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Tunisia: Surprise, Change and Continuity

Relating Actors, Structures and Mobilization
Opportunities around the 14 January 2011
Revolution

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Mobilizing for Democracy: Democratization Processes and the Mobilization of Civil Society

The project addresses the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in democratization processes, bridging social science approaches to social movements and democracy. The project starts by revisiting the “transitology” approach to democratization and the political process approach to social movements, before moving towards more innovative approaches in both areas. From the theoretical point of view, a main innovation will be in addressing both structural preconditions as well as actors’ strategies, looking at the intersection of structure and agency. In an historical and comparative perspective, I aim to develop a description and an understanding of the conditions and effects of the participation of civil society organizations in the various stages of democratization processes. Different parts of the research will address different sub-questions linked to the broad question of CSOs’ participation in democratization processes: a) under which (external and internal) conditions and through which mechanisms do CSOs support democratization processes? b) Under which conditions and through which mechanisms do they play an important role in democratization processes? c) Under which conditions and through which mechanisms are they successful in triggering democratization processes? d) And, finally, what is the legacy of the participation of civil society during transitions to democracy on the quality of democracy during consolidation? The main empirical focus will be on recent democratization processes in EU member and associated states. The comparative research design will, however, also include selected comparisons with oppositional social movements in authoritarian regimes as well as democratization processes in other historical times and geopolitical regions. From an empirical point of view, a main innovation will lie in the development of mixed method strategies, combining large N and small N analyses, and qualitative comparative analysis with in-depth, structured narratives.

Tunisia amid Surprise, Change and Continuity

Relating Actors, Structures and Mobilization Opportunities around the

14 January 2011 Revolution

Teije Hidde Donker

Cosmos Working Paper 2012/12

Abstract: The following report provides an in-depth and empirically focused overview of collective mobilization before, during and after the breakdown of the Tunisian authoritarian regime in 2010-11. It focuses on the relation between changing (political) contexts and dynamics within Tunisian collective mobilization concerning the peaceful character of the protests, the use of modern media tools, the language of human rights, the role of students, labor organizations, and the Islamists. The report provides a detailed overview of the historical and structural background of the uprising and eventual revolution. It discusses resulting (political) opportunities for social mobilization; provides an overview of key actors and – eventually – gives a detailed overview of actual protest events taking place throughout this period.

It is argued that existing student, labor and “democratization” movements in Tunisia did not initiate protests, but did provide crucial existing structures for protests to endure and spread. The movements themselves were therefore not at the inception of the uprising, but were crucial in shaping it. Second, it is argued that so-called “political opportunity structures” were completely closed at the inception of the uprising but that the subsequent opening of these structures led to a plethora of (re)mobilizing movements – actually showing that changes in political context influenced mobilization dynamics *after* the actual revolution of January 14th 2011.

Keywords : Tunisia, Arab Spring, Democratization, Contentious Mobilization

Introduction

The story has become infamous. Mohammad Bouazizi, a jobless college graduate turned fruit seller, had his goods confiscated for illegal street selling. On top of this, he was slapped in the face by a police woman while it happened. In protest, on 17 December 2010, he set himself alight in front of the local city council in Sidi Bouzzid. He died weeks later (on January 5th 2011),ⁱ but popular protests that had started after his self-immolation had already spiraled out of

control. Via neighboring cities, and soon to the capital Tunis, they tumbled into an open revolt against the rule of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. As a consequence the president fled for Saudi Arabia – never to return. Mohammad Bouazizi's self immolation would be the start of the Tunisian uprising, its transition to democracy – and the beginning of a wave of uprising that would sweep through the Arab world in 2011 and 2012.

The above account is as simplified as it is misleading (and sometimes plain wrong: Bouazizi was no college graduate and the police woman later denied ever hitting him): social mobilization had been brewing for years, the protests in Sidi Bouzzid were exceptional but not unheard of, and the self-immolation of Mohammad Bouazizi was not in itself the final nail in the coffin of Ben Ali. Collective mobilizations during the 2010-2011 uprising built on previous events: from numerous strikes and protests in the Tunisian periphery since 2005, including a six month-long uprising in Gafsa in 2008, to more recent protests in the mining regions at the beginning of 2010. Without these earlier uprisings the Tunisian revolution would not have emerged. Even the date of the revolution, 14 January 2011, although now fixed in the collective memory, can be questioned: this was nothing more than the date that Ben Ali was lured (for that was what happened) out of Tunisia; it can be argued that the actual revolution was only achieved more than two months later, on 23 February.

Throughout these phases – before, during and after the breakdown of the Tunisian authoritarian regime – collective mobilization changed as result of experience and changing (political) contexts. The peaceful character of the protests, the use of modern media tools, the language of human rights, the role of students, labor organizations, and (eventually) the Islamists – all this was a result of, and changed with, the cascading changes in political structures that occurred as the revolution unfolded and transition set in.

The following report aims to shed light on these dynamics by providing a detailed overview of the historical and structural background of the uprising and eventual revolution. It discusses resulting (political) opportunities for social mobilization; provides an overview of key actors and – eventually – gives a detailed overview of actual protest events taking place throughout this period. The paper has a strong empirical focus, and I have tried to keep analyses in the background. But, without wishing to force analysis on the reader, over the next pages I would urge the reader to keep the following issues in mind: existing student, labor and “democratization” movements in Tunisia never initiated protests, but they did provide the necessary structures for its emergence; they transformed short episodes of discontent over material grievances into more sustainable mobilization episodes evolving around broader socio-political grievances. The movements themselves were therefore not at the inception of the uprising, but they were crucial in shaping it.

Second, in the Tunisian case broad-based mobilization was behind the of forcing a “full” transition into democracy. This mobilization emerged in the context of a stable and closed political sphere. At the same time, throughout the various transition phases, social mobilization transformed due to the changing political context. As such, the issue is to see to what extent, and when, the political context was the “dependent” or “independent” variable, and how this changed over the course of the transition. It is impossible to argue that changes in the political context started the uprising: the political context was too stable. Yet it is also impossible to state that the political context was *not* an influence in the period during and after the 23 October elections, when increased polarization between secular and Islamist groups split mobilization as a direct consequence of political liberalization.

Periodization

We can subdivide the Tunisian transition into three phases: breakdown, transition and consolidation. I would add to these three phases a fourth “pre-breakdown” period, as mobilization during the 2010-2011 uprising was very much contingent on previous mobilization in the country. As such, I would say we have to look at the following stages:

- Phase 0: pre-breakdown. In broad terms from 2005 until 2010. An early example of protests in this period is the strike against a visit of Israeli prime minister Sharon to Tunis in November 2005. The first main protest event in this period, I would argue, was in 2008 in the mining region of Gafsa. During these protests economic grievances were effectively translated into broader demands for political reform. This happened mainly through the interventions of local unionists and (human rights) activists. During this period the regime successfully repressed contention and the overall political regime did not seem to be threatened and/or unstable.
- Phase 1: Breakdown. 17 December 2010 – 14 January 2011. The former is the date of Bouazizi's self-immolation, the latter is the date of president Ben Ali's departure. During this period demands focused on human rights and political reforms and later (on 8 January 2011) changed into demands for the fall of the regime. The regime initially reacted with severe repression. But as the police were increasingly overwhelmed by protesters and the army refused to aid in repressing peaceful protests, the only viable option to end protests was seen to be the removal of the President and his close associates.
- Phase 2: Transition. 14 January – 23 October 2011. This period runs from the exit of Ben Ali to the first election for the Constitutive Assembly. It was a period marked by continued mobilization against and pressure on

the political regime in order to force democratic rule, and subsequently also by intensified social tensions between secular and resurgent religious movements. The repression of protests declined rapidly after the exit of Ben Ali but did not disappear completely for a considerable period. Additionally, the first weeks after Ben Ali's exit were marked by clashes between Ben Ali's political police and regular police and armed forces.

- Phase 3: Consolidation. 24 October 2011 - ? This period starts with the election of the Constitutive Assembly. The task of the Constitutive Assembly is to govern the country and draft a new constitution outlining the political future of the country. Though much is still unclear – this report was written in February 2012 – it is clear that a truly democratic regime has not yet been instituted, nor will be for at least the next few years. I have nevertheless decided to call this the “consolidation” phase in order to clearly distinguish it from the pre-23 October 2011 period. It can be argued that the consolidation phase will only start with the implementation of a new constitution and elections for the first democratically chosen parliament. The first election for a “real” parliament and government will probably not take place before 2014.ⁱⁱ

Protests

In this section I follow the periodization as outlined above. For each period I outline the main protests, including an exploration of interaction between relevant actors and the political regime; the influence of previous protests is also discussed. Appendix C presents an overview of all the main protest events, including information on aims, organizers, numbers of protests, duration, and repertoires used. The appendix also provides a more elaborate reference list to (mostly Arabic, but also English and French) newspaper articles covering these protests. Appendix A provides a map of Tunisia as the following account often refers to specific cities. As the Gafsa protests of 2008 are often the first protests that activists allude to, the narrative starts there.

The Gafsa protest, January-June 2008. The inland Gafsa region is famous for its phosphate mines and relative poverty compared to the more urban, coastal areas of the country. The 2008 protests were a reaction to what were perceived as unfair hiring practices by the *Compagnie Phosphate de Gafsa* (CPG) which had allegedly set up a hiring deal with local UGTT representatives. Families that felt disadvantaged took to streets and were quickly supported by local union bodies, the communist PCOT party and its student wing (Chomiak 2011). The protests developed into weekly marches in which thousands participated and – eventually – clashed with police forces. The marches endured and spread throughout the mining region, and the aims of the protest broadened to include social injustice, repression and relative neglect of

the regions by the Ben Ali Regime (Chomiak 2011, 5). With a mixture of repression, concessions and media blockage, the regime successfully contained the protests within the region and eventually, after some six months, repressed them. The Gafsa protests are important, first, because they proved to be one of the first times economic grievances were translated into broader socio-political claims; second, they proved that mobilization could be sustained over a long period; and, third, it was one of the first times that Internet was used to disseminate news blocked from formal news channels, even though the influence of the internet was still limited at the time.ⁱⁱⁱ It also taught people in the region that they could successfully press the government to give in to some of their demands.^{iv}

Though Gafsa was the site of the main uprising in the periphery, and took longest to quell, it was not the only one. In the years preceding the revolution there were other instances where workers started wildcat strikes and where, increasingly, local activists became effective in sustaining mobilization. There were also protests in the mining region in January 2010 for instance.^v Protests existed during this period, they just did not spread beyond the regions in which they originated.

White Shirt protests, 22 May 2010. These challenged Tunisian Internet censorship and attempted to show the absurdity of repression by the Ben Ali regime. It was organized by a few young bloggers. On Facebook the actual event was entitled “*Ce samedi, je m'habille en blanc et je vais prendre un café sur L'avenue*” (“this Saturday I will wear white and go for a coffee on the Avenue Bourghiba”) (as quoted in Chomiak 2011, 6). This was exactly what participants did, around a hundred people showed up in white - and dozens were arrested. But as the event was taped by various people and subsequently put on the Internet (Chomiak 2011; Chomiak and Entelis 2011) the organizers still considered it a success.^{vi} The event had shown the absurdity of the Ben Ali regime, and had for the organizers been a lesson in the power of filming and posting online in terms of creating outrage over authoritarian repression.

Continuing to *the breakdown phase*. I separate this phase into three parts delineated by specific changes in the aims of collective mobilization. The first phase is marked by *protests demanding political reform*, between 17 December and 8 January. These protests were aimed at economic grievances and political reforms, and mainly took place in the periphery. The protests started with the self-immolation of Mohammad Bouazizi.^{vii} The day after he set fire to himself in front of the regional office, the story spread quickly. Family members and sympathizers took to the streets on Friday 17 December 2010 to show their anger in front of the building of the regional government and RCD offices.^{viii} An activist from Sidi Bouzzid recalls:

“So on Friday 17 December we gathered in front of the regional government building: hundreds of unionist and activists. We had a sit-in in front of the government building and stopped traffic, until 8 at night. [...] together with the unemployed; and friends of Bouazzizi – all throwing oranges and other fruit at the regional government building.”^{xix}

Crowds swelled from a few hundred to thousands within a few days. As noted above, there was a strong presence of local unions and opposition parties from the beginning, they aided in the organization of the protests and demands quickly moved to include political reforms that would lead to development and work in the region. Within days the protests had spread to other towns in the Sidi Bouzzid region,^x and to cities in neighboring regions such as Kairouan, Sfax and Ben Guerdane, asking for reforms and better job opportunities.^{xi} They eventually spread to cities like Thrall, al Rageb and Menzel Bouzaiane (Beinin and Vairel 2011, 238).^{xii} Clashes with the police erupted, with one youth killed in the first week, and another person committing suicide as a way to denounce the political situation.^{xiii} Local coordination bodies were formed by activists from opposition parties, student movements and unions, they issued press releases, coordinated action and fine tuned demands,^{xiv} forming an infrastructure to manage and sustain the protests.

With unrest continuing in the periphery, a week later hundreds– mainly union members, opposition figures and students – protested in front of the UGTT building in the capital. The protests intended to show solidarity to the people in Sidi Bouzzid and demanded a stop to heavy police repression of the protests and better work opportunities in the periphery.^{xv} These protests did not at this time develop further into broad-based mobilization within the capital. Demands remained limited to political reforms and improvements in regional economic development. Tellingly, at the protests in front of the UGTT building signs reading “*al-huriya, karama, wataniya*” (Freedom, dignity and nationalism), and “*as-sharal Istihqaq*” (Work is a Right) were put up.^{xvi} None demanded the fall of the regime. The overall picture was of mobilization occurring in the periphery and a regime that was – despite using harsh measures – incapable of effectively repressing it. Although some activists were protesting in solidarity in the capital, the uprising was mostly taking place in the rural periphery.

This all changed in the second period of *protests demanding the fall of Ben Ali*, between 8 January and 14 January – a period of less than a week. On 7 January, heavy clashes broke out between police and protesters in the city of Thalla and around twenty people were killed in two days (although the numbers of protesters killed during the clashes continued to rise in following weeks and months, rising to around 50) (Allal and Geisser 2011). As result of the repression in Thalla, protesters began to demand not just reforms but the fall of the regime.^{xvii} After the clashes, regime forces retreated from Thalla, causing

shock waves through the country as the city was deemed “liberated” and providing encouragement for protests throughout the country.

Additionally, in a main critical turn around, the UGTT publicly voiced their support for the protests and called for a nationwide strike a week later on 14 January 2011. The strike was to be preceded by a general strike in Sousse on Wednesday (12 January) and Sfax on Thursday (13 January).^{xviii} Throughout the preceding week pressure on the capital mounted. For the first time, during the night of 10-11 January 2011, popular street protests and clashes spread from the periphery to the center: hundreds of youths clashed with police forces in Rue de France and other streets close to the central Avenue Bourghiba. Clashes continued and increased in severity up to the 14th. The day itself started peacefully with the general strike paralyzing the country and tens of thousands gathering on Avenue Bourghiba. The protesters were, literally, on the doorstep of the Interior Ministry and pressing their way through police cordons towards the entrance:^{xix}

“there were huge crowds gathered here, at the Avenue Bourghiba, in front of the Ministry of the Interior. And there were lines of police between the ministry and the protesters. People were pushing with increasing strength. [...] Apparently the story had gone around that there was a stand off at the Ministry of the Interior. Some youths came on mopeds, drove through the crowds – and straight into the police. This is when the clashes started. I was standing here [a hundred meters from the ministry] and saw it happening: they were just aiming and shooting straight into the protesters. This is when you realize you can die at any moment. The strange this is, on a day like that, you just don't care.”^{xx}

That evening, earlier than anybody had expected,^{xxi} a formal announcement on television had declared that the president had left the country and would not be allowed to return.^{xxii} In the direct aftermath chaos ruled in the suburbs and city center. Street battles erupted and regular police, army and security forces loyal to Ben Ali fought each other. Dozens of civilians were shot randomly by snipers loyal to the security forces of Ben Ali. It took until the beginning of February for the situation to stabilize and basic security to return^{xxiii} with almost 3000 members of the political police arrested by the army. Despite these arrests, violent clashes continued in the periphery (particularly al-Kef, Gafsa and Qabla) between police and youths aiming to destroy and arson police stations throughout February.^{xxiv}

Within this context of extreme insecurity people continued to go to the streets and *protest, demanding the RCD's removal from political life*. From 20 January onwards increasing amounts of people, up to tens of thousands, would gather at the Ministry of the Interior and the headquarters of the RCD in the capital to demand the removal of RCD ministers from the government and an end to the former ruling party. In other cities too people took to the streets in

protest marches: in Sfax fifty thousand took to the street on the 26th to demand the end of the interim government.^{xxv} When on 28 January 2011 Mohamad Ghannouchi declared a complete reshuffle of the cabinet – removing all RCD ministers except himself – the UGTT declared its support for the new government.^{xxvi} Although many thought Ghannouchi should have stepped down as well, protests dwindled soon after.

With the removal of Ben Ali, we move to the *transition phase*.^{xxvii} After the exit of Ben Ali a wave of mobilization rolled across the country. This wave was highly fragmented: all kinds of specific groups mobilized around (material) grievances: the police wanted increases in their pay, journalists demanded improved media, people protested around the country in front of regional state offices to claim their right to work, (wildcat) strikes demanded higher wages for factory workers, etc. These protests would continue well into the consolidation phase after the elections of 23 October 2011 and continued at the time of writing (February 2012).^{xxviii} The UGTT itself was in disarray for much of this period, rendering any kind of effective management of its local branch organizations limited.

Within this overall context two main protests stand out, *Kasbah II* (mid February 2011) and *III* (mid-July 2011), in addition to two smaller protest events at the beginning of May and the middle of August. *Kasbah II* emerged within a month of Ben Ali's leaving the country. With him, family members and those in the inner circles of power left as well – but the party remained, and many ministers retained their positions in “the government of national unity”. Even after these ministers had been ousted, the government was led by Mohamad Ghanoushi – himself an RCD member. In addition, no date had been set for elections, nor was there clarity over the police killings of citizens during the uprisings, and social forces remained excluded from the reform process. The people were increasingly critical of the way the revolution was proceeding and demanded the removal of Mohamad Ghanoushi and a clear election date.

Most political opposition parties and their leaders (including the at that time still rebuilding Ennahda) joined the protests, as did many human rights activists and well known people from “civil society”. From Sunday 20 February a sit-in began at Kasbah square with groups of protesters arriving from throughout the country and joining the encampment. After Friday prayers on 25 February 2011, around half a million people gathered at the “Kasbah” government square to demand the exit of the government. The following day clashes broke out on the Avenue Bourghiba when protesters attempted to storm the Ministry of the Interior. Violent clashes continued through the afternoon and night and left five people dead. Mohammad Ghanoushi then declared on television that he would not have blood on his hands – and left. He was succeeded by 85 year old (pre-RCD candidates were the only ones suitable and

therefore elderly) Caid el Sebsi, a new government was formed and an election date set.^{xxix} Soon after, the encampment emptied and the protests ended.

The second main event was the Kasbah III protest. Though attempted multiple times after the February Kasbah II events, it was clear that in mid-July an alliance of (youth) NGOs and human rights activists would be able to gather a substantial amount of protesters for a new sit-in at the Kasbah square in order to demand greater for young people in the transition process, accountability for police actions during the uprising and the postponement of the election date to provide parties more time to organize. As the protesters demanded an early election date, Ennahda did not support them, although it quickly accepted the date after the demand was met by the interim prime-minister Caid el Sebsi. Turnout at the protests was limited and dwindled in the weeks after it started. This was the last time that a large common platform was formed to protest against the government – although at this time the protesters had already started to split along party lines.

The two examples above are the main protest events. But ever since the exit of Ben Ali *protests have continued, demanding farther reaching reforms*. Sometimes these have developed into large protests events and/or violent clashes with the police. A main example of this type of mobilization is formed by the protests which followed a declaration by the former Minister of Interior Affairs (mid-May 2011) in which he claimed the military was planning a coup d'etat should the Islamists win the elections. Another example are the protests that emerged in mid-August, when youths took to the streets demanding the political police be dissolved and clashed with police forces.^{xxx} These two events are examples of protests that were not organized by political parties or unions, rather, they were organized by youths in (formal) NGOs or through loose networks – supported by new media. The size of these events was limited, often drawing a few hundred protesters only, but they formed the core of the young mobilized Tunisians that kept up pressure on the government to fully reform and organize free and fair elections.

Another set of protests that emerged, and that gained increasing importance as the revolution became memory and the new post-revolutionary political regime emerged, was the *protests around the cleavage of “seculars” versus “Islamists”*. The main protest in this respect was that against the Nesma television channel after it showed a film about the Iranian revolution (entitled “Persepolis”) in which god is depicted. The film was shown only two weeks before the 23 October elections. In response to the airing of the film, thousands marched on avenue Bourghiba to show their anger at this “insult going to the base of Tunisian religious identity.” More radical Salafi Muslims tried to set fire to the house of the editor in chief of the television channel. Ennahda was not involved in the protests, and did not – as a party – openly support it.^{xxxi} Ennahda members, individually, did. This protest was immediately followed by a protest

by secular minded Tunisians: they protested against an Islamist takeover of politics and society and in particular in defense of women's rights. Organized by leftist political parties and NGOs, they drew considerable crowds, though less than the protests they were a reaction to. These are typical examples of the "Islamist"- "secular" cleavage that gradually became more pervasive in popular protest. Both sides state that the other is authoritarian: seculars by arguing that "Islamists" want to impose Islamic rules on minorities, therefore implying a dictatorship by the majority; and Islamists in their turn claiming that the seculars want to enforce a secularism that is not a natural characteristic of Tunisian society –thereby implying the reincarnation of the social engineering that was so specific to the authoritarian rule of Habib Bourghiba.

The "*consolidation*" phase, it should be mentioned, only started after the electoral victory of Ennahda at the 23 October 2011 elections and the installation of the Constitutive Assembly and its government at the end of December. Therefore, mobilizations and (the importance of) protest events are still unclear. But a few dynamics have come to the fore. First, there have been no more protests in the name of "Tunisians" as such; rather *the Islamist-Secular divide has become pervasive*. Though "moderate" Islamists do not take to the streets, continuing protests are carried out by two groups: Salafists – who argue that the government/Ennahda is not doing enough for Islam – and seculars – who argue they are doing too much. For instance, from November 28th until the beginning of January Salafists blocked the entrance to one of Tunis' largest universities (Manouba), demanding the right to wear the Niqab within the university. Salafi youngsters have started a hunger strike, and – although the entrance has been cleared – they continue their sit-in. A second example on the 28th of January saw a large protest in the center of town that aimed to show the power of secular forces in Tunisia. It was the culmination of various secularly-minded protests (another example is the #occupyBardo protests during the first three weeks of January 2012) that had taken place since the electoral victory of Ennahda.

Another issue is the *continuing strikes*, all over the country, demanding work. These strikes are paralyzing the domestic economy and seem to be frustrating the work of the new government. The new prime-minister went so far as to ask for a six month "time out" from the protesters – just so his government could get the country back on track.^{xxxii} How these protests will develop is still uncertain, but it is clear that it will only be when the new constitution is written and implemented and trust in the democratic characteristics of the new government is entrenched within society that the Tunisian democratization process will end, and – maybe – mobilization in the country will return to "normal" levels.

Structural Conditions

To understand the dynamics of the 2010-2011 uprising we need to consider the historical development of Tunisia since its independence from France in 1956, and how it has developed under its two presidents, Habib Bourghiba (1956-1987) and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali (1987-2011), since then.

The basis of the structural conditions underpinning transition today were laid, as is true in many Arab countries, during the struggle for independence against the French between the early 1930s and the 1950s (Perkins 2004). The independence struggle itself was a relatively peaceful, non-militarized undertaking. This can be explained by the fact that the resources necessary to sustain a long drawn out conflict were not present^{xxxiii} and French incentives to hold on to Tunisia were limited. In comparison to its direct neighbors (Algeria to the west and Libya to the east), for instance, Tunisia is a relatively small country with about ten million inhabitants and, apart from a few phosphate mines, few natural resources.^{xxxiv} In addition, Tunisia has never been as closely integrated in French political structures as its Algerian neighbor. An important practical result of the above for the dynamics of the uprising in 2010-11 was the fact that the armed forces have never played an important role in Tunisian politics or economics, and have remained relatively small compared to other Arab armies.

It was during the struggle for independence that most of the central Tunisian political actors emerged. First was the dominant party in Tunisian politics before the uprising, the *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique* (Constitutional Democratic Rally, or RCD), which was a direct descendant of the neo-Destour movement that led the uprising against the French. In addition, in 1946, the domestic worker's movement (*Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail*) was founded.^{xxxv} The UGTT would become, next to the Neo-Destour, the backbone of the independence struggle (Alexander 2010, 1041–58). In the final years of the struggle the two were closely allied against the French (Perkins 2004, 124). In return for its support the union demanded a key role in post-independence Tunisian political life. In the final years of the independence struggle an internal conflict emerged between more secular progressive parts of the Neo-Destour (led by Habib Bourghiba) and more conservative (and religiously minded) militant groups (led by Saleh Bin Youssef). Bourghiba would prove victorious – in large part because of his allegiance to the (leftist-secularist parts of the) UGTT (Perkins 2004, 124).

This leads us to another issue: Bourghiba's staunch secularist stance. Bourghiba was the type of president that believed he knew the needs of his population, even though the people themselves might not realize those needs just yet. This concerned the position of religion in society particularly. Probably radicalized through his fight with Ben Yussif in the final years of the independence struggle, as soon as he had gained solid power over the state and

party, Bourghiba set out to “educate” “his” people.

In the first few years after independence an elaborate (and successful) policy to reduce the authority of religious elites was implemented, in addition to the drafting and application of one of the most progressive family laws in the Arab world (Halliday 1990; Esposito and Voll 2001). At the same time, Bourghiba successfully silenced the opposition with a mixture of repression and broad-based clientelism, institutionalized through his neo-Destour party. As a consequence, Tunisia developed as a secular country into the late 1970s (although society was generally actually more conservatively-minded), and clientelistic networks permeated various socio-political groups and layers of society.

Bourghiba's later tenure was marked by two struggles that developed these structural factors further. There was a continuing struggle with labor and student movements, mainly embodied by the UGTT. As politics stabilized and Bourghiba pulled more political power towards himself, the UGTT demanded more of a say in economic policy setting. Bourghiba reacted by out-manoeuvring and subsequently co-opting the union – rendering it a mouthpiece of his regime. Rather than having socialist policies defining the country's economics, Bourghiba used the UGTT as his main organization to silence leftist mobilization against his increasingly authoritarian rule (Perkins 2004). Although these strategies were generally successful, the UGTT remained the primary structure for organizing discontent and would, in a few instances, awaken from its co-optation induced lethargic state following popular pressure from the rank and file. One of these instances was in the late 1970s, when deteriorating economic conditions led to a nationwide strike and protests on 26 January 1978. Hundreds of protesters were killed by the police. As a direct response, however, some political liberalization was initiated, including the legalization of a number of leftist opposition parties. But liberalization was quickly reversed as it emerged that the ruling party might lose in subsequent elections. These brief political liberalizations were of importance in another unexpected way: they uncovered a new, previously underestimated, Islamist political movement in the country (Perkins 2004).

The second struggle was against the Tunisian Islamists, and specifically against the Movement of Islamic Tendency founded by Rashd Ghanoushi (b. 1941) and Abdalfatah Mourou (b. 1948). Inspired by both the Islamic revolution in Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (Esposito and Voll 2001), they opposed increasing secularization under Bourghiba. The movement started as a small Islamic learning group that developed into a popular Islamist *dawa*^{xxxvi} movement and subsequently into a political Islamist one. Not without reason, Bourghiba began to view the Islamists as his prime opponents (Esposito and Voll 2001) and his stance towards them became progressively more hostile

(Waltz 1986). His rule ended as a direct consequence of his attempt to have Islamist leaders, including Rashd Ghanoushi, tried and executed in 1987. Playing on his deteriorating mental state, he was declared unfit to exercise his duties by interior minister and head of the political police Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who subsequently took over his position (Noyon 2003).

Ben Ali's rule differed in a few important ways from Bourghiba's (Alexander 2010, 1530–49). Whereas Bourghiba always stressed the importance of national unity in “democratic” Tunisia, and used this “unity” to legitimize his authoritarian rule, Ben Ali stressed the virtues of liberal democracy, only to change the rules of the game whenever the rule of the (newly named) RCD was threatened. For the Islamist movement Ben Ali brought, initially, hope for democratization and an opening up of the political sphere (Alexander 1997). Political liberalization was initiated and many opposition parties became more publicly active – including the Movement of Islamic Tendency. The party adopted its current “non-Islamic” name Harakat Ennahda (the Renaissance Movement)^{xxxvii} in February 1987 to appease the government and attempt to gain formal recognition. Ben Ali failed to formally recognize the party however, and Ennahda politicians participated in elections as independents (Allani 2009, 263). After Ennahda candidates saw a strong showing in the elections of 1989, Ben Ali backtracked on political liberalization and, between 1989 and 1992, had thousands of Islamists arrested. The principle leader of the Ennahda movement, Rashd Ghanoushi, was forced to live in exile (Esposito and Voll 2001).^{xxxviii} Despite this repression the informal network at the base of the *dawa'* movement remained, proving impossible to root out completely.

As the years progressed, Ben Ali's rule gradually became more blatantly authoritarian. The secular opposition was forced either into irrelevance or to play by Ben Ali's rules, hoping for some influence through the pluralism his democratic discourse provided (Alexander 2010). As the Ministry of the Interior and its political police became more powerful, these options became increasingly narrow. The unions were either co-opted or disbanded, the elite opposition harassed or forced into exile. Additionally, the traditional endemic clientelism of the RCD continued alongside economic liberalization in the 1990s and 2000s and the increasing concentration of political and economic power in family members of the president (the Economist 2011). This rendered Ben Ali's rule much more “family-based” than Bourghiba's had ever been. The practical result was that the ruling family, the RCD party structure, state organizations (specifically the Ministry of the Interior) and economic structures became increasingly interconnected. It seemed that in a context of a worsening political climate these political-economic networks provided the regime with the political alliances necessary to stabilize its rule (Hibou 2004; Hibou 2006; Heydemann 2004). Where public discontent emerged at the periphery, a mixture

of repression and co-optation was applied – local activists were bought off and protests forcefully dispersed, all combined with media blackouts to prevent unrest from spreading to other areas.

Arguably crucially, the last few years before the uprising saw the adoption of Internet, blogs and social media by (young) parts of society. As in any other country, the introduction of these new channels for sharing information altered the media landscape considerably. It became much easier for regular citizens to spread images and news to others and pass them to mainstream media. This posed some challenges in imposing media blackouts – an important tool in containing protest. Although there are technologies available for the effective control and supervision of blogs and sites such as Facebook, the Tunisian regime seemed not to have adopted them. As a result, it resorted to draconian measures in its reaction to these new challenges. For instance, in 2010 it shut down Facebook altogether – which led to international outcry and a quick reversal. Summarizing all of the above, the structural context on the eve of the uprising was marked by:

- a concentration of political and economic power in the family of Ben Ali in a context of a close integration of the ruling RCD party with state and economic elites. Concerning formal state institutions, the Ministry of the Interior (and its political police) lay at the center of institutionalized power. The army was historically small and kept so due to fears of a coup d'état.
- The Tunisian economy was well developed in comparison to its Arab neighbors, though corruption and clientelism meant the economy and politics became increasingly intertwined and centrally focused. Development at the periphery was also lacking in the main cities near the coast. Income disparities were rising fast. In addition, strong labor organizations (and many of their branches) were present, though co-opted by the regime.
- Social policies had resulted in an outwardly strong secularly-minded society, with one of the lowest birth rates of the region, the highest levels of education, and progressive family law. Domestically, a conservative element in society was forcefully kept in check. Islamists were prevented from formal institutionalization through severe repression, but it was clear that a movement remained present. Since the early 2000s, Salafism had begun to emerge.
- Developments in information and communication technology were changing the domestic media landscape, facilitating information sharing between individual citizens and (traditional) mass media outlets.

Following the departure of Ben Ali, two interim governments succeeded one

another before elections to the Constitutive Assembly. First, directly after Ben Ali's exit, his prime-minister Mohamed Ghannouchi (not to be confused with the unrelated Rashd Ghannouchi, the leader of the Islamist Ennahda party) took over political power and formed a government of national unity – inviting numerous opposition figures to take part. Exiled opposition figures were told they could return to Tunisia; the repression of protests decreased considerably; the UGTT became much more independent, and political liberalization was (said to be) initiated. At the same time, a number of powerful RCD ministers remained in government (though they were removed in a government reshuffle at the end of January). The party itself was still functioning, no political police were brought to justice and – crucially – no date was set for elections. Not surprisingly, many Tunisians were not at all certain of the true nature of the reforms initiated.

A second government was formed after continued protests on 25 February 2011. It was led by 85-year old Beji Caid el Sebsi. No RCD members took part in this interim-government and the electoral law was amended so that members of the interim government were barred from participating in the elections for a *majlas ta'sisi* (Constitutive Assembly) that would draft a new constitution, call fresh elections and govern the country in the meantime. An initial date was set for the elections: 24 July 2011.^{xxxix} This was later postponed to give new parties more time to prepare and organize for the elections. In addition, the political police was disbanded, the power of the interior ministry checked through institutional reforms and, finally, the RCD party was banned by court order on 9 March 2011.

The elections of 23 October 2011 were overall seen as a success. The government is now led by a troika of the Islamist Ennahda, the centrist CPR and the leftist Attakatol. The prime minister, Hamadi Jabali, is from Ennahda, the President, Moncef Marzouki, is from the CPR and the president of the Constitutive Assembly is Mustapha Bin Jaafar, from Ettakatol.^{xl} No formal time limit for the process of drafting the constitution and calling subsequent elections has been set. Hamadi Jabali stated on 3 February 2012 that the government aimed to hold fresh elections within 18 months.^{xli}

Contingent Political Opportunities

Considering political opportunities in the traditional sense – that is party alliances, divisions in political elites, the emergence of potential allies within the political sphere, and elections contested – there were no real shifts to speak of during Ben Ali's tenure and the political sphere remained closed off to (the influence of) movements within society. This was true both before and during the uprising. It is obvious that just before 14 January 2011 Ben Ali was increasingly perceived as a liability by his close advisors and therefore advised to leave the country for a few days while the domestic situation calmed down.

After he left, the government issued a formal statement that he would not return. But this internal dissent only became known publicly months after his removal. In addition, there were no (plans for) reform projects, nor was there any substantial foreign pressure that created a critical space for dissent in the months leading up to December 2010. As such, there were no (perceived) political opportunities for collective mobilization (of any type) in the traditional sense before 14 January 2011.

Nevertheless, we may say - in a less traditional sense - that three dynamics were at the basis of perceived opportunities for popular protest in the years leading up to the uprising. The first was the learning process in which opposition figures began to cooperate with (wildcat) strikers and protesters at the periphery, and the realization that these types of cooperation could be successful in sustaining popular mobilization. Second, the logic followed by domestic political/state elites in engaging with protests was not to repress them at their start, but often to buy them off at their end. This type of “carrot” tactic taught activists they could go onto the streets, get away with it, and gain some government concessions. Third, because of a changing media landscape, news about protests spread faster and became increasingly uncensored. Also related to this, activists understood that when protests happened in one town, the protesters could be helped by taking to the streets in a neighboring town: this forced the police to spread out over a larger region. As such, it can be said that the combination of increased cooperation between unionists and (human rights) activists, the perception of a regionally weakened repression and a changing media landscape proved the basis on which the uprising was built.

As the protests started in Sidi Bouzzid, they quickly spread to cities in the surrounding area. With the (political) police as the only effective tool for repressing collective contentious mobilizations, the police forces were soon overwhelmed by the extent and geographic spread of the protests: they could not be everywhere at once. With the army remaining on the sidelines, this gave protesters the possibility to continue and concurrently strengthened the perception that they were powerful enough to face the regime. When police forces retreated from Thalla on 8 January 2011 following heavy clashes, this was perceived as a direct victory for the protesters over the police and Ben Ali's regime and sent shockwaves through the country. The 14th was set as a national strike. As the 14th approached and the police forces had to focus all their strength on the capital – thereby effectively retreating from most other towns in the countryside – it was a clear sign for many that the regime was on the verge of collapse, which fanned protests even more. Interestingly, on 11 January 2011 the army moved into the capital at night in what later proved to be an attempt to secure state buildings. That night, many thought that that a *coup d'etat* had taken place and that the army had taken over.^{xliii} Although these rumors proved to be false, it was the first time that non-mobilized citizens dared to contemplate an end to Ben Ali's rule – making it a key event in the perception of opportunity

among ordinary Tunisians.

As the day of the general strike drew closer the police forces were seen as obviously incapable of repressing mobilization and the army remained on the sidelines. More and more people thus saw an opportunity and seized it. The turnout on the 14th of January was overwhelming and marked the end of Ben Ali's rule.

With the exit of Ben Ali a period of political turmoil began. Throughout this period there were so many changes within the political sphere that specific configurations of political actors remained obscure. The general perception was that many within the Ministry of the Interior attempted to salvage as much power as they could. In the end they failed, in large part due to continuing mobilizations pressuring for reforms. It was unclear (and many were skeptical) to what extent the Ghannouchi government constituted a real break from Ben Ali and RCD rule. The government attempted to include some opposition figures in the government, but many quit after a number of weeks, disillusioned. Others never joined in the first place. The revolution therefore brought about a complete opening of opportunities on one side, in that repression decreased and the political sphere was completely open, and on the other in that the ensuing chaos meant that particular *configurations* within the political sphere had no influence –they were simply invisible and unknown to the wider public to a great extent. What changed in the second interim government (under the leadership of Beji Caid el Sebsi) was that the RCD and the Ministry of the Interior (both considered by many as bastions of “anti-revolutionary forces”) were considerably weakened. In combination with the law that established that none of the ministers of the interim government would be allowed to run in the elections, this meant that overall skepticism over the reform process decreased and the particular configurations of actors did not influence mobilization.

In the October 23 Constitutive Assembly elections, Ennahda won 89 out of 217 seats; the centrist Congress for the Republic (*Congrès pour la République* or CPR) won 29, the leftist Ettakatol^{xliii} 20, Chebi's Progressive Democratic Party (or PDP) 16, and the Popular petition party - a populist Islamist party that was completely unknown before the elections - won 26 seats. The umbrella party for the traditional (strongly secular) opposition movements, the Democratic Modernist Pole (*Pôle démocratique moderniste* or PDM), won only 5 seats and the Tunisian Workers' Communist Party (*Parti communiste des ouvriers de Tunisie*, or PCOT) only 3. Both are historically important opposition parties in Tunisia. The rest of the seats were shared among smaller parties.^{xliv} What the installment of the newly elected government (and with it the representation of multiple, democratically chosen parties in the Constitutive Assembly) will mean for mobilization on the ground remains to be seen.

Actors in transition: Elites.

The most relevant actors are discussed in chronological order following the various stages of the uprising and focusing on their (changing) positions and strategies vis-à-vis the latter.

The political clique of Ben Ali. This is not, as such, the ruling RCD but rather the group around the president (and most crucially Ben Ali himself) that had meaningful influence over decision making processes before the revolution. Ben Ali's position changed throughout the uprising from outright defiance to a much more conciliatory stance, giving a voice to these political elites. In three televised speeches throughout the uprising this change was clearly observable. In his last address he stated (in Tunisian dialect) that he was the only one that "knew the needs of the Tunisian people" and thereby implied he was the only viable choice to lead the country. The speech was overall perceived as a show of weakness and helped to fan protests. As the uprising developed, increasing pressure was placed on the position of the president. Though no schisms appeared visible within relevant elites, a common understanding that the position of the president was at risk must have grown. He was asked to leave the country temporarily for his own safety, and thereafter not given the possibility to return.

The Tunisian Army and General Rachid Ammar. As described before, the Tunisian army is a professional body, relatively small, and holds no large economic interests in the country. When protests reached the capital and army units took up positions at government buildings, Ben Ali ordered the army to repress the protests, an order which General Rachid Ammar subsequently refused.^{xlv} What might have played a role here is the fact that relations between the army and the Ben Ali regime had been strained since top army generals had died in a helicopter crash in 2002. Regime involvement in the crash was suspected. Rachid Ammar's refusal made Ben Ali's presidency unsustainable. Typically, almost immediately after the formal declaration that Ben Ali would not return, the army confirmed its support for the new government and stated it would follow any order the new government gave.^{xlvi} In the months after 14 January 2011 the army was crucial in maintaining a reasonable level of safety in the country, as the police apparatus stopped functioning. The force has always maintained an apolitical stance and refrained from intervening in politics.

The Tunisian General Labor Union (in French: Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail or UGTT). Although formally a representation of workers' movements in society, the UGTT had been so closely intertwined with the political regime that it is described here as an elite actor. It is the umbrella organization for all labor unions in the country, although local branches were not as well integrated within the UGTT as was generally expected. When protests occurred in the periphery it was local human rights organizations and trades unions that formed the basic institutional structure upon which protests

were sustained and spread – independently of the UGTT umbrella organization. This entails that the co-optation of unions by the political regime was only achieved to a limited degree in the various regions (Allal and Geisser 2011). A senior Tunisian analyst, Abdal Jalil Tamimi, stated in an interview with the author that:

“The problem was [...] that the union could not move freely. Its room for maneuver was limited and it could not trespass these limits. The union's influence was limited, and therefore the power of the union against the regime weak. But this concerns the central union. When we consider the branches of the union things are different. The branches in the region had some independence. Because unionists in the regions were close to the people, they knew what was truth and what were lies. It made them crucial in mobilization. For instance, the uprising in Sfax – at the start of the revolution – did not come from the UGTT. 50.000 people were there. Who organized them? The local union in Sfax.”^{xlvii}

In the first three weeks of the uprising, the UGTT kept a low profile and did not release any statements either on the protests or on the violence in Sidi Bouzzid and other regions. This changed around 8 January when violence and popular protests escalated. At this point the rank and file within the organizations pressured the union to take a stance and called for a general strike on January 14th 2011. This would prove to be the day that the regime around Ben Ali collapsed. Following the collapse of the regime the union maintained a critical stance vis-à-vis the interim government of Mohammad Ghanoushi, and was one of the key organizers of the Kasbah II protests that led to the fall of Ghannoushi and the installment of the Sebsi government. The UGTT subsequently supported the new government and remained, thereafter, quiescent. This relative quiescence can be explained by internal turmoil that followed the uprising. In addition many activists started electoral lists for the Constitutive Assembly elections, and therefore left the UGTT. The internal turmoil was only resolved with new internal elections at the beginning of 2012.

Notably, *many types of elites were also absent* during the protests. Religious leaders, for example, were completely absent, as were mosques (and other religious institutions) as a framework for structuring and managing mobilization during the uprising. This was in part due to the fact that the Tunisian religious sphere is relatively weak. Another reason is that elites from Islamist movements were either still in prison or opted to remain silent – for fear of tainting the uprising with an “Islamist” brush and thereby fragmenting mobilization. Concerning more general, intellectual elites, many voiced their support for the uprising – either from abroad or domestically – but all refused to become “leaders” of the movement or influence public discourse in any crucial way. The uprising had an explicit and public “leaderless” character.

After the elections, in what I have dubbed the “*consolidation*” phase, the strength of political parties – and with them social movements – in society became clearer. Islamism returned as the main force in elite politics, as did multiple secular parties; most notably the CPR and attakatol. This has also meant that new elites—among them new Islamist and secular elites--are emerging. Concerning the Islamists, this emergence holds both in the sense of key politicians, like the prime-minister Hamadi Jabali; and religious leaders, like the scholars at the Zeytuna university, who are becoming part of a newly emerging socio-political elite group. Likewise, some previously well known opposition figures are gaining a central position in either politics or the public sphere. The main examples here are Yadh Ben Achour, head of the constitutional drafting committee, Hama Hammami, head of the communist party, and Najib Chebbi, one of the leaders of the largest opposition parties, the PDP. But this process is still in its infancy, and therefore the influence on mobilization is hard to predict.

Actors in transition: Civil Society

Before and during the *breakdown* phase three movements were particularly important: the Tunisian labor movement, the student movement and the democratization/human rights movement. Religious (e.g. Islamists) movements were present but not (able to) publicly mobilize and did not therefore play a significant role.

Labor movement. As described earlier, the Tunisian labor movement’s history dates back to before independence. It is embodied in a union structure that is present throughout the country at local, regional and national levels. There are unions for all types of professions (the most active are the lawyers’ and teachers’ unions) and the main umbrella organization is the UGTT.^{xlvi} The extent to which the UGTT controls its local branches outside the capital proved limited when popular protests emerged in the years leading up to the 2010-11 uprising. Therefore, local union groups acted independently from their umbrella organization. The practical result of this was that the labor movement in the periphery provided activists with the necessary structures to sustain mobilization. Before the 2010-2011 uprising (for instance in Gafsa in 2008) these local unions had already been critical in terms of translating direct material grievances (related to unemployment and regional underdevelopment) to more political demands for reform and better regional (economic) development. The influence of the labor movement can also be seen in the central role of strikes in mobilization: not only in the final days of the uprising – after the UGTT had voiced its support – but also in its first weeks when mobilization was still mainly focused in the periphery.

Student movement. Like the labor movement, the student movement has a long history in Tunisia. Activism within universities has always been present in

the country: this is even true of secondary (and in extreme cases even primary) schools. Student bodies within the universities represent these movements. With student movements so powerful in the country it is not surprising that the end of the Christmas holidays marked an escalation in protests. Subsequently Ben Ali shut the schools down. As such, it was schools and universities – rather than mosques as seen in subsequent uprisings in the Arab world – that provided an important infrastructural basis for mobilization. The preferred modes of protest were marches and sit-ins (at universities and schools). The framings of protests seemed to follow those of the labor movement.

It is clear that the revolution in Tunisia was built on a youth revolt: it was mainly young people that took to the streets in protest. But the student movement was not, as such, at the basis of this mobilization. The initial uprising was built with the participation of youths that had already graduated but not entered professional life – high youth unemployment being considerably high in Tunisia. Therefore these people did not belong to college or university life. This forms part of the explanation of why the uprising started in the countryside and not the cities. In the periphery, youth unemployment is high. At the same time there are neither universities nor other educational centers--meaning that the student movement is weak. What did happen, however, was that as the mobilization developed the student movement played a crucial role in building mobilization in the larger cities: it was in the universities that many protests were initiated.

Democratization/Human Rights Movements. Human rights activists have long been present in the country, and many human rights organizations existed under the rule of Ben Ali. More specifically, Tunisia counts the Tunisian League of Human Rights (Ligue Tunisienne de Droits de l'Homme or LTDH), the first human rights organization in the Arab world (Perkins 2004, 165). Under the previous regime possibilities for action by these organizations was either heavily restricted or they were effectively co-opted and served as legitimization for the Ben Ali regime. However, as was the case with union activists, human rights activists in the regions participated in and provided structure to popular mobilization almost immediately after its emergence. As such, though silenced under Ben Ali and incapable of initiating protests, they did provide crucial structures when protests erupted.

More generally, activists from these three movements provided the institutional structure for the uprising to sustain itself and spread to other regions during the breakdown phase. Practically, this happened through the founding of local councils in which activists from various movements worked together to disseminate information, plan strikes and organize marches. For instance, within a week of the start of the uprising in Sidi Bouzzid, “a citizens' council” was formed in which both unionists and human rights activists participated.^{xlix} This type of rapid coordination would probably not have been

possible without the experience acquired during the uprisings of previous years: for instance in Gafsa in 2008. Local activists were experienced in building up cross-movement relations to channel, co-ordinate and sustain popular discontent. After 14 January 2011, these councils, the results of this type of cross-movement coordination, were transformed into “councils for safeguarding the revolution”.

During the *transition phase*, the main change concerning civil society actors was the (re)mobilization of various Islamist movements. A few of these movements that form the more obvious examples are representations of movements present in the wider Arab world. For instance, *Hizb al-Tahrir* (the Liberation party, or HuT) is part of a global movement aimed at the reinstatement of the Islamic caliphate.^l Despite some early successes in staging protests, it seems that their following in Tunisia remains limited, and they failed to gain formal recognition as a political party.^{li}

A second family of Islamist movements is the *Salafists*. Compared to other Arab countries, Salafism is a relatively new phenomenon in Tunisia: it emerged in the early 2000s in the context of the American invasion of Iraq. After 2006 they were subject to widespread arrests (Allani 2009) and the most active Salafists were imprisoned during the uprising, and only released in the months following the revolution. Despite their relative weakness^{lii} they have been increasingly visible in public life and, more specifically, in protests. They generally build on very fluid and informal networks, after the revolution specific mosques were “taken over” by Salafist movements and now constitute an important node within the infrastructure of the movement. Within Tunisia they have mainly mobilized around issues concerning the freedom of religion (being allowed to wear a Hijab to university for instance) and in reaction to perceived attacks against the Islamic basis of Tunisian identity and public life (for instance when the television channel Nesma showed Persepolis, see above). General repertoires include marches, public prayers, sit-ins and – occasionally – arson attempts.

The two movements described above have clear collective identities and can be considered examples of Islamist social movements. The majority, however, are far less clearly defined. It is a form of *mobilized public religion*: collective social mobilization on the basis of a national religious identity. There are large groups within Tunisia that wish to change the social and political context and collectively mobilize against a “secular” enemy. At the same time, however, they do not identify with either HuT or the Salafists. Many were part of the Ennahda *dawa'* movement in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s or are, through family relations, linked to it. Ennahda's transformation into a political party has not removed its institutional structure, nor its collective identity, upon which its *dawa'* movement may continue more publicly. It thereby created a

relative void in societal Islamist mobilization. How this relative “void” will develop in the future remains unclear. It is a movement, or family of movements, that is in the process of (re)defining itself.

As the transition phase becomes *the “consolidation” phase* following elections, a new (political) elite is in the process of emerging and influencing mobilization dynamics on the ground. With the Islamist Ennahda in power, general Islamist mobilization has been pushed into the background while secular and Salafist mobilization has risen.

What is clear is that the common enemy of the Ben Ali regime, which brought together the student, labor and democratization movements, has disappeared. The major cleavage now is between Islamists on the one side, and secular actors on the other. Though secular activists often presume that “they” owned the uprising – and therefore were the mainstay of the mobilization forces of the revolution – this does not seem to hold true as they failed to draw significant amounts of people to the streets in defense of secularism. A more accurate assessment is probably that popular discontent was structured by these movements, rather than represented by them.

Conclusion

The report has provided a detailed overview of the historical and structural background of the Tunisian uprising of 2011 and subsequent political changes. In the preceding pages I have discussed the resulting (political) opportunities for social mobilization, provided an overview of key actors and given a detailed overview of the actual protest events that took place throughout the period. I hope it is clear that existing student, labor and “democratization” movements in Tunisia did not initiate protests, but did provide crucial existing structures for protests to endure and spread. The movements themselves were therefore not at the inception of the uprising, but were crucial in shaping it. This dynamic was only possible because of experience gained during earlier periods of collective mobilization in which these movements had interacted for short term mobilization around specific material grievances. Second, I hope that the empirical overview has made it clear that so-called “political opportunity structures” were completely closed at the time of the uprising (therefore, changes in the constellation of political actors seem to have had little influence on the timing of the uprising), but that the subsequent opening of these structures led to a plethora of (re)mobilizing movements (actually showing that changes in political context were important, in that they influenced mobilization dynamics after January 14th 2011).

What the future will hold for Tunisia remains, of course, unknown. Social cleavages between secular and Islamist groups in society seem to be gaining

salience and dominating mobilization in the country; the future position of the workers movement (and the UGTT) vis-à-vis the political sphere is still an open question; the drafting process of the new constitution has just started and its outcome is still largely unknown. It is these issues, and many others, that will define how mobilization in Tunisia will develop in the coming years.

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Appendix A: Map Tunisia^{liii}



Appendix B: Newspapers and news sites used.

International Newspapers

- New York times /International herald Tribune (English and French)
- France 24 (English and French)
- Al Hayat (Arabic, international)
- As-Sharq al-Awsat (Arabic, international)

Tunisian Political (weekly) newspapers

- al Mawqif. (Arabic, Tunisian, PDP)
- Al tariq al-jadid (<http://attariq.org>) (Arabic, Tunisian, al-tajdid)
- Al-Fajr (Arabic, Tunisian, Ennahda) NB: restarted in March 2011.

Extra sources

- Aljazeera (english and arabic)
- Al-Arabia (english and arabic)
- as-Sabah (Arabic, Tunisian, State (Saher Matri))
- As-Sarih (Arabic, Tunisian)
- Ach chourouq (Arabic, Tunisian, State)
- La Presse (French, Tunisian, State)
- Al-Mouatin

Useful Electronic Sources

- UGTT website: ugtt.org.tn (only Arabic at time of writing, French and English parts of the website “under construction”.)
- www.turess.com (French and Arabic Tunisian press, mostly (formerly) state related.)
- <http://nahdha.info/arabe/index.php> (Arabic)
- www.tunisia-live.net

Appendix C: Table of protests Beginning 2008 – End 2011

The table below notes the main protest events that occurred in the period under review. It aims to provide a general overview of the key protests (in the general perceptions of Tunisians) and to be used as a possible starting point for a more representative (and thorough) event analysis of Tunisian protests during this period.

Name	Date / duration	Cities	Aim	# protesters	Forms/repertoires	Actors organizing
Gafsa mining protests ^{liv}	Start period: Jan-Feb 2008. End: June 2008. ^{lv}	Gafsa, Redeyef, ^{lvi} Gabes.	From unfair hiring to general economic grievances. ^{lvii}	Thousands, estimates up to twenty thousand. ^{lviii}	Protest marches. ^{lix}	“street-based”, later: workers, local teachers’ union?, PCOT. ^{lx}
Tunesie en Blanc ^{lxi}	22 May 2010 ^{lxii}	Tunis ^{lxiii}	Against Internet censorship ^{lxiv}	A few hundred, max. one thousand. ^{lxv}	Limited street protest, wearing white and walking in the main boulevard ^{lxvi}	young bloggers ^{lxvii}
2010-2011 “Revolution”	18 December – 7 January 2011 ^{lxviii}	Sidi Bouzzid ^{lxix} Bin Gardane, Sfax, Kairouan, Kasserine, Bin Arous ^{lxx} → Thalla. ^{lxxi} Also, to a limited extent, in the capital. ^{lxxii}	Unemployment, ^{lxxiii} later, and mostly claimed by unions, human rights and political reforms. ^{lxxiv}	At the start hundreds, ^{lxxv} increasing to thousands, ^{lxxvi} up to hundreds of thousands. ^{lxxvii} Protests in the capital: around 500.	Protest marches and strikes. ^{lxxviii} Additionally: arson, ^{lxxix} suicides ^{lxxx} towards the 7 th : a few sit-ins. ^{lxxxi}	Emerged spontaneously, but within days: (local) unions, ^{lxxxii} HR activists and (high school) political parties, ^{lxxxiii} students. ^{lxxxiv}
	8 January – 14 January 2011 ^{lxxxv}	Cities around the country, including the capital. ^{lxxxvi}	As previous protests, but in addition: regime change. ^{lxxxvii}	In the capital from hundreds ^{lxxxviii} to tens of thousands on 14 January. ^{lxxxix}	Protest marches, ^{xc} strikes. ^{xcii} Also: throwing stones at police, looting, arson of RCD offices. ^{xcii}	Various unions and the UGTT (national Union), ^{xciii} students (high schools and universities) ^{xciv}

	15 - (+/-) 29 January. ^{xcv} Protests continued, but from this day became less frequent and smaller. ^{xcvi}	Focused in the capital,, specifically at the Ministry of the Interior and RCD Headquarters. ^{xcvii} Also in multiple other cities (Tataouine, alMehdia, Kasarine, Sfax, Sidi Bouzzid), ^{xcviii} Thousands from rural regions traveled to the capital in a “freedom caravan”. ^{xcix}	Demanding the fall of the “Unity government”, a new constitution and complete cut with RCD past by removing RCD ministers from government. ^c	Tens of thousands, 50 thousand in Sfax. ^{ci}	Protest marches, ^{cii} strikes (schools on first day they reopened..). ^{ciii}	(Doctors’, lawyers’, teachers’) unions, “civil society”, political opposition parties. ^{civ} After RCD ministers were removed from government, UGTT supported the government and protests dwindled. ^{cv}
Kasbah II	19 - 26 February 2011. ^{cv}	In Tunis, people from Medenine, Gafsa, al-Kef, Kasserine, etc. ^{cvii}	Elections, new constitution, fall of government. ^{cviii}	Starting at hundreds, ^{ci} to tens of thousands, ^{cx} later: 500.000 ^{cx} , estimates up to a million. ^{cxii}	Sit ins, ^{cxiii} protest marches ^{cxiv} later also riots and attempts at storming (interior) ministries. ^{cxv}	PCOT active, as other human rights activists, not the UGTT. ^{cxvi}
Kasbah III	15 July 2011. ^{cxvii}	From around the country, going to the government (Kasbah) Square in the capital. ^{cxviii}	7 demands in total, ^{cxix} among which: resignation of minister of justice and minister of the interior, independence of judges, 23 October as date of elections . ^{cxx}	700, quickly dispersed by police. ^{cxxi}	Protest and sit-in in front of prime-ministerial building. ^{cxii}	Coalition of youth NGOs, human rights activists. ^{cxiii}
Anti-Nesma, Islamists protests	9 and 14 October. ^{cxxiv} Reaction – protest for free expression on 16October. ^{cxxv}	Tunis (Kasbah) ^{cxxvi} and cities around the country. ^{cxxvii}	Closing the Nesma channel for showing Persepolis on 7 October. ^{cxxviii}	First day (9 October) 300, ^{cxxix} later thousands. ^{cx}	Marches, ^{cx} arson ^{cxii}	0

Salafi Manouba Islamist protests.	From 28 November → ongoing? ^{cxxxiii}	Tunis, University of Manouba. ^{cxxxiv} Similar protests earlier in Souse.	The right to wear a Niqab at the university. ^{cxxxv}	A few dozen. ^{cxxxvi}	Sit in, barring students from entering the university. ^{cxxxvii}	Via mosques, informal networks? ^{cxxxviii}
Secular mass protest	28 November. ^{cxxxix}	Tunis, avenue Bourghiba. ^{cxl}	Defending freedom and against violence and (religious) extremism. ^{cxli}	8-10 thousand ^{cxlii}	Marches. ^{cxliii}	Unions, leftists. ^{cxliv}

Some protests that did not make it into the overview:

1. (15 February 2011) The first Islamist protests.^{cxlv}
2. (20 February 2011) In defense of secularism.^{cxlvi}
3. (1 April 2011) Sit-in to demand the release of the police woman who slapped bouazizi.^{cxlvii}
4. (17 April 2011) RCD people protesting because they were politically excluded.^{cxlviii}
5. (5-12 May 2011) Protests after the former minister of the Interior said there would be a military coup if the Islamists won the elections.^{cxlix}
6. (9 May 2011) Protests by journalists against continuing state frustration of independent news gathering.^{cl}
7. (29 June 2011) Salafists demanding the release of prisoners.^{cli}
8. (18 July) General strike after a 14 year old girl was killed in post-Kasbah III clashes.^{clii}
9. (13 August 2011) pPro-women's rights protests demanding equality in inheritance (anniversary of the personal status code).
- 10.(15 August 2011) Outbursts of violence "just to have them remember".^{cliii}
- 11.(7 September 2011) Police union on strike...^{cliv}
- 12.(3 November 2011, 1 December 2011 → for weeks) #occupy Bardo. In defense of Secularism after Ennahda's electoral victory.^{clv}

- i France 24. “Protester Who Set Himself on Fire Has Died, Says NGO - TUNISIA - FRANCE 24”, January 5, 2011. <http://www.france24.com/en/20110105-protestor-who-set-himself-fire-has-died-says-brother>.
- ii See the statement by prime-minister Jabali in February 2012.
- iii As in the testimony of Slim Amamou at Tamimi Center, Tunis (Tunisia), 5 November 2011.
- iv Interview with 'Alim from Sidi Bouzzid, Tunis (Tunisia), 15 March 2011.
- v During these years, very little was written in the international press about these events and (of course) nothing was written in domestic newspapers. This leaves opposition newspapers, of which very few have a good (online) archive. Interview with a trade unionist from Sidi Bouzzid, Tunis (Tunisia), 15 March 2011.
- vi As in the testimony of Slim Amamou at Tamimi Center, Tunis (Tunisia), 5 November 2011.
- vii Attariq Aljadid, 25-31 Dec 2010, p.4.
- viii Attariq Aljadid, 1-7 jan. p4.
- ix Interview with a trade unionist from Sidi Bouzzid, Tunis (Tunisia), 15 March 2011. [17:00 → 18:25]
- x al-Hayat. “Dar Al Hayat - تونس: استمرار المواجهة في سيدي بوزيد وامتداد التظاهرات إلى مناطق جديدة”, December 27, 2010. <http://www.daralhayat.com/internationalarticle/217045>.
- xi al-Jazeera. “Tunisia Struggles to End Protests - Africa - Al Jazeera English”, December 29, 2010. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2010/12/20101229122733122341.html>.
- xii Al-tariq, 1-7 jan 2011, p4.; Also, according to the BBC the number of self-immolations had risen fivefold since the uprising to 107 cases over the last year. See: BBC. “BBC News - Tunisia One Year on: New Trend of Self-immolations”, January 12, 2012. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-16526462>.
- xiii In the first week alone there were multiple instances of individuals – and at one point a mother with two children – who attempted suicide by throwing themselves into electricity wires. The woman failed as the electricity was cut by the authorities: France 24. “مظاهرة في العاصمة إثر سقوط قتيل في اشتباكات مع الشرطة قرب سيدي بوزيد - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya”, December 24, 2010. <http://www.france24.com/ar/20101224-sidi-bouzzid-tunisia-suicide-menzel-bouzaiane-dead-clashes-police>.
- xiv Attariq Aljadid, 25-31 Dec 2010, p6
- xv Attariq Aljadid, 1-7 jan.
- xvi France 24. “مظاهرة في العاصمة إثر سقوط قتيل في اشتباكات مع الشرطة قرب سيدي بوزيد - تونس - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya”, December 24, 2010. <http://www.france24.com/ar/20101224-sidi-bouzzid-tunisia-suicide-menzel-bouzaiane-dead-clashes-police>. # ?? ##
- xvii Interview with young secular activists, Tunis (Tunisia), 2011.
- xviii Ibid.
- xix See “ثورة الشعب” - الجيش التونسي في مسار - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya”, January 17, 2011. <http://www.france24.com/ar/20110117-tunisia-army-revolution-jasmin-ben-ali>.
- xx Interview with two secular activists and eye witnesses of the events described, Tunis (Tunisia), 15 November 2011. [40:05 → 42:25]
- xxi One activist stated he thought it would take at least a year to get Ben Ali out, see: Temimi (2011) *L'observateur de la Revolution Tunisienne*, p157.
- xxii al-Hayat. “Dar Al Hayat - نص إعلان «شغور» منصب الرئاسة - تونس”, January 16, 2011. <http://www.daralhayat.com/internationalarticle/223932>.
- xxiii France 24. “الانتفاضة الشعبية تطيح بين علي والسعودية تستقبله وعائلته - تونس - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya”, January 15, 2011. <http://www.france24.com/ar/20110115-tunisia-zine-elAbidine-ben-ali-departure-popular-revolution-saudi-arabia>.; Around 3000 members of Ben Ali’s security forces were supposedly arrested in the days after his exit (Kirkpatrick and Fahim 2011). In the following week chaos still persisted in many parts of the country, for instance (and specifically) in Kasserine. See: France 24. “عصابات تشيع الرعب والفوضى في بلدة - تونس - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya”, January 31, 2011. <http://www.france24.com/ar/20110131-insecurity-tunisia-looting-revolution-ben-ali-kasserine>.
- xxiv France 24. “تجدد أعمال العنف في مناطق عدة في تونس - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya”, February 6, 2011. <http://www.france24.com/ar/node/648412>.
- xxv al-Hayat. “تونس: تظاهرات ضخمة ضد الحكومة... ومذكرة توقيف دولية بحق بن علي - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya”, January 27, 2011. <http://www.daralhayat.com/internationalarticle/228073>.
- xxvi al-Hayat. “تونس: الاتحاد العام للشغل يدعم «الحكومة المعدلة» - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya”, January 29, 2011. <http://www.daralhayat.com/internationalarticle/228714>.
- xxvii The RCD party was eventually suspended on February 6th 2011 and disbanded by court order on March 9th. The Associated Press. “Tunisia Suspends Ben Ali’s Party.” The New York Times, February 6, 2011, sec. World / Africa. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/07/world/africa/07tunisia.html?scp=81&sq=tunisia&st=cse>.; al-Hayat. “Dar Al Hayat - وقف أنشطة حزب بن علي تمهيداً لحلّه وإحراق مقر الشرطة في مدينة الكاف - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya”, February 7, 2011. <http://www.daralhayat.com/internationalarticle/231895>.
- xxviii as-Sharq al-awsat. “تونس: حكومة الجبالي تجد صعوبات لمواجهة الاعتصامات، أخبار - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya”, January 7, 2012. <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=657835&issueno=12093>.
- xxix as-Sharq al-awsat. “قائد السبسي.. سياسي من العهد البورقيبي لإصلاح تونس الجديدة، أخبار - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya”, March 5, 2011. <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=611063&issueno=11785>.
- xxx France 24. “الشرطة تفرق بالهراوات والغاز المسيل للدموع تظاهرة مناهضة لحكومة السبسي - تونس - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya”, March 5, 2011. <http://www.france24.com/ar/20110305-police-tunisia-gas-disperses-protest>.

- 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya”, August 15, 2011. <http://www.france24.com/ar/20110815-tunisia-protests-avenue-bourguiba-anti-government>. ; New York times. “Tunisia - Protesters Call for New Leaders - NYTimes.com”, August 15, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/16/world/africa/16briefs-tunisia.html?scp=56&sq=tunisia&st=cse>.
- xxxii ---
- xxxiii as-Sharq al-awsat. “تونس: حكومة الجبالي تجد صعوبات لمواجهة الاعتصامات, أخبار”, January 7, 2012. <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=657835&issueno=12093>.
- xxxiv Compared to Algeria, for instance, Tunisia does not have a large and mountainous outback from which an uprising can be sustained; additionally Tunisia does not have the natural resources that can provide the necessary financial basis for a long drawn out insurgency.
- xxxv Socially, apart from a few small Jewish and Berber communities, Tunisia is an ethnically homogeneous country, with 99% of its citizens being Sunni Muslim.
- xxxvi See: <http://www.ugtt.org.tn/ar/>
- xxxvii *Dawa'* means to “call” people to religion. *Dawa'* movements aim to Islamize society through various social activities (mostly schools and charitable work) building an image of what a good Islamic society should look like.
- xxxviii The name of the group-movement-party reflects its development: it started out as the al-Jamia' al-islamia “the Islamic Group” in 1972; it then became the “Islamic Tendency Movement” in 1980, Harakat Ennahda “Renaissance movement” in 1987, and Hizb Harakat Ennahda (Ennahda movement party) on 1 March 2011.
- xxxix Around ten years later the first prisoners were released as their sentences had expired, though they still were under daily surveillance from the political police (Human Rights Watch 2010).
- xl as-Sharq al-awsat. “تونس: إعلان ثالث حكومة منذ الإطاحة بـ علي بـ 22 وزارة و 9 كتاب دولة, أخبار”, March 8, 2011. <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=611519&issueno=11788>.
- xli For a full list of ministers and party affiliations, see: <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2011/12/22/tunisia-new-government/>
- xlii tunisia-live.net. “Tunisian Prime Minister Declares Interim Government’s Intention to Hold Presidential Elections in 18 Months : Tunisia Live”, March 2, 2012. <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/02/03/tunisian-prime-minister-declares-interim-governments-intention-to-hold-presidential-elections-in-18-months/>.
- xliii Cite interview and al-Hayat. “Dar Al Hayat - وضاحتها الغربية - انتشار وحدات من الجيش في تونس العاصمة وضاحتها الغربية”, January 12, 2011. <http://www.daralhayat.com/portalaricledah/222644>.
- xliv The full name of Ettakatol is “Ettakatol – *Forum démocratique pour le travail et les libertés* (Democratic Forum for work and Liberties).” Ettakatol is the Arabic word for “Forum”.
- xlv For more information see www.isie.tn (the website of the independent electoral institute) and <http://www.anc.tn> (the website of the constitutive council). The number of seats mentioned in the text are taken directly from the website of the constitutive council.
- xlvi France 24. “تعيين الجنرال رشيد عمار الذي رفض قمع التظاهرات ضد علي رئيسا لأركان الجيوش - تونس”, April 18, 2011. <http://www.france24.com/ar/20110418-tunisia-army-rachid-ammam-head>.
- xlvii At-tariq, 22-28 January 2011 , p.3.
- xlviii Interview Abdaljalil Tamimi, Tunis (Tunisia), 4 November 2011. [12:50 → 13:58]
- xliviii See their website at: www.ugtt.org.tn
- xlix attariq aljadid. حركة التجديد: ‘مجلس حماية الثورة’.. ازدواجية في السلطة قد تخلق أزمة سياسية تعرقل تحقيق الثورة [rouge].” <http://attariq.org>, February 22, 2011. <http://attariq.org/spip.php?article1123&lang=ar>; France 24. “الهيئة العليا لتحقيق أهداف ثورة تونس توسع تركيبها وتبدأ بحث الملفات الحساسة”, March 26, 2011. <http://www.france24.com/ar/node/659936>.
- l Though named a party, they are not recognized as a formal political party and therefore discussed here as a movement.
- li Under the current government of CPR, Ettakatol and Ennahda, most Salafist parties and HuT received formal recognition.
- lii Some observers estimate that there are no more than 3000 Salafists in total in Tunisia. See: France 24. “السلفيون - تونس”, December 7, 2011. <http://www.france24.com/ar/20111208-revolution-threat-violence-salafism-tunisia-islam-religion-education>.
- liiii CIA world factbook: Tunisia. Sidi Bouzzid and Thalla added by the author.
- liv France 24. “الحكومة تسيطر على الأوضاع الأمنية بعد إقالات واسعة في قطاع الأمن - تونس”, February 3, 2011. <http://www.france24.com/ar/20110203-tunisia-police-security-ben-ali>.
- lv Attariq Aljadid, 8-14 January 2011, p.8; Chomiak, 2011, p.4.
- lvi Attariq Aljadid, 20-26 September 2008; Gabriele Del Grande. “Fortress Europe: Tunisia: The Dictatorship South of Lampedusa”, November 2, 2008. <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com/2006/01/tunisia-dictatorship-south-of-lampedusa.html>.
- lvii As in Chomiak 2011; Gabriele Del Grande. “Fortress Europe: Tunisia: The Dictatorship South of Lampedusa”, November 2, 2008. <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com/2006/01/tunisia-dictatorship-south-of-lampedusa.html>.
- lviii Gabriele Del Grande. “Fortress Europe: Tunisia: The Dictatorship South of Lampedusa”, November 2, 2008. <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com/2006/01/tunisia-dictatorship-south-of-lampedusa.html>.
- lix Gabriele Del Grande. “Fortress Europe: Tunisia: The Dictatorship South of Lampedusa”, November 2, 2008. <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com/2006/01/tunisia-dictatorship-south-of-lampedusa.html>.

- lx As in Chomiak 2011.
- lxi Chomiak and Entelis 2011, 7; testimony of Slim Amamou at Tamimi Center, Tunis (Tunisia), 5 November 2011.
- lxii attariq aljadid. "Protests Nahar Alla Ammar". at-Tarqiq al-Jadid, May 20, 2010. http://attariq.org/IMG/jpg/Page_02-66.jpg; Chomiak 2011, p.7.
- lxiii Ibid, p.6.
- lxiv Ibid, pp.6-8.; attariq aljadid. "Protests Nahar Alla Ammar". at-Tarqiq al-Jadid, May 20, 2010. http://attariq.org/IMG/jpg/Page_02-66.jpg.
- lxv ---
- lxvi Ibid, pp. 6-7.
- lxvii Ibid, 6-7.; attariq aljadid. "Protests Nahar Alla Ammar". at-Tarqiq al-Jadid, May 20, 2010. http://attariq.org/IMG/jpg/Page_02-66.jpg.
- lxviii France 24. "مواجهات بين الشرطة ومحتجين في ولاية سيدي بوزيد بعد أن أحرق شاب نفسه - تونس" - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya", December 19, 2010. <http://www.france24.com/ar/20101219-tunisia-clash-poorness-young-suicide-police>.
- lxix France 24. "مواجهات بين الشرطة ومحتجين في ولاية سيدي بوزيد بعد أن أحرق شاب نفسه - تونس" - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya", December 19, 2010. <http://www.france24.com/ar/20101219-tunisia-clash-poorness-young-suicide-police>.
- lxx As stated in: (Beinin and Vairel 2011); and see: (al-Hayat 2010b; al-Jazeera. "Tunisia Struggles to End Protests - Africa - Al Jazeera English", December 29, 2010. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2010/12/20101229122733122341.html>.; France 24 2011d)
- lxxi Thalla is important as it was one of the first towns where the political and riot police retreated from the city after violent clashes with protesters. See: at-tariq, 8-14 january 2011, p7.; as-Sharq al-awsat. "تونس: يومان من المواجهات في تالة.. وإصابة 14 بجروح, أخبار عاطلون عن العمل وطلبة في مواجهات جديدة مع الشرطة" - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya", January 5, 2011. <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=602446&issueno=11726>.; France 24. "Thousands Vow Revenge at Funeral of Suicide Protester - TUNISIA - FRANCE 24", January 6, 2011. <http://www.france24.com/en/20110106-thousands-attend-funeral-suicide-protester-sidi-bouazizi-tunisia-unemployment>.
- lxxii France 24. "مظاهرة في العاصمة إثر سقوط قتيل في اشتباكات مع الشرطة قرب سيدي بوزيد - تونس" - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya", December 24, 2010. <http://www.france24.com/ar/20101224-sidi-bouazizi-tunisia-suicide-menzel-bouzaiane-dead-clashes-police>.
- lxxiii France 24. "مظاهرة في العاصمة إثر سقوط قتيل في اشتباكات مع الشرطة قرب سيدي بوزيد - تونس" - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya", December 24, 2010. <http://www.france24.com/ar/20101224-sidi-bouazizi-tunisia-suicide-menzel-bouzaiane-dead-clashes-police>.; as-Sharq al-awsat. "المحتجون على البطالة في تونس: الحلول" - FRANCE 24 - Monte Carlo Doualiya", December 25, 2010. <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=600938&issueno=11715>.; al-Jazeera. "Tunisia Struggles to End Protests - Africa - Al Jazeera English", December 29, 2010. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2010/12/20101229122733122341.html>.; France 24. "Thousands Vow Revenge at Funeral of Suicide Protester - TUNISIA - FRANCE 24", January 6, 2011. <http://www.france24.com/en/20110106-thousands-attend-funeral-suicide-protester-sidi-bouazizi-tunisia-unemployment>.)
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