



Tunisia

Last update:	25 September 2017
Population:	11,107,800 million (World Bank 2015 est.)
Prime minister:	Youssef Chahed
President:	Beji Caid Essebsi
Governemental type:	Republic
Ruling coalition:	Unity government
Last election:	21 December 2014 (presidential elections)
Next election:	2018 (parliamentary elections)
Sister parties:	Forum Démocratique pour le Travail et les Libertés (FDTL)

Tunisia is currently led by a government of unity. It was created by a process initiated by President Beji Caid Essebsi and formalized in July 2016 through the Carthage Agreement. A coalition was formed of the two biggest parties - the secular Nidaa Tounes and Islamist party Ennahda - with the involvement of smaller parties and important non-governmental actors. While the government promotes unity, it has not succeeded in addressing growing discontent of the Tunisian people. Issues such as youth unemployment and corruption are bigger than during the Arab Spring and have led to new protests. Moreover, after several terrorist attacks, security measures have been taken that threaten civic rights which Tunisia was lauded for with the introduction of its new constitution.

Political Situation

Government of Unity and New Cabinet

In the summer of 2016 Prime Minister Habib Essid and his cabinet were dismissed after a parliamentary vote of no-confidence. In the wake of the terrorist attacks on the Bardo National Museum and the mass shooting at a tourist resort near Sousse, he had lost the trust of the parliament. PM Essid was unable to resolve growing economic problems (partly resulting from the declining tourist industry), but also proposed to close down 80 mosques promoting radical Islam as a counter-terrorist action. In August 2016 Essid was replaced by Youssef Chahed. Chahed, former minister of Local Affairs and senior member of Nidaa Tounes, was asked by the President to form the new government of unity. He is a technocrat, able to maintain the idea of national unity but also the youngest prime minister, hoping to appeal to youth. His young age has also been a point of criticism for the opposition, suggesting he might show a lack of experience. His alleged family ties with the president could also be seen as a problem, as nepotism was characteristic under the rule of Ben Ali. In forming a new cabinet, important posts such as Ministers of Interior, Defence, Exterior were filled by the old cabinet, but other ministers and all of the state secretaries were replaced. Among them were five younger than 35, two were former members of the UGTT and eight of them are women.

2014 new constitution and interim government

Tunisia's National Constituent Assembly approved a new constitution for the country on 25 January 2014, three years after dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was ousted by a popular uprising. It was praised as one of the Arab World's most progressive charters, by recognising Islam as state religion, but also protecting freedom of belief and gender parity in politics and society. It also ensures political pluralism by affirming the opposition's rights. A new government was announced at the same time, following ruling Islamist party Ennahda's stepping down at the end of 2013. Ennahda lost its credibility and support from a large part of the population following the assassination of political leader Mohamed Brahmi in July 2013 and the political deadlock that resulted from it. A political compromise was eventually reached between the country's ruling and opposition parties to form a non-political technocrat cabinet led by Mehdi Jomaa until the parliamentary and presidential elections in October and November 2014. It includes experts with international experience at the Finance and Foreign Affairs Ministries.

Political system after the 2014 constitution

Although Tunisia's new constitution reaffirms the pre-existing Republican system, in which the executive power is held by the president for five years with the help of the prime minister, it modified the legislative power. Until January 2014 the parliament was bicameral, composed of a Chamber of Deputies and a Chamber of Advisors. Today, it is composed of a sole Chamber, the

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Assembly of the Representatives of the People. The leader of the majority party or coalition after elections is designated by the president as prime minister. One of the great improvements in the 2014 constitution is the creation of a Constitutional Court, which restricts the legislative power and prevents laws that would go against rights and freedoms from being ratified. Tunisia is administratively divided in 24 governorates, headed by governors who are appointed by the president. The country enjoys competitive elections thanks to lively partisan life which is constitutionally guaranteed by article 35.

Gender representation and minority rights

Tunisia is often said to be the most progressive Arab country in terms of women's rights. In fact, female representation in parliament has risen to 31% since 2011. The constitution of 2014 not only grants equality of men and women but also includes a "guarantee of equality of opportunity" and aims "to achieve equal representation...in elected councils" in article 46, stating clear goals. In 2017 two further laws, which strengthened women's rights, passed the parliament. Since June domestic violence has been criminalized and Muslim women are able to marry non-Muslim men (interfaith marriages), which according to Islamic law, is not allowed. Additionally, the parliament abolished a reform which would have allowed rapists to escape punishments by marrying the victim.

But progress has its barriers in Tunisia. Men are still considered to be the one who take care of the family and its finances, although a growing number of female workers has been entering the labour market. Restrictions come from the rulings of the Islamic law, highly influential religious institutions and most importantly society itself. Current president Beji Caid Essbsi's steps towards giving women more rights (mainly to show the world, how modern Tunisia is), have been heavily criticised as "state-imposed feminism". Many say, that the government is touching Tunisian cultural roots and strongly oppose new laws like the [inheritance law](#), granting women the same amount as men.

Other than that, many minorities suffer under current religion based laws. Protests for more rights of LGBT+ groups have been shut down for various reasons. Hate speech in public media is very common and government statements on the situation are very rare, although discrimination from TV stations and news agencies is forbidden. Homosexuality remains illegal and punishable in Tunisia under article 230 of the penal code. Critics have been repeatedly saying that article 230 violates constitutional rights such as equality before law (article 21) and personal privacy (article 24). Through a new committee, established by the president, women's rights and the status of the LGBT+ community have been discussed and might be reformed through bills in the parliament. The most recent improvement in Tunisia was the founding of the region's first queer radio station 'Shams', which against many death threats, still broadcasts on the daily lives of LGBT+ individuals.

Tunisian revolution

The current political situation in Tunisia is the result of the popular unrest that erupted in the first half of 2011 after a young man set himself on fire in Sidi Bouzid on 17 December 2010. The frustration of the man concerning the high unemployment rate, living conditions, the economic situation and annoyance with the ruling elite was shared by many Tunisians. Demonstrations occurred around the country for weeks and resulted in the ouster of President Ben Ali on 14 January 2011. Fouad Mebazaa, the speaker of the Tunisian parliament, was sworn in as the country's interim president on 15 January. On 17 January a new government was formed by Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi. A day later three ministers stepped down denouncing the new administration as a betrayal, since the government included several ministers from the former ruling party, the RCD. It is said that over 338 people were killed during the Tunisian uprising.

Political situation under Ben Ali

Before the popular uprising and Tunisia's legislative elections of 2011, the country underwent a long period of authoritarian rule. The bicameral legislative authority was controlled by former President Ben Ali's political party the Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD). Although the role of political parties used to be defined by the constitution as "political parties help to educate citizens so as to organise their participation in political life", only 20 percent of the Chamber of Deputies was granted to opposition parties. Tailor-made laws prevented the candidates from some of the stronger opposition parties from running and severe constraints on freedoms of expression, the press, and assembly deprived challengers from making their case to the public. It was therefore inevitable that Ben Ali and his party the RCD won both elections with a majority of the votes.

Parliamentary Elections

On 26 October 2014 parliamentary elections were held in Tunisia, which established a 217-seat Assembly of the Representatives of the People as adopted by the new constitution. In total, 69 percent of the Tunisian population turned up for voting. The biggest change as a result of these elections for the Tunisian parliament is that the Nidaa Tounes party, a secular party, has taken the lead

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in parliament with 85 seats, which is 39 percent of the votes. Thus, beating the previous dominating party, the Ennahda Movement. The Ennahda party won 69 seats (32 percent of the votes), losing 16 seats compared to 2011, and hereby running as a close second. This gives the Nidaa Tounes party the right to name a prime minister and form a coalition government. However, the party split after Hafedh Caïd Essebsi, the son of President Béji Caïd Essebsi, became Executive Director in January 2016. As a result, Nidaa Tounes holds 62 seats as the second largest party currently, therefore losing its top spot in parliament to the Ennahda Movement. Mohsen Marzouk, former special advisor of the President and member of Nidaa Tunis, founded the new party Machrou Tounes, holding 24 seats in the Assembly.

About 13,000 candidates competed for a seat in the 217-strong National Assembly of Tunisia. All candidates pledged to focus on crippling poverty and unemployment, trying to make an end to Tunisia's social unrest over the weak economy, violence blamed on Islamists, and attacks by militant groups.

The former coalition parties and the Popular Petition have received the biggest losses. The Congress for the Republic went from 29 to 4 seats, the Popular Petition went from 26 to 2, and the Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties (FDTL) lost all seats. These former coalition parties have been punished for their poor results during their governing time. The losses for both Ennahda and the central left-wing parties are due to the political crisis resulting from the murder on two secular politicians and the poor results of the stagnating economic conditions, unemployment and deteriorating safety conditions in the country. However, smaller parties, such as the Free Patriotic Union, the Popular Front, and the Afek Tounes party, emerged noticeably. The Free Patriotic Union won 15 seats and now have 16 seats in parliament, the Popular Front went from 4 to 15 seats, and the Afek Tounes party went from 3 to 8 seats.

The leader of Ennahda, Lotfi Zitoun, has accepted this result and congratulated the winner. The result was hailed internationally for its democratic viability as the only one of the major Arab Spring uprisings that is not convulsed by instability and turmoil. President Barack Obama declared the result as a "milestone" since the parliamentary elections in Tunisia were free, fair and non-violent. Secretary of State, John Kerry, said it was an example of "why Tunisia remains a beacon of hope, not only to the Tunisian people, but to the region and the world".

Official election results

Party	Votes	Seats
Nidaa Tounes	1,279,941	86
Ennahda Movement	947,014	69
Free Patriotic Union	140,873	16
Popular Front	124,046	15
Afek Tounes	102,915	8
Other parties*	-	23
*Congress for the Republic	69,794	4
* Popular Petition	40,826	2

Coalition

On 23 January 2015 Tunisian Prime Minister Habib Essid proposed a new minority government that excluded most of the major parties, such as Islamist and leftist parties. The Nidaa Tounes party originally promised to form a broad government coalition and it had not ruled out forming a coalition with the Ennahda Movement. However, the 24 new ministers presented appeared to come from only two parties that had not enough seats to survive a no-confidence voting. The proposed cabinet included ten ministers from Nidaa Tounes and three from the Free Patriotic Union Party. On 26 January 2015, Essid announced that new negotiations have started over his cabinet after most political parties said they would oppose his initial choice of ministers in a parliamentary vote.

As a result Essid came up with a new cabinet-proposal, which was approved on 5 February 2015. This cabinet is a broad unity coalition that includes the Ennahda Movement. The coalition also includes the populist Free Patriotic Union party and the liberal Afek Tounes Party.

A new cabinet was named by new Prime Minister and member of Nidaa Tounes, Youssef Chahed, on 6 September, replacing 13 ministers of the 27-member government. Among the new ministers he appointed three former ministers who also served under the rule of ousted President Ben Ali. Ridha Chalgoum was restored as finance minister. Lofti Braham, like Chalgoum member of Nidaa

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Tounes, was named as interior minister. Taoufik Rajhi, one of Chahed’s economic advisors and member of the Islamist Ennahda Movement, was appointed to the new minister post of economic reforms.

National Constituent Assembly elections 2011

On 23 October 2011 Tunisia held free elections for the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) for the first time in history. The task of the 217-seat NCA was to write a new constitution for the country and to form an interim government. The two most important issues in the campaign were the questions of the place of religion within the new constitution and how to deal with the remaining old RCD regime representatives. On 21 November 2011 a coalition of Ennahda, CPR and FDTL/Ettakotal was formed holding a majority of 138 seats in the assembly. They agreed to share the three highest posts in the Assembly. Therefore Ettakotal/FDTL leader Mustapha Ben Jaafar was elected President of the Assembly and Meherzia Labidi (Ennahda) and Larbi Abid (CPR) were elected vice presidents. The Assembly also performed normal parliamentary functions in that year, such as government oversight and the drafting of new legislation.

Presidential Elections

Presidential elections were held on 23 November 2014. According to official results, Beji Caid Essebsi, founder of the Nidaa Tounes party, won this first round of voting by receiving 39.46 percent of the votes. However, as Essebsi ran short of the required overall majority of 50 percent of the votes, a second round of voting was required.

On 21 December, the second round of voting was held. Official results, announced on 22 December, showed that the frontrunner Beji Caid Essebsi won the second round, and therefore Tunisia’s first free presidential elections, with 55.68 percent of the votes. His main rival, Moncef Marzouki, became second with 44.32 percent of the votes. On 31 December Essebsi was inaugurated officially as the President of Tunisia.

Both Essebsi and Marzouki were trying to convince Tunisian voters that these presidential elections were the chance to break with the old regime. However, both candidates were accusing their opponent of returning to the old regime that will set off the country’s revolution. Essebsi stirred the competition up by stating that only he could defend Tunisia against the threat of extremism and not Marzouki. Essebsi stated that “the people who voted for Marzouki were the Islamists...that is to say Ennahda members...but also jihadist Salafists.” These comments of Essebsi resulted in large protests in southern Tunisian cities – who largely voted for Marzouki – and calling Essebsi’s comments insulting and divisive. As a response, Al-Bakoush, secretary-general of Essebsi’s political party, accused Marzouki’s Congress for the Republic Party of “attempting to divide the country between the north and the south” and warned of an “unprecedented polarisation” in Tunisia’s southern cities. The head of the EU observer mission, Annemie Neyts-Uytterbroeck, stated that the official results of the first round of Tunisia’s presidential elections were “pluralist and transparent.” She also said that “the exercise of freedom of expression and assembly was guaranteed.”

Shortly after the announcement of the official results, demonstrations and small riots emerged in several southern towns in Tunisia in protest against Essebsi. The protestors argued that these presidential elections have resulted in the return of an old guard of Ben Ali’s era, since Essebsi was a former Ben Ali official for five decades. These critics see the appointment of Essebsi as the Tunisian President as a setback to democracy that resulted from the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011. However, many others supported the newly elected president and hoped that Essebsi would contribute to finalizing Tunisia’s road to democracy. The president himself commented that he was “committed to be president of all Tunisian men and women without exclusion” and that “there is no future without consensus among all parties and social movements.” Also U.S. President Barack Obama and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry congratulated Essebsi on his victory, but also Tunisia as a whole in achieving democratization this far: “Tunisia has provided a shining example to the region and the world of what can be achieved through dedication to democracy, consensus, and an inclusive political process.”

Official election results

Candidates

Beij Caid Essebsi (Nidaa Tounes)
Moncef Marzouki (Congress for the Republic)

Votes first round

1,289,384 (39.46%)
1,092,418 (33.43%)

Votes second round

1,731,529 (55.68%)
1,092,418 (44.32%)

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Hamma Hammami (Popular Front)	255,529 (7.82%)
Hechmi Hamdi (Current of Love)	187,923 (5.75%)
Slim Riahi (Free Patriotic Union)	181,407 (5.55%)
Kamel Morjane (National Destourian Initiative)	41,614 (1.27%)
Ahmed Nejib Chebbi (Republican Party)	34,025 (1.04%)
Others	185.269 (5.6%)

Social Democratic Parties

Forum Démocratique pour le Travail et les Libertés (FDTL)

Party Leader: Mustapha Ben Jaafar

Number of seats: 0

<http://ettakatol.org/?lang=fr>

Established in 1994, just a month before the country's legislative elections, the FDTL is a centre-left secularist party. Its establishment was the result of a call by 200 democrats, academics and defenders of human rights in 1993 for the unification of democratic forces. The party that was established by its current Secretary-General Mustapha Ben Jafar was only legalised in 2002. However, it failed to obtain government positions or seats in the parliament in the 2004 elections.

In the Constituent Assembly elections in October 2011, FDTL won 20 seats and took part in the coalition that consisted of Ennahda and the CPR. Its stated core values are transparency and openness. Its leader Ben Jafar was elected President of the Constituent Assembly in November 2011. During the parliamentary elections in 2014, the FDTL lost all seats. However, it is still member of the Socialist International and observer by the Party of European Socialists.

Harak Tounis Al-Irada (Mouvement Tunisie Volonté) (MTV)

Party Leader: Moncef Marzouki

Number of seats: 4

<http://alirada.tn/>

On 20 December 2015 former president Moncef Marzouki founded a new political party: Al-Irada. The members of the new party are mainly former CPR members. In February 2016 CPR decided to dissolve and announced its merger with Al-Irada.

CPR was a centre-left secular political party which was established by Moncef Marzouki in 2001. As the party was banned in 2002, Marzouki moved to France and ran the party from there. The CPR's main objectives included transparent and free elections, independence of state institutions and the judiciary, to guarantee public liberties and defend human rights and to affirm the Arab Muslim identity within the framework of respect for universal humanitarian values as they are stipulated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The party has been labelled Islamist, but rejected the label and after the elections in October 2011 was seen as a counterweight to the moderate Islamist party which became the country's dominant political force in the elections.

The CPR won 29 seats in the 2011 NCA elections, becoming second after the Ennahda. Party leader Marzouki was elected interim President of Tunisia by the Constituent Assembly and the CPR formed a coalition with Ennahda and the social democratic Ettakatol/FDTL. Together they held 138 seats in the Assembly. During the parliamentary elections in 2014, the party lost significantly and went from 29 to 4 seats.

Al Massar (Voie démocratique et sociale)

Party Leader: Samir Taïeb

Number of seats: 0

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The party was founded in 1978 by Ahmed Mestiri and associates, liberal dissidents from the then ruling Parti Socialiste Destourien (PSD), the predecessor of the RCD. He was replaced by Mohamed Mouadda. After some internal strife over the leadership of the party, Ismail Boulahya, the last founding member of the party still in function, officially became the leader in 2002.

The party successfully participated in the 2004 legislative elections, obtaining 14 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, making it the largest (opposition) party in the Chamber under the domination of the RCD. The number of seats grew to 16 seats at the 2009 election. The Movement of Social-Democrats offers almost the same program as the RCD, apart from being more Arab nationalist and socialist. The party obtained 2 seats in the latest NCA elections in October 2011 elections but of the two deputies, one joined Ennahda in 2013 and the other one joined the Social Democratic Path in 2014.

During the parliamentary elections in 2014, the Social Democrats did not win a seat.

Le Courant Démocrate

Party Leader: Ghazi Chaouachi
Number of seats: 3

Le Courant Démocrate is founded by Mohamed Abbou in May 2013. He was succeeded by Ghazi Chaouachi at the first congress of the party in March 2016. The party focus on ICT for better governance to improve the standard of living of Tunisia's citizens. The goal is to develop a digital culture. Furthermore, Courant Démocrate wants to guarantee rights and freedoms of all, and seeks an Arab federal state that brings together the Arab nations liberated from dictatorships.

Other Parties

Nidaa Tounes (Call for Tunisia)

Party Leader: Beji Caïd Essebsi
Number of seats: 62

Nidaa Tounes was created in June 2012 under the impetus of Beji Caid Essebsi, a former Tunisian ambassador close to Habib Bourgiba and member of former President Ben Ali's government. The party highlights several objectives: the introduction of a Constituent Assembly that will draft a solid constitution, a plan to save the national economy based on national consensus, a process of transitional justice aiming at finalising Tunisia's post-Ben Ali transition, safeguarding individual freedoms and ensuring the neutrality of mosques. During the launch of the party on 16 June 2012, Essebsi asked all Tunisians to unite in favour of transition. Nonetheless, its creation has led to a bipolarisation of party politics in the country, by attracting all opponents to Ennahda.

During the parliamentary elections in 2014, the party won significantly and became the biggest party with 86 seats. However, it has had some significant losses in March 2016, when Mohsen Marzouk announced the official creation of the Movement of Tunisia's Project party. During the split in December of 2015 Marzouk brought several prominent now former Nidaa Tounes members with him including more than twenty deputies in the parliament. In June 2016 there were several smaller transfers of deputies between the Free Patriotic Union and Nidaa Tounes. Nidaa Tounes now holds 62 seats in the parliament and lost its majority to Ennahda, which still has 69 seats.

Ennahda Movement, Renaissance Party, Hizb al-Nahda

Party Leader: Rached Al-Ghannouchi
Number of seats: 69
<http://www.ennahdha.tn/>

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Initially established as Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique (MTI) in 1981. The party is theoretically shaped by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and its key intellectual in the 1950s and 1960s, Sayyid Qutb. The party began as a rather radical one, but started to be described as moderate Islamist in the 1980s and changed its name to the current one in 1988 after Ben Ali's National Pact that sought to separate religion from politics. They advocate democracy and a Tunisian form of Islamism also described as political pluralism.

In elections held in 1989, Ennahda came in second place to the RCD. Shortly afterwards, Ennahda was banned, and its leader Rachid Ghannouchi fled the country for the UK as he and other Ennahda members were prosecuted for "membership in an illegal organization." After the collapse of the Ben Ali regime the Tunisian interim government granted the group permission to form a political party. The Ennahda party became the biggest and best organised party and won 89 seats in the 2011 Constituent Assembly elections.

Ennahda sees itself as an advocate of Islamic democracy, like Turkey's ruling Justice and Development (AKP) party. The party can be seen as a centre-right party that is sympathetic towards economic liberalism. Ennahda's leadership has stressed that it supports equal rights for men and women, although only two women are at first position for the NCA election. Nevertheless, secularists remain wary of Ennahda, whose party's strongest support comes from Tunisia's rural interior.

The Ennahda Movement stepped down in January 2014 since the neutral interim government was established to make the final draft of a constitution, followed by early elections based on this new constitution. During the parliamentary elections in 2014, the party became second after the Nidaa Tounes party, losing almost half of its seats. The party currently holds 69 seats in parliament.

Free Patriotic Union, Union Patriotique Libre (UPL)

Party Leader: Slim Riahi

Number of seats: 16

In May 2011 the party was established by the British-Tunisian Petroleum entrepreneur, Slim Riahi, who returned from London after the Tunisian revolution in January 2011. The party proposes a free market economy and a modern society while rejecting Islamism.

The UPL has mainly been noted for its expensive and excessive electoral campaign. As opposed to most other parties that rely on the voluntary commitment of their members, the Free Patriotic Union can afford to pay its candidates and campaigners. This resulted in an accusation against the party of "buying" candidates and supporters. During the parliamentary elections in 2011, the party received only 1.26 percent of the votes. On 7 March 2013, it was announced that seven minor parties joined forces with the UPL in order to create a new "centrist party of socialist-liberal orientation." During the parliamentary elections in 2014, the party came in third.

The party currently holds 16 seats in parliament.

Popular Front, ej-Jabha (Popular Front for the Realization of the Objectives of the Revolution)

Party Leader: Mohamed Jmour

Number of seats: 15

<http://front-populaire.org/>

The Popular Front was formed in October 2012. It is a leftist political and electoral alliance in Tunisia. The party consists of nine political parties. It brings mainly left wing Tunisian parties together, including the Democratic Patriots' Movement, the Workers' Party, Green Tunisia, the Movement of Socialist Democrats, the Tunisian Ba'ath Movement, the Party of the Democratic Arab Vanguard, two different parties of the Iraqi branch of Ba'ath Party, and other progressive parties.

After the revolution in 2011, leftist parties decided to form the Popular Front in order to better consolidate the previously divided Tunisian left wing so as to be able to compete more effectively in the parliamentary elections in 2014. During the parliamentary elections in 2014, the Popular Front became fourth and gained 15 seats.

Afek Tounes

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Party Leader: Yassine Brahim

Number of seats: 8

http://www.afektounes.tn/Fr/accueil_46_17

Afek Tounes was formed after the revolution and grew famous thanks to its political ads and the perceived modernity of its doctrines. The party could be ideologically classified in the spectrum of centre to liberal and they advocate secularism and emphasize the urge to strengthen the civil liberties while most Tunisians seem to be overwhelmed by other causes related to corruption, unemployment and security.

They are being accused of having links to the former dominant party, the RCD, however this has been denied by the party itself. Many Tunisians claim that this party is targeted to the upper and wealthy classes and is frequently called bourgeois. Since its establishment, the party has been prone to systematic sabotage; its meetings were disrupted frequently during the last months with the infamous French word 'dégage' which means 'leave'. They gained 4 seats in the NCA elections in 2011. Afek Tounes merged on 9 April 2012 with several other minor parties among which the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) – which was dissolved - to form the Republican Party. This new party had 11 seats in the NCA. In August 2013 the current leader, Yassine Brahim, and other former party members left the Republican Party to revive Afek Tounes. During the parliamentary elections in 2014 Afek Tounes won 8 seats.

Courant de l'amour, Current of Love (Popular Petition)

Party Leader: Mohamed Hechmi Hamdi

Number of seats: 2

<https://www.facebook.com/Courant.Mahabba>

The People's Petition for Freedom, Justice and Development party, short Popular Petition or Aridha Chaabia party, and nowadays called the Current of Love, was created after the Tunisian Revolution by the political writer and media entrepreneur, Mohamed Hechmi Hamdi on March 17, 2011.

The People's Petition party included three broad popular ideas during the campaign ahead of the NCA elections in 2011: the formation of a democratic constitution, the adoption of a system of free health care and the dispensation of grants to the unemployed. Hamdi was alleged to have close ties with the ousted President Ben Ali, but claimed those allegations to be false. To the surprise of everyone the party obtained 25 seats in the National assembly during the elections, but did not manage to form a cooperation within a coalition. During the parliamentary elections in 2014, the party has received one of the biggest losses. It went from 26 to 2 seats.

Machrou Tounes

Party Leader: Mohsen Marzouk

Number of seats: 24

Machrou Tounes is founded by former member of Nidaa Tounes, Mohsen Marzouk, in March 2016. It includes members of the 'Al-Horra'-bloc and several political figures, such as former minister Sadek Chaâbane. Important issues are the fight against terrorism and major reforms to improve the social and economic conditions. The party focus on young people and women. Currently, it holds 24 seats in the Assembly. With respect to the government, the party has an ambiguous stance.

Biographies

Beji Caid Essebsi

President

Beji Caid Essebsi was born on 29 November 1926 in Sidi Bou Said in Tunisia. He is a great-grandson of Ismail Caïd Essebsi, who was raised with the ruling family in the beginning of the 19th century and later became an important member within the government.

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Essebsi studied law in Paris and became a lawyer in 1952.

He was a follower of Tunisia's post-independence leader Habib Bourguiba. He then joined Bourguiba as an adviser following the country's independence from France in 1956. From 1957 to 1971, he held various functions, such as Interior Minister from 1965 to 1969 and as Ambassador in Paris. In April 1981, he came back to the government under Mohamed Mzali as Minister of Foreign Affairs, serving until September 1986. From 1990 to 1991, he was the President of the Chamber of Deputies. In the aftermath of the Tunisian Revolution in 2011, Essebsi was appointed as new Prime Minister.

After the elections in 2011, when the new interim President Moncef Marzouki was appointed, Essebsi was replaced as Prime Minister. He then founded the secular Nidaa Tounes party, which won the parliamentary elections in 2014. He was also the party's candidate in Tunisia's first free presidential elections in 2014. In December 2014, in the second round of voting, official results showed that Essebsi won the presidential race. On 31 December 2014, Essebsi was sworn in as the first free elected President of Tunisia.

Youssef Chahed

Prime Minister

Youssef Chahed was born on 18 September 1975 in the capital of Tunis. He studied agricultural engineering at the National Agricultural Institute of Tunisia, and after graduating in environmental economics in France, he obtained a PhD on measuring the liberalization of agricultural trade. As an expert on agriculture and economy he wrote several reports for the European Commission and the US Department of Agriculture.

After the Arab Spring in 2011 he returned to Tunisia and established a new political party: Al Joumhouri. In 2013 he joined the party of Béji Caïd Essebsi, Nidaa Tounes. After winning the elections of 2014 he became secretary of agriculture and fisheries in the cabinet of Habib Essid. In 2016, after a shuffle in the cabinet, he became minister of Local Affairs. After the ousting of prime minister Habib Essid in the summer of 2016, president Essebsi asked him to become Prime Minister and form a new cabinet. As a technocrat, he was relatively unknown. He is known to be a good orator, and has the advantage of his age. His cabinet is seen as progressive with many young state officials and eight women, one of which is his Finance Minister.

Rached Ghannouchi

Leader Ennahda

Rached Kheriji, known as Rached Ghannouchi (1941) is one of the most prominent politicians in Tunisia as he is the leader of the second largest party in Tunisia. He co-founded the Ennahda Movement and is seen as its intellectual leader.

Ghannouchi graduated from Zaytuna University in Tunis in 1962 before he attended Cairo University (Egypt) to study agriculture. After he was expelled from Egypt due to a row between former presidents Bourguiba and Abdel Nasser, Ghannouchi went to University of Damascus (Syria) where he majored in philosophy, and graduated in 1968. Ghannouchi started forming his political orientations as a university student. Despite the fact that he initially joined a socialist party, his views gradually tended towards religious ideology. Ghannouchi then attended the University of Paris, Sorbonne. After studying there for a year, he returned to Tunisia and founded an organization to initiate reforms in the country. Based on his Islamic convictions, he among other, initiated the Islamic Tendency Movement in 1981 to fight political pluralism and call for economic reconstruction.

Ghannouchi along with his followers was sentenced to 11 years in prison in 1981 where he was tortured. Many Tunisians of the whole political spectrum protested against their torture. Ghannouchi was released in 1984. After being sent back to prison in 1987 with a life sentence, he was released again in 1988. Eventually Ghannouchi was exiled to Algeria, and from there he moved to England in 1991, where he lived for over twenty years. During his exile, Ghannouchi was a tireless critic of the political regime in Tunisia. On 30 January 2011 Ghannouchi returned to Tunis for the first time in two decades.

His party, Ennahda, won 89 of the 217 seats in the Constituent Assembly's elections in October 2011, the second party gaining at a much lower rate of 29 seats. During the parliamentary elections in 2014, Ennahda almost lost half of its seats and now claims 69 seats in parliament.

Khalil Zaouia

Secretary-General Ettakatol

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Khalil Zaouia was born 1961 in Tunis. He is an orthopaedic surgeon and professor at the Charles-Nicolle hospital in Tunis, and head of the union of hospital-university doctors. During the third congress of Ettakatol on 9 -10 September 2017, Khalil Zaouia was elected as secretary-general of the party, succeeding Mustapha Ben Jaâfer who founded the party in 1994. After being re-elected in 2009, Zaouia became member of the Political Bureau in charge of international relations. He was Minister of Public Health and Minister of Social Affairs in the Hamadi Jebali government between 2011 and 2014. He is also active as member of the Tunisian League of Human Rights (LTDH) since 1988.

Mohsen Marzouk

Secretary-General Nidaa Tounes

Mohsen Marzouk was born in the city Sfax in 1965. He studied political sociology and international relations in Tunis. He worked as coordinator for the Arab Institute for Human Rights since 1989. Marzouk became secretary-general of the NGO Arab Democracy Foundation in 2008. He was one of the co-founders of Nidaa Tounes in 2012. However, he left the party after disagreement of the party's direction in January 2016, and founded the party Machrou Tounes. Currently, he is secretary-general of the party.

Samir Taïeb

Samir Taïeb was born in 1957 in Tunis. He taught at the Faculty of Law of the University of Sfax between 1989 and 1995, and at the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences in Tunis since 1995. He was member of the American Political Science Association between 2001 and 2003 as well as member of the Scientific Council of the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of Tunis between 2002 and 2011. After the fall of Ben Ali, he became member of the Ettajdid movement that was absorbed in Al-Massar. Currently, Taïeb is secretary-general of the party. He wrote some books on tax reform, social cohesion, and the revision of Tunisia's constitution. Currently, Taïeb is Minister of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries under the new government of Youssef Chahed.

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