ibid.*

125. "Kalthoum Kannou, des détails?" 25 September 2014. Baya.tn. <http://www.baya.tn/2014/09/25/kalthoum-kannou-des-details/>

126. "Qui est Kalthoum Kannou?" 30 September 2014. DirectInfo. <http://directinfo.webmanagercenter.com/2014/09/30/qui-est-kalthoum-kannou/>

127. "Kalthoum Kannou, des détails?"

YOUTH REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

As leaders of the revolution, Tunisia's youth are well-positioned to secure significant gains from post-revolution governments. However, as noted in the 2011 iteration of this election guide, youth were "conspicuously absent from the political scene during the transition." Although youth have found some representation in the NCA, there appears to be a disconnect between the NCA and youth constituents.

The current NCA has eight representatives between the ages of 26 and 30, while another 38 representatives are between the ages of 30 and 40.¹²⁸ Thus, approximately one fifth of the NCA's membership can be considered youth representatives. Notably, seven of the eight youngest representatives are women. No youth representatives are present in the executive bureau of the NCA, nor were any present in the leadership of the constitution-writing committees. Of the legislative commissions, only the Commission of Service Sectors is headed by a youth representative, Mahmoud Baroudi.

When drafting a new electoral law in 2014, the NCA debated adding provisions to Article 23 requiring greater youth representation in electoral lists. The most stringent of these provisions would have required a fifth of all lists submitted by a party to be headed by a youth candidate under the age of 30. However, the provision did not include any form of punishment for parties failing to adhere to this policy and ultimately did not pass.

The relevant text of Article 23 in its final form reads, "In constituencies where the number of seats is equal to or greater than four, each electoral list must include among the first four candidates a youth candidate, not exceeding 35 years in age upon the date of submission of his or her candidacy. In cases of non-compliance with this condition, the electoral list is deprived of half of the total value of compensation from public funding." Given that all electoral districts in Tunisia have more than four seats,¹²⁹ the new stipulation should increase youth candidates' chances of winning a seat; although, much like the problem women candidates face, placement outside of the first position on an electoral list greatly decreases the chance of winning a seat.

SECURITY AND ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

Although Tunisia has been relatively peaceful and unaffected by outbreaks of violence, political assassinations and terrorist attacks have raised concerns of possible electoral violence. With possible targets spread across the nation, providing security to polling centers and voters presents a unique challenge to Tunisia's military and police.

Aside from the aforementioned assassinations, the more recent terrorist attack on the army in the interior of the country at Jebel Chaâmbi, which resulted in 14 deaths, once again raised fears of violence. Shortly after the attack at Jebel Chaâmbi, the government announced that it would be calling upon reserve military forces to secure the upcoming elections. As part of a wider effort to secure the nation and crack down on growing extremism, the country will rely on national forces to maintain peace on election days.

In October, Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa announced that some 1,500 militants had been arrested in previous months, and that one-third would be facing trial this month¹³⁰—marking the first time

128. For more on the age demographics of the NCA, see: <http://majles.marsad.tn/fr/assemblee>

129. While four of the six electoral districts outside of Tunisia have fewer than four seats assigned.

130. "Tunisia Arrests 1,500 Militants." 12 October 2014. AlBawaba News. <http://www.eurasiareview.com/12102014-tunisia-arrests-1500-militants/>

since the Ben Ali era that mass trials for accused terrorists will occur.¹³¹ The detainees include militants who fought in Syria, as well as all those who could “now pose a danger... ahead of Tunisia’s upcoming elections.”¹³²

The United States, for its part, has attempted to bolster the capacity of the national police and army to secure the country and polling stations for the upcoming elections. On August 14, the U.S. Embassy in Tunis announced the donation of 14 million USD worth of equipment to the Ministry of the Interior. In the ceremony marking the donation, U.S. Ambassador Jacob Walles noted that the donation “demonstrates our strong commitment to support Tunisia’s fight against terrorism and our determination to help Tunisia succeed in its transition to democracy.” He continued, “The body armor and personnel protective gear will help save the lives of Tunisia’s security officers and allow them to be even more effective in their efforts to dismantle the groups that are terrorizing the Tunisian public and seeking to destabilize the democratic transition and the upcoming elections. Together with the training that we are providing, this equipment will help give the security forces the tools and tactics they need to provide security for the Tunisian people and patrol Tunisia’s borders.”¹³³

Anxiety about possible security threats remains, but Tunisians are hopeful that recent steps taken by the government and security forces to curb terrorism will create an environment in which potential voters will not be deterred from heading to the polls on election day.

131. “Terrorismo: Tunisia, al via processi per centinaia imputati.” 13 October 2014. ANSAmed. http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/it/notizie/stati/tunisia/2014/10/13/terrorismo-tunisia-al-via-processi-per-centinaia-imputati_9c2b16fb-8f64-4be7-829c-ea44f1d0c405.html

132. *Ibid.*

133. “Remarks by Ambassador Walles at Ceremony for the Donation of Equipment to the Ministry of Interior.” 14 August 2014. US Embassy Tunisia. <http://tunisia.usembassy.gov/am-speeches/remarks-by-ambassador-walles-at-ceremony-for-the-donation-of-equipment-to-the-ministry-of-interior-august-14-2014.html>

LOOKING AHEAD

Although the upcoming elections could signal an end to Tunisia's political transition, the nation has much work ahead of it as it continues the process of democratic consolidation. As democratic transitions across the world have revealed, solidifying democratic rule is not a linear process, nor is the process measured in years.

While the newly promulgated constitution is an important landmark, it is incumbent upon the incoming leadership to implement the structures mandated and uphold the rights guaranteed to the Tunisian people. This will be no small feat. The constitution is arguably the most democratic in the region—both in terms of its content and the process by which it was drafted—and the newly elected legislature and government will require great political will to deliver all that the constitution promises.

Tunisia's elected officials will also face impending crises on multiple fronts—namely the faltering economy and the threat of instability and transnational terrorist groups crossing the country's borders. Economically, the nation suffers from crippling unemployment for both the uneducated and educated populous, rising staple prices, a burdensome subsidy system, and an urgent need to reform tax and investment codes. With respect to security, the threat of instability spilling over from Libya's ongoing crisis looms over Tunisia's relative stability. In addition, Tunisia's extensive border in the interior and southern regions of the country have already been targets for terrorist groups, including those responsible for the attack at Jebel Chaâmbi.

The numerous threats to Tunisia's stability and democratic system will require the nation and its people to remain engaged in dialogue to build consensus regarding the country's future. As the crisis of 2013 revealed, political division can often be mitigated by meaningful dialogue and consensus-based decision-making. Ultimately, the winners of this fall's parliamentary and presidential elections will be called upon to ensure a broad spectrum of political actors are involved in the re-making of the Tunisian state.

Despite the many challenges that threaten Tunisia's transition, the country remains the best hope for a successful transition to democracy in the Arab world. The nation's democratic constitution stands as a testament to the will of its people. The success of Tunisia's democracy will depend on its newly elected leaders to defend the constitution and protect the rights of all Tunisian citizens.

APPENDIX: ELECTION STATISTICS AND REGISTRATION DATA

DISTRICT	ELIGIBLE VOTERS	ELIGIBLE VOTERS (%)	REGISTERED VOTERS	REGISTERED VOTERS (%)	SEATS (#)	SEATS (%)	ELIGIBLE VOTERS PER SEAT	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	NUMBER OF LISTS
ARIANA	360,519	4.5%	246,497	68.4%	8	4.0%	45,065	440	55
BÉJA	239,223	3.0%	131,770	55.1%	6	3.0%	39,871	264	44
BEN AROUS	438,210	5.5%	294,292	67.2%	10	5.0%	43,821	510	51
BIZERTE	445,781	5.6%	241,696	54.2%	9	4.5%	49,531	414	46
GABÈS	278,719	3.5%	178,564	64.1%	7	3.5%	39,817	322	46
GAFSA	250,777	3.1%	162,528	64.8%	7	3.5%	35,825	434	62
JENDOUBA	332,133	4.1%	166,233	50.1%	8	4.0%	41,517	480	60
KAIROUAN	409,491	5.1%	215,140	52.5%	9	4.5%	45,499	549	61
KASSERINE	296,032	3.7%	185,409	62.6%	8	4.0%	37,004	552	69
KEBILI	113,676	1.4%	84,406	74.3%	5	2.5%	22,735	135	27
KEF	205,474	2.6%	118,941	57.9%	6	3.0%	34,246	228	38
MAHDIA	287,357	3.6%	163,839	57.0%	8	4.0%	35,920	248	31
MANOUBA	267,332	3.3%	168,242	62.9%	7	3.5%	38,190	413	59
MEDENINE	377,453	4.7%	193,797	51.3%	9	4.5%	41,939	306	34
MONASTIR	367,276	4.6%	254,487	69.3%	9	4.5%	40,808	324	36
NABEUL 1	328,274	4.1%	204,301	62.2%	7	3.5%	46,896	252	36
NABEUL 2	219,334	2.7%	165,611	75.5%	6	3.0%	36,556	186	31
SFAX 1	255,020	3.2%	192,427	75.5%	7	3.5%	36,431	301	43
SFAZ 2	415,147	5.2%	248,382	59.8%	9	4.5%	46,127	396	44
SIDI BOUZID	308,134	3.8%	197,584	64.1%	8	4.0%	38,517	512	64
SILIANA	177,560	2.2%	97,460	54.9%	6	3.0%	29,593	234	39
SOUSSE	457,011	5.7%	292,301	64.0%	10	5.0%	45,701	450	45
TATAOUINE	115,640	1.4%	59,752	51.7%	4	2.0%	28,910	124	31
TOZEUR	76,322	1.0%	61,044	80.0%	4	2.0%	19,081	168	42
TUNIS 1	488,773	6.1%	244,599	50.0%	9	4.5%	54,308	414	46
TUNIS 2	378,626	4.7%	275,611	72.8%	8	4.0%	47,328	360	45
ZAGHOUAN	128,754	1.6%	80,693	62.7%	5	2.5%	25,751	225	45
TOTAL TUNISIA	8,018,048	100.0%	4,925,606	61.4%	199	100.0%	40,292	9,241	1,230
ARAB WORLD	48,966		32,182	65.7%	2		24,483	28	14
N. AMERICA	72,162		52,308	72.5%	2		36,081	28	14
GERMANY	63,429		25,575	40.3%	1		63,429	13	13
ITALY	102,663		54,071	52.7%	3		34,221	54	18
FRANCE 1	194,968		79,925	41.0%	5		38,994	95	19
FRANCE 2	239,408		114,192	47.7%	5		47,882	95	19
TOTAL ABROAD	721,596		359,530¹	49.8%	18		40,089	313	97
TOTAL	8,739,644		5,285,136	60.5%	217		40,275	9,554	1,327

1. On October 6, the ISIE announced that 359,530 Tunisians had registered to vote in polling stations abroad. However, final registration statistics for the six expatriate districts have not been released. The data included for these districts has not been updated since August.

