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# CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT IN TRANSITION

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LESSONS FROM  
EGYPT, LIBYA, TUNISIA AND YEMEN

When popular uprisings swept across the Arab region in 2011, many Arab citizens and followers around the world welcomed the events and the new future they would usher into the region. Philosopher Slavoj Žižek spoke of the magic of Tahrir, and academic Asef Bayat described the uprisings as world-changing events that would redefine the spirit of our political times. These uprisings inspired hope in populations that had long suffered under the rule of authoritarian regimes, and revealed the collective power of everyday citizens to challenge their oppressors.

The power of the uprisings was due in large part to broad-based public participation and civic engagement. Prior to the uprisings, Arab regimes espoused an authoritarian social contract whereby citizens were promised state protection and social welfare in exchange for acquiescence and legitimacy. Under this system, regimes did not feel obligated to undertake political reform nor engage citizens' voices. Then, the fall of ruling regimes in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen opened the floodgates of political participation. During this time, the number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the region increased exponentially. These political communities, many of which initially emerged during the uprisings to put pressure on autocratic regimes to step down, evolved during and after the events to address neglected political and social issues. Other groups, who were active in the preceding years and are credited with leading the uprisings, continued to be important actors after the events. In addition to the expansion of traditional methods of political participation, such as political parties, labour movements and electoral participation, Arab citizens also carved out new ways of engaging in politics through youth movements, women's rights initiatives, social media platforms, street protests and public arts. These new and dynamic political spaces have contributed to the debates about the future of post-uprising states and allowed a broader sector of the population to engage in national policy dialogues.

This publication will highlight contemporary civic engagement and participatory development initiatives in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen. Since uprisings swept across the region beginning in late 2010, these four countries have seen radical shifts in political and social participation, and the cases that follow reveal valuable insights about the challenges and possibilities of post-uprising civic engagement. As this kit will show, engaging all sectors of the population in political and social development requires concerted efforts on the part of both Governments and civil society groups.

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This publication was authored by Jade M. Lansing, Social Development Division Intern, with the substantive guidance of Oussama Safa, Chief of the Social Policy Section, and Dina Tannir, Social Affairs Officer, who provided supervision, mentorship, technical advice and patient encouragement. Throughout the drafting and editing phases, it has also benefited from the careful review and feedback of Rania al-Jazairi, Vivienne Badaan and Viridiana Garcia.

A close-up photograph of a person's face, partially obscured by a large red triangular graphic overlay. The person's skin is covered in thick, textured white body paint. A bright yellow patch is visible on the white paint. A red band, possibly representing the Egyptian flag, is painted across the forehead and upper cheek area. The background is blurred, showing other people.

# EGYPT

CIVIL SOCIETY IN TRANSITION

Egypt has long had a large and vibrant civil society sector, despite the strict legal restrictions on CSOs in the country. As of 2007, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law estimated that 24,500 CSOs were active in Egypt, including domestic and international associations, foundations and unions. Since the uprising that removed 30-year former President Hosni Mubarak from power, civil society groups have played a key role in the transitional political space by advocating for human rights, holding Governments accountable, facilitating political organization and maintaining a vibrant public policy dialogue. As the European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy put it, “There is hardly an area of [Egyptian] public life where civil society does not offer an added value... I think the role of the civil society lies in generating ideas, being a bridge between society and the authorities, [and] having an important role in monitoring and delivering on the reform process”. In the May 2014 presidential elections, for example, civil society groups led the campaigns for both candidates Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Hamdeen Sabahi, as well as alternative campaigns to abstain from voting. Civil society groups were also active in unofficial

**“DOWN WITH CORRUPTION AND REPRESSION. THIS IS A NEW DAY OF FREEDOM. I HAVE TASTED FREEDOM AND I WILL NOT TURN BACK”.**

**Protester in Tahrir Square**

election monitoring and evaluation, ensuring that processes were just and transparent.

While the development and proliferation of diverse CSOs across all sectors of Egyptian society is promising, they also face considerable challenges moving forward. The legal environment, for both Egyptian and foreign organizations, is vague and inhospitable, and groups must confront radically shifting political atmospheres that come with changing regimes. A 2013 law drafted by the Shura Council, the upper house of Egypt’s bicameral parliament, imposes further restrictions on the registration and activities of foreign CSOs, establishing a coordination committee to monitor CSO activities and determine whether foreign organizations should be allowed to operate in Egypt. The committee may restrict foreign CSO operations for a broad swath of reasons, including threatening national sovereignty, engaging in political party activities, or acting “against public order and public attitudes”.



Source: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2011.

## THE APRIL 6 MOVEMENT

### ◆ FOUNDERS

Ahmed Maher, Mohamed Adel,  
Waleed Rashed and Asma Mahfouz

### ◆ MEMBERS

Around 3,000 Facebook participants

### ◆ HISTORY

The April 6 movement began as a Facebook page in 2008, in solidarity with a 6 April 2006 textile workers' strike in the industrial town of El-Mahallah El-Kubra to protest low wages and poor working conditions. After the strike, the April 6 Facebook page remained active, drawing 70,000 followers by January 2009, many of whom were educated youth. The core founders of April 6 viewed it as a movement to combat government nepotism, corruption, inadequate economic policies and limitations on freedom of speech.

### ◆ ACTIVITIES

The movement took an active role in the revolution, calling citizens to take to the streets. As the figure on the previous page indicates, deteriorating economic conditions and economic injustices were the primary driver of the 25 January revolution, and the April 6 movement was formative in coordinating popular frustrations into organized protests and action. It also remained active after the revolution, organizing a campaign to prevent former members of the old regime from regaining political power in the late 2011 elections. The campaign, called "Black Circle, White Circle", publicized the names of electoral candidates with ties to former president Hosni Mubarak's allegedly corrupt National Democratic Party in the black circle, and listing qualifications and traits they hoped to see in future elected officials in the white circle. During the popular protests that swept the country in June 2013, the

movement chose not to side with either of the two poles of the conflict between the Muslim Brotherhood and the military. However, it has been vocal in its opposition to military interference in politics. More recently, in November 2013, the April 6 movement has focused on campaigns to speak out against the controversial law banning protests and challenge then-presidential contender and former Defence Minister Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's candidacy.

### ◆ OUTCOMES

The "Black Circle, White Circle" campaign helped raise awareness about the prominence of former regime figures in post-revolution politics, and initiated important conversations about how to engage with these figures while maintaining the integrity of the goals of the revolution. Subsequent protests and campaigns have likewise fostered dialogue and held governing regimes accountable for their actions. However, two of the movement's founding members, Ahmed Maher and Mohamed Adel, who were detained in November 2013, continue to be held as of mid-June 2014 for protesting without a permit. In April 2014, the entire movement was banned by the Cairo Court for Urgent Matters for "tarnishing Egypt's image" and "espionage". According to Mohamed Fouad, April 6 media spokesperson, "The ruling is a politicized one, meant to suppress any kind of criticism against Sisi". The strict government crackdown on the movement's activities highlights both the power of their campaigns and the challenges that civil society groups face when confronting the incumbent regime.

THE APRIL 6 MOVEMENT BEGAN AS A  
FACEBOOK PAGE IN 2008. BY THE FOLLOWING  
YEAR, IT HAD 70,000 FOLLOWERS.

### ◆ FOUNDERS

Abdelrahman Mansour and Wael Ghonim

### ◆ MEMBERS

Two million Facebook participants

### ◆ HISTORY

Kullna Khaled Said (We Are All Khaled Said) is a movement against police brutality, disregard for life, and rampant government corruption. The initiative started as a Facebook page launched following the violent murder of Khaled Said by Egyptian police officers. Said was a 28-year-old Egyptian worker from Alexandria, who, on 6 June 2010, was reportedly dragged into the street and brutally beaten by two police officers, eventually leading to his death. The detective responsible for Said's case claimed that he had choked to death on drugs as he was attempting to conceal the substances from the police; but a photograph of his crushed and disfigured face revealed both the violence of the police officers and the injustice of the court detective. The picture went viral on the Kullna Khaled Said Facebook page, which developed into a vibrant space for information sharing and public discussion.

### ◆ ACTIVITIES

Leading up to the 25 January revolution, the group organized multiple marches and sit-ins publicizing Said's case and protesting against police brutality. The Kullna Khaled Said page became a microphone for the Egyptian uprising, offering the Egyptian people a platform to speak out against the Mubarak regime and organizing for political change.

After the revolution, the Kullna Khaled Said initiative has continued to engage in political discourse, focusing on monitoring human rights violations in Egypt, particularly the

issue of torture. During the transitional period following Mubarak's ouster, Kullna Khaled Said joined the Revolutionary Youth Coalition, which brought together youth activists from the April 6 movement, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Democratic Front, among other groups, to represent Egypt's youth in conversation with the army-led transitional Government. Although the coalition disbanded after the forced dispersion of a sit-in in Tahrir Square on 7 July 2012, it was a unique example of youth from across the political spectrum, collaborating to represent their generation in discussions with the Government and civil society actors.

During the September 2012 constitutional referendum, the group launched a campaign calling for a two-thirds majority vote in the Constitutional Assembly in order to approve or amend the constitutional draft, which sought to undermine single-party domination in the Assembly. The campaign was relatively successful and resulted in a compromise whereby a two-thirds majority would be required in the first round of voting, and, if no consensus could be reached, then only a 57 per cent majority would be required in the second round of voting.

### ◆ OUTCOMES

With the constitutional referendum campaign and the group's participation in the 25 January revolution and the Revolutionary Youth Coalition, Kullna Khaled Said evolved from a niche Facebook page responding to a single atrocity to a significant player in national grassroots political mobilization. The page became a platform for conversations about police violence and human rights violations by the Egyptian Government far beyond the murder of Khaled Said.

### ◆ PROMINENT GROUPS

Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment, Tahrir Bodyguard, Basma Movement, the Uprising of Women in the Arab World and Harassma

### ◆ HISTORY

In recent years, Egyptians from across the political and ideological spectrum have joined together to fight what has become an “epidemic” of sexual harassment and assault in Egyptian streets. A 2013 survey conducted by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) revealed that 99.3 per cent of women in Egypt have suffered sexual harassment, 83 per cent do not feel secure in public places, and 49 per cent reported an increase in sexual harassment after January 2011. A 2013 Thomas Reuters Foundation poll ranked Egypt as the worst Arab country with regard to women’s rights, citing high rates of sexual violence and low female political representation.

### ◆ ACTIVITIES

A myriad of public campaigns, civil society initiatives and grass-roots organizations have emerged to respond to this challenge, and have developed elaborate and organized programmes to combat the verbal and physical violence levelled at women in public spaces. Some such programmes have worked to make Egyptian protest spaces hospitable to women by coordinating patrol and rescue services to combat sexual attacks; others have centred on raising

awareness through demonstrations and online campaigns or engaging with harassers and challenging social norms. Organizations have developed public initiatives such as the “I Have Seen Harassment”, “Taking Back Egypt’s Streets” and “Egypt’s Girls Are a Red Line” campaigns. They have also coordinated with security officials and volunteers to create sexual harassment response networks, with a system of watchtowers, walkie-talkies, telephone hotlines, coloured vests and safe houses, particularly during crowded protests when the most violent and rampant assaults have been recorded.

### ◆ OUTCOMES

While sexual harassment remains a daily experience for women on Egyptian streets, these initiatives have nonetheless been successful in bringing sexual harassment into the limelight of public discourse. In recent debates, however, sexual harassment has also been used as a political tool to condemn opposition groups rather than addressed as a widespread phenomenon across the country. As of mid-June 2014, how the new Government of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi will confront and penalize this phenomenon remains to be seen. A law criminalizing sexual harassment was announced in June 2014, threatening perpetrators with up to five years in jail or fines between 400 United States dollars (\$) and \$7,000, but implementation has thus far been sporadic and ineffective.

# LIBYA

REBUILDING LIBYAN CIVIL  
SOCIETY AFTER GADDAFI

Under the 42-year rule of Muammar Gaddafi, civil society was severely restricted and all political participation was channelled through vague and hierarchical systems overseen by the Gaddafi regime. Civil society leader Amina Megheirbi explains, “even if we wanted to put on a children’s fair, we had to associate it with something political, related to one of Gaddafi’s claimed achievements.” During and after the uprising, however, civil society groups rapidly emerged and flourished. Hundreds of civil society groups have sprung up in Libya since the uprising, addressing such diverse issues as election monitoring, women’s rights, human rights, healthcare and education. According to Charles Dunne, director of Freedom House’s Middle East and North Africa programme, “civil society is poised to play a key role in Libya’s troubled, but ongoing, democratic transition”.

However, Libyan CSOs face many challenges moving forward:

- Limited organizational capacity and experience in the implementation of civil society programmes;
- Lack of cooperation and coordination between CSOs in Libya, within and across sectors;
- Ongoing instability and security concerns;
- regular violent conflict between militia factions across the country;
- Inaccessibility of national representatives and lawmakers;
- Limited domestic funding sources;

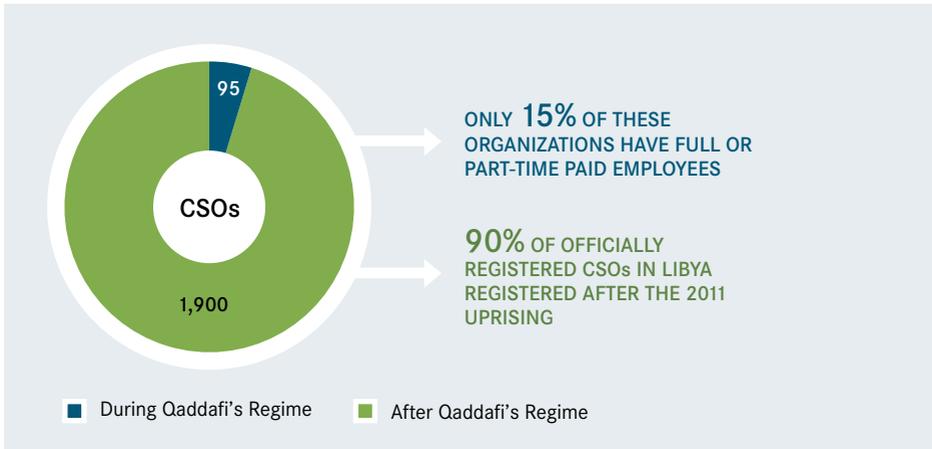
- short-sightedness of foreign funding targets;
- Widespread distrust of government officials and unknown organizations;
- Lack of transparency and knowledge about political processes;
- Unclear legal frameworks for civil society actors.

Routine violence, kidnappings and political assassinations, as well as the instability caused by porous borders, a weak national Government, and long-standing domestic conflicts, have created an overall environment of insecurity. Despite these evolving challenges, civil society in Libya continues to thrive. Hundreds of organizations and independent media platforms lay the foundation for future advocacy, cooperation and national dialogue. Particularly at the local level, CSOs have been integral actors in connecting people, providing social services and educating citizens about democratic processes and institutions. As Freedom House explains, “with minimal resources and support, civil society activists are at the forefront of reclaiming Libya’s hope and future”. Amid security and governance challenges, Aly Abuzaakouk, President of the Citizenship Forum for Democracy and Human Development in Benghazi, describes civil society as “the brightest side in Libya”.

“CIVIL SOCIETY IS THE KEY TO GETTING LIBYA’S MOMENTUM BACK...IT IS TIME TO MAKE IT A PRIORITY AGAIN... THIS IS A NEW CULTURE. PEOPLE HAVE CHANGED THE TIDE IN MANY WAYS.”

**Aly Abuzaakouk, President  
of Citizenship Forum for  
Democracy and Human Development**

## GROWTH OF CSOs POST-QADDAFI



Source: Foundation for the Future, 2012

## ATTAWASUL ASSOCIATION FOR YOUTH, WOMEN, & CHILDREN OF FREE LIBYA

### ◆ FOUNDER

Amina Megheirbi

### ◆ HISTORY

Attawasul, which translates as “connect” or “reach out” in Arabic, was first established as a women’s empowerment organization. However, the enthusiasm and participation of young men during the uprising inspired Megheirbi to expand the association’s mission. After the revolution, Attawasul became an organization focused on empowering young men and women through leadership skills, advocacy campaigns and community dialogue.

### ◆ ACTIVITIES

Attawasul now coordinates a media house, with newspaper and radio programmes, and a training organization that provides young people technical guidance and leadership skills training. It also maintains records on families in Benghazi that do not have access to social services, coordinating with partner organizations to ensure that food and basic

services reach the most vulnerable sectors of the population. Attawasul also partners with the Libyan Women’s Society to host weekly dialogues on women’s rights, and with the Voice of Libyan Women to advocate for the inclusion of women in transitional politics. The community-based organization currently has over 150 volunteers and less than 10 paid staff.

### ◆ OUTCOMES

Attawasul is widely considered one of the most active CSOs following the Libyan uprising in February 2011. By bringing citizens together under the common mission of empowering youth and women, Attawasul has not only expanding social services to underprivileged populations, but also facilitated dialogue between diverse citizens. Attawasul founder Megheirbi expects that the association will have a critical long-term role in local development in Benghazi, but stresses that funding is a consistent and pressing challenge.

## THE LIBYAN YOUTH MOVEMENT

### ◆ FOUNDER

Ayat Mneina and Omar Amer

### ◆ HISTORY

The Libyan Youth Movement, or Shabab Libya, was established on 2 February 2011 by two Libyans living abroad in response to the 25 January uprising in Egypt. The movement's aim was to connect Libyan youth both in and outside of Libya in the uprising against Gaddafi. Shabab Libya began as a Facebook group to coordinate anti-regime protests, and then expanded into a platform for information sharing. The movement's founders anticipated that Gaddafi would freeze media and communication inside Libya during the uprising, so they began by creating a network of contacts across the country that could provide international media with information about events on the ground. Shabab Libya does not associate with any political party or tribal faction. The movement expanded through its public media presence and reputation for neutrality, and, as of June 2014, had over 36,600 followers on Facebook.

### ◆ ACTIVITIES

Throughout the uprising, Shabab Libya organized demonstrations and facilitated

public political debate. The movement also used Twitter, Facebook and Youtube, and conducted interviews to document the uprising and regime responses. The group is now developing a permanent network of youth to connect with the transitional Government, and, according to Mneina, “ensur[e] the voice of Libya’s youth is heard... [and] develop the economy without relying on oil... concentrating development in agriculture, fishing, natural resource, renewable energy, and tourism sectors”. Shabab Libya is now run by 20 administrators, 3 of whom are based in Libya.

### ◆ OUTCOMES

Shabab Libya played a significant role in coordinating protest efforts within Libya and raising awareness of the uprising internationally. According to Mneina, Shabab Libya’s media efforts shaped the international response to Libya and, subsequently, the United Nations Security Council resolutions that contributed to the fall of the Gaddafi regime. The movement facilitated a link between Libyan citizens and the international community, and continues to encourage dialogue among Libyan youth around the world.

## THE NEW LIBYA FOUNDATION

### ◆ FOUNDERS

Rihab Elhaj and Iya Khalil

### ◆ MISSION

The New Libya foundation seeks to “nurture the successful development of civil society organizations in Libya through training, education, access to resources and financial assistance”. Their vision focuses primarily on civic engagement, inclusiveness and association.

### ◆ HISTORY

The New Libya Foundation started on 10 February 2011 as a Facebook page called “Time For a New Libya”, in support of the uprising against the Gaddafi regime. The page sought to bring global media attention to the events in Libya and foster a civil society that could rebuild the country after the uprising. On 25 February 2011, only eight days after the uprising, Elhaj and Khalil co-founded the New Libya Foundation to build a national

vision and contribute to the development of civil society in Libya. The organization believes that a vibrant civil society is the foundation of democracy.

#### ◆ ACTIVITIES

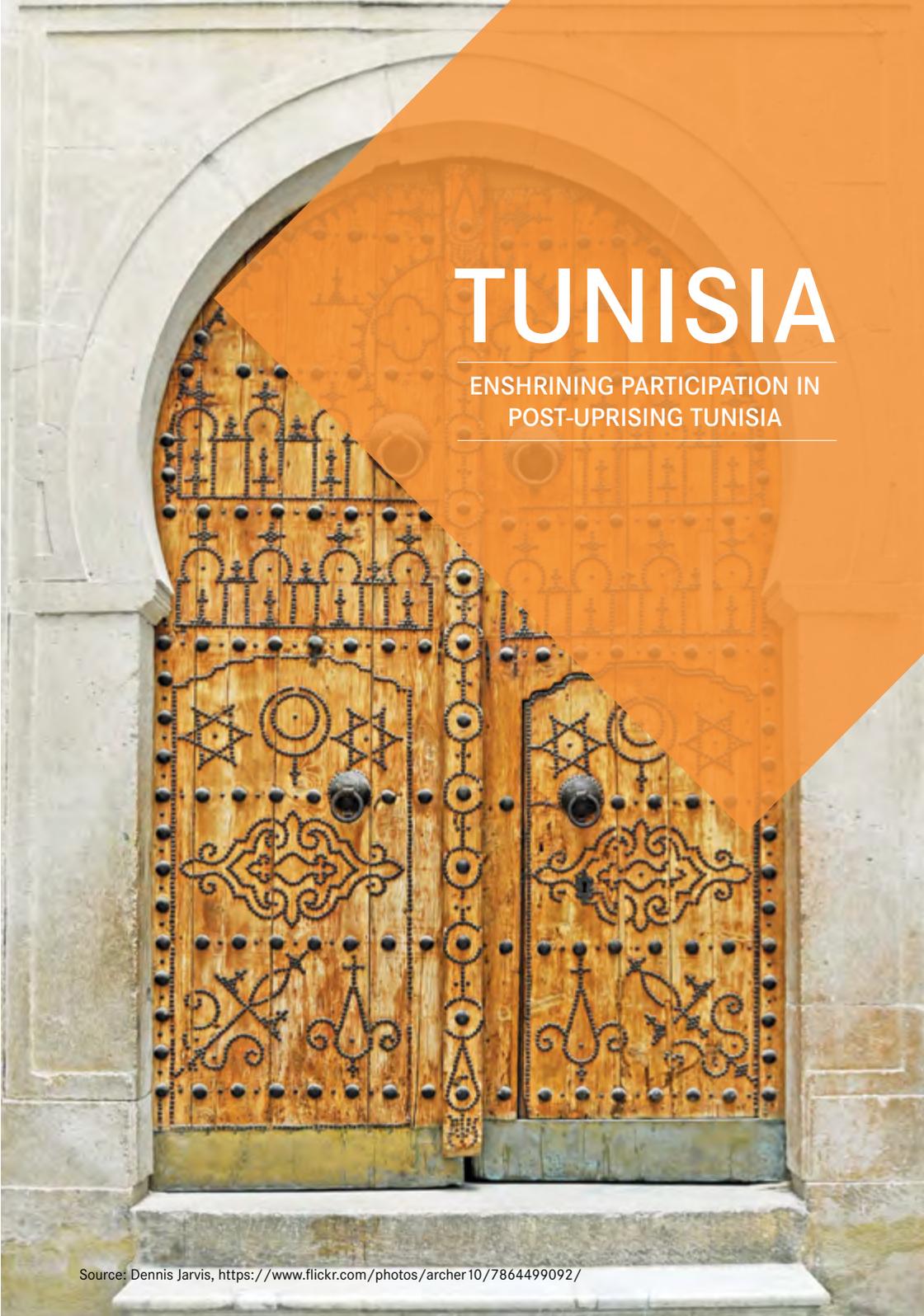
The New Libya Foundation partners with educational institutions, development agencies, and other Libyan CSOs to facilitate cooperation and coordinate capacity-building programmes. The foundation conducts a Leadership in Civil Society programme to empower individuals with the tools to lead their communities and, in turn, empower others to do the same. In each session of the programme, 20 citizens graduate with the skills and resources to support inclusive civil society development by creating their own CSO. In parallel with this programme, the New Libya Foundation supports the launch of each graduate's CSO vision. Throughout the programme, participants learn how to articulate their organizational mission, coordinate programmes, approach donors, address pressing community needs and mentor future leaders within their organizations.

#### ◆ OUTCOMES

The New Libya Foundation's "Leadership in Civil Society" programme contributes to the development of strong, sustainable and accountable CSOs through participatory mechanisms. Both the programme itself and the CSOs it supports empower diverse citizens to take on a leadership role in civil society. Each session of the programme results in 20 new CSOs in Benghazi and Misurata with the resources and tools to flourish. The foundation also encourages CSO partnerships and collaboration.

THE MOST VITAL ELEMENT OF A NEW LIBYA IS A SOCIETY THAT IS ABLE TO DETERMINE THE COURSE OF ITS FUTURE, AND CONTRIBUTE IN SETTING THE PRIORITIES OF ITS GOVERNING BODY. NO CALL TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE CAN BE REALIZED UNTIL PEOPLE ORGANIZE TO ADDRESS THEIR CONCERNS AND ASPIRATIONS. THE LIBYAN PEOPLE HAVE TAKEN ON THE CAUSE OF BUILDING THEIR NATION AND EMPOWERING CITIZENS. THE NEW LIBYA FOUNDATION IS WORKING TO PROVIDE THE RESOURCES AND MEANS NECESSARY TO BUILD THE CIVIC INSTITUTIONS OF THE NEW LIBYA AND GENERATIONS TO COME.

**New Libya Foundation**



# TUNISIA

ENSHRINING PARTICIPATION IN  
POST-UPRISING TUNISIA

Since the uprising unfolded in Tunisia in December 2010, new channels of participation have flourished and served as an example to other post-uprising States in the region. In particular, Tunisia stands out in its efforts to institutionalize diverse and inclusive participatory practices into the transitional political process after the fall of the regime of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. Engaged civil society organizations (CSOs) and strong political parties helped maintain

a vibrant national dialogue process that culminated in the ratification of a widely-praised new Constitution on 26 January 2014, revealing Tunisian's ability to contain national differences in political channels and state-sanctioned institutions. Tunisian labour movements and women's rights groups were an especially significant mobilizing force during and after the uprising.

## THE TUNISIAN WORKERS' MOVEMENT

### ◆ HISTORY

The workers' movement in Tunisia played an active role in the uprising and subsequent political developments in the country. Since Tunisian independence in 1956, labour unions have served as a platform for the expression of opposition to the regime. They were likewise instrumental in maintaining the momentum of the 2011 revolution, framing the movement as a challenge to the injustice of the economic status quo under Ben Ali's reign. Since its foundation in 1946, the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT), the largest union in the country, has been a voice of dissent under authoritarian regimes, as during the general strike in 1978 under Habib Bourguiba's regime and the Gafsa protests in 2008 under Ben Ali's regime. These activities have made UGTT a target of government repression throughout its 68-year history, and the lead-up to the Jasmine Revolution was no exception.

### ◆ ACTIVITIES

The Union has continued to organize strikes and protests after the revolution, and has actively participated in the political transition through both electoral campaigns and national dialogue initiatives to advocate for social and regional equity. In the period

immediately following the fall of the Ben Ali regime, UGTT participated in the formation of the interim Government spearheaded by Mohamed Ghannouchi, subsequently joining the opposition in support of Kasbah I and Kasbah II, two consecutive protest movements (January and February 2011) which demanded electoral accountability, a new constitution and the dissolution of the Constitutional Democratic Rally. On 15 March 2012, UGTT organized a nationwide walkout in coordination with the High Commission for Achieving the Objectives of the Revolution, Political Reform and Democratic Transition, and in February 2013, the Union organized a mass strike to protest the assassination of liberal politician Chokri Belaid and the interim regime's proposal to dissolve the Government in response.

**"UGTT DEMANDS SOCIAL RIGHTS,  
THE RIGHT TO WORK, THE RIGHT TO  
HEALTH FOR EVERYBODY."**

**Abdelkarim Jrad, UGTT Deputy General  
Secretary for Social Security**

## ◆ OUTCOMES

UGTT acted as a catalyst during the uprising, and has continued to be an important player in the uprising politics. Tunisian economist Hassine Dimassi explains, “UGTT was a decisive actor in the revolt, but only in the last hours of the regime – that is to say, on the 14th. It was the UGTT that really dealt the final blow [to Ben Ali’s rule]”. During the 2013 national dialogue, UGTT helped to end a months-long political deadlock by fostering negotiations between parties. After the successful adoption of Tunisia’s new Constitution in 2014, UGTT was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for its progressive role in the national dialogue process.

TUNISIA STANDS OUT IN ITS EFFORTS TO INSTITUTIONALIZE DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES INTO THE TRANSITIONAL POLITICAL PROCESS AFTER THE FALL OF THE BEN ALI REGIME. ENGAGED CSOS AND STRONG POLITICAL PARTIES HELPED TO MAINTAIN A VIBRANT NATIONAL DIALOGUE PROCESS THAT CULMINATED IN THE RATIFICATION OF A WIDELY-PRaised NEW CONSTITUTION ON 26 JANUARY 2014, REVEALING TUNISIAN’S CAPACITY TO CONTAIN ITS DIVERSE POPULATION IN POLITICAL CHANNELS AND INSTITUTIONS.

## TUNISIAN WOMEN’S RIGHTS INITIATIVES

### ◆ PROMINENT GROUPS

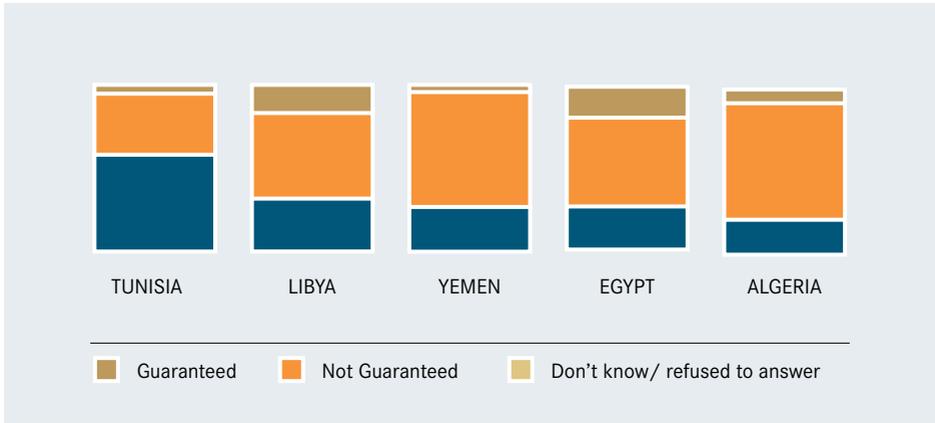
Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, Karama Association, Equity and Parity Organization

### ◆ HISTORY

Tunisia is often considered one of the most progressive Arab States for women’s rights and gender parity. At the same time, Tunisian women still suffer disproportionately from unemployment and are not equitably represented in politics. Though women are legally allowed to participate equally in government, in 2010 they occupied only 28 per cent of the seats in Parliament and only 38 per cent of Tunisian women are employed, compared to 51 per cent of men, according to figures from a 2010 report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Although civil society groups focused on expanding women’s rights existed under the Ben Ali regime, they were carefully monitored and controlled by the

Government. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MAF), the official government body charged with addressing women’s rights and living conditions in Tunisia, implemented limited programmes to empower Tunisian women, including initiatives to foster dialogue with CSOs and a 2013 campaign to discourage Tunisian women from joining the war in Syria in an alleged “sexual jihad”. Most recently, MAF has been dissolved and merged into the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Women and Family, a move that many activists have decried as an intentional silencing of women’s rights efforts through state channels. Following the uprising, women’s CSOs such as the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, worked tirelessly to ensure that the post-uprising Government would make women’s empowerment an important component of the political agenda. They also feared that the conservative orientation of the Ennahdled Government would result in the reversal of the more progressive rights that women had secured under the regime of Ben Ali.

**TRENDS IN PUBLIC OPINION TOWARDS THE GUARANTEE OF FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION** (enrolling in political parties and civil society organizations, and ability to participate in demonstrations)



Source: Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies, 2014

◆ **ACTIVITIES**

In August 2012, thousands of women protested when the interim Government led by the moderate Islamic party Ennahda issued a draft constitution that contained a clause referring to women as “complementary to men”. CSOs condemned the clause as sexist and spoke out against what was perceived as an effort to move towards a more conservative interpretation of women’s roles in Tunisian public life. In the end, they were successful in ensuring the removal of the “complimentary” clause in later drafts of the constitution as well as an earlier clause that cited sharia as the primary source of legislation. Likewise, in September 2012, women’s rights groups organized protests to express outrage over the charges of “indecentry” against a 27-year-old woman who was raped by police officers. Women’s rights groups coordinated a nationwide women’s strike and encouraged Tunisians to show solidarity by writing “Rape her then judge her” on the Interior Ministry’s Facebook page. As a result of this public

“THE STATE GUARANTEES THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND SUPPORTS THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS, CONSIDERING THEM AS MEN’S TRUE PARTNERS IN BUILDING THE NATION, AND THEIR [MEN’S AND WOMEN’S] ROLES FULFILL ONE ANOTHER WITHIN THE FAMILY. THE STATE GUARANTEES EQUAL OPPORTUNITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN CARRYING OUT DIFFERENT RESPONSIBILITIES. THE STATE GUARANTEES THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.”

**Article 28 of Tunisia’s 2012 Draft Constitution**

pressure, the charges were dropped, accompanied by an official state apology to the assaulted woman, and the perpetrators were convicted.

◆ **OUTCOMES**

Despite this mobilization, a large-scale qualitative study conducted by the National Democratic Institute in 2012 reveals the

continued challenges for women's participation in Tunisia. For example, they note that "despite an interest in politics, most participants, particularly young women, demonstrated low levels of political awareness. They may have heard of various political institutions or individuals, but could not provide details about what they knew... They lack familiarity with laws and official entities". In addition, most female participants did not see any value in contacting political representatives to

resolve community issues or participating in public political debate. No participants could name the female representatives in their region and few could cite the name of any Tunisian women's organizations. Young women, especially in interior regions of the country, "seek avenues to participate but are not aware of any new avenues that exist outside of contacting the Government; they do not expect the Government to provide adequate redress".

# YEMEN

EMERGING VOICES IN YEMEN  
AFTER THE UPRISING



The 2011 uprising in Yemen facilitated the development of a myriad of new avenues of political expression, and the proliferation of civil society groups addressing issues across the political spectrum. Despite considerable political challenges moving forward, cultural and social shifts have been set in motion by the energy of the uprising. Women and men, young and old, and urban and tribal came together to overthrow the regime, and now efforts are being made by civil society groups and individual initiatives

to maintain this political equity. CSOs have been working to secure women's rights through a ban on child marriage and a law that would set a quota to reserve 30 per cent of all political offices for women. In addition, a myriad of youth groups have emerged to encourage democratic development and political dialogue, and diverse groups have coordinated their efforts to make their voices heard by the Government.

## THE CIVIC COALITION OF REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH (CCRY)

### ◆ PARTICIPATING GROUPS

Alliance for the Youth's Revolution, Alliance of the People's Youth Revolution, Alliance of Youth and Students for a Peaceful Revolution, and Coalition of the Leaders of Change

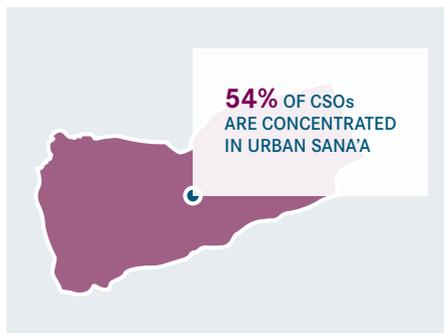
### ◆ HISTORY

One of the largest collaborative youth initiatives in Yemen, the Civic Coalition of Revolutionary Youth (CCRY), was formed in response to the 16 January 2011 uprising. The group began as a Facebook page created by Yemeni activist Rafat al-Akhali to foster dialogue between youth organizations, coordinate their demands and enable productive dialogue with government representatives. According to the group's founder, prior to the creation of CCRY, more than 465 separate youth groups existed in Yemen, many with less than 10 members, which made it difficult to present a united platform or organize political action. CCRY brought together individuals from diverse groups of activists, CSOs, professional associations and tribal groups.

### ◆ ACTIVITIES

The Coalition resulted in a collaborative list of Yemeni youths' demands, released on 23

March 2011. The list included: immediate dismantling of the current regime, arrest of all those involved in the harming of civilians during the uprising, the development of a constitution that transforms the political system from presidential to parliamentary, full governmental transparency, and a decentralized Government that simultaneously protects the unity of Yemen and the diverse interests of different regions. In addition to this list of demands, CCRY also organized numerous marches on the President's palace, published a weekly revolutionary newspaper and maintained a vibrant presence on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.



Source: Human Rights Information and Training Center

## ◆ OUTCOMES

As a result of the success of CCRY in organizing youth movements and in acknowledgement of the importance of the youth constituency to any successful future political arrangement, the Yemeni Government began to organize meetings to better communicate with youth leaders, leading up to the National Dialogue Conference (NDC). However, it was reported that these meetings routinely descended into “chaos” and physical altercations. Following NDC, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) spearheaded an initiative to develop a political road map in Yemen. Though the so-called GCC Initiative was widely heralded as progress, it “only addressed the formal political parties, and disregarded those who were the fuel for the mass people’s revolution: the youth”. When the national consensus Government was eventually formed, young and independent participants were absent from more than half

“OTHER CSOS, SUCH AS SAYAJ, SISTERS ARAB FORUM, THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR DEFENDING RIGHTS & FREEDOM (HOOD), THE HUMAN RIGHTS INFORMATION AND TRAINING CENTERS (HRITC), AND SAWASIA FOR DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE, FOCUSED ON RECORDING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES, INCLUDING RECRUITMENT OF CHILD SOLDIERS, ILLEGAL IMPRISONMENT, AND CONFLICT AMONG GROUPS OF DIFFERENT POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS. HOWEVER, THE CONTRIBUTION OF CSOS WAS LIMITED COMPARED TO THAT OF THE MANY YOUTH-LED INITIATIVES.”

USAID

“AFTER THE DEATHS AND INJURIES OF HUNDREDS OF PEACEFUL PROTESTERS AND CIVILIANS, THE IMMUNITY CLAUSE GIVEN TO SALEH AND HIS CLOSE ALLIES FEELS LIKE A SLAP IN THE FACE.”

Yemeni activist

of the seats in both the opposition and the leading coalition.

This increased political participation, particularly among youth, has not come without a cost. Many activists and protesters were killed or arbitrarily detained before and during the uprising. A further frustration for many young Yemeni revolutionaries is the absence of accountability for crimes committed against them by regime members during the uprising. Many young activists were injured during clashes, and they were subsequently offered medical treatment by presidential decree, but this treatment has not come through. Youth groups have organized numerous demonstrations to protest against this injustice to their injured comrades, receiving promises from the transitional Government in response, but no serious action has been taken to ensure transitional justice. One major hindrance to the transitional process is the immunity clause offered to former President Ali Abdallah Saleh when he stepped down from power. This prevents Yemenis from seeking justice for the crimes committed against them by the previous regime, and undermines inclusive development initiatives after the uprising.



[@CCRY\\_Yemen · 14 Apr 2011](#): CCRY and CCYRC and the revolution goals group are coordinating now on the ground & on the media, for those who doubt us [#Yemen](#) here we are



[@CCRY\\_Yemen · 14 Apr 2011](#): Persistence Friday in [#Yemen](#) We are here and we will not back down

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