



2010: the last year of an authoritarian development model and the limits of Tunisia's electoral authoritarian regime

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On 17 December 2010 Mohamed Bouazizi, a fruit vendor from the central Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid doused himself with gasoline and set fire to himself in front of the local governorate. The weeks that followed this act of self-immolation saw an ever-growing wave of clashes between Tunisians and the security forces spread all over the country. Faced with unprecedented popular anger, the regime firstly resorted to its usual panoply of anti-riot measures. The regime's bell tolled when on 13 January 2011 General Rachid Ammar, the Chief of Staff of the Tunisian Army, refused to order his troops to fire on demonstrators, hence denying President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali any further support.

The limits of an authoritarian development path

Hardly any observer would have predicted that Mohamed Bouazizi's solitary and desperate protest against the arbitrary confiscation of his fruit cart would eventually lead to the ousting of incumbent President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali on 14 January 2011. After the economic downturn of 2009, the economy stabilized in 2010 with growth perspectives being again promising in the light of the solid business environment. Hadn't the World Economic Forum in its 2010-2011 edition of the Global

Competitiveness Index remunerated the government's past development efforts by identifying Tunisia as the most competitive economy on the African continent? Average growth rates of 5% over the last 10 years had confirmed the regime's choices of resolutely embarking on an export-driven development strategy. Recent negotiations with the European Union had led to an agreement to set up a commission to work on a roadmap for Tunisia to finally achieve an advanced integration status. Clearly, the country capitalized on decade-long investment efforts in Tunisia's human capital. Also, Tunisia had received a considerable influx of foreign direct investment in recent years, which in contrast to other countries in the region, was increasingly directed toward manufacturing industries higher up the value chain (e.g. aeronautical components). Next to Tunisia's weak interlinkages with global financial markets, it was undoubtedly thanks to these sound economic foundations that Tunisia had managed to weather the global economic crisis. In addition, rising government expenditures for infrastructure projects, while preserving macroeconomic stability, and a good harvest helped keeping the country's economy on track in 2009. Despite a 22.1%-drop in export revenues in 2009, the Tunisian economy grew

by respectable 3.1% in 2009 and an estimated 3.2% in 2010. In terms of human development, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Tunisia's Human Development Index had risen quicker than the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) average over the last 20 years. With a global rank of 81 out of 169 countries in 2010 Tunisia came in, not surprisingly, behind oil-rich countries such as United Arab Emirates (rank 32) or neighboring Libya (rank 53). But the country had outpaced countries like neighboring oil-rich Algeria (rank 84) and even more clearly Egypt (rank 101) or Morocco (rank 114).

Of course many observers in 2010 knew that the image of the immaculate social and economic success story lauded by the government-controlled media and Tunisia's European partners was only one side of the Tunisian reality. Years of economic growth had not been enough to bring unemployment below the official rate of 14%. Socially motivated riots in the region of Gafsa in spring 2008, at the latest, must have alerted the regime that some regions in the Tunisian *hinterland* might well one day constitute a powder-keg for the regime. The unemployment (or under-employment)

among young, well-educated Tunisians hovered around 30% in regions like El Kef, Gafsa, Kasserine or Sidi Bouzid. The economy there was clearly disconnected from the industrial centers around Sousse and Monastir, the glamorous holiday resorts in Hammamet or the ambitious real estate projects in greater Tunis. And the drought of autumn 2010, in conjunction with increasing prices of everyday commodities, had surely not made life easier for the average Tunisian.

This increasing gap between two Tunisias, evolving at different paces, widening discrepancies in purchasing power and mounting social hardship, explain only in part why the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi had such wide repercussions on the Tunisian society. Protestors' anger needs of course to be seen against the background of the more and more unabashed corruption of a narrow state elite and the family clan around President Ben Ali, as well as the day-to-day patronizing of an omnipresent police state and the bleak human rights record of the

regime. On a more abstract level, the end of the year 2010 seems to have seen the explosion of an increasingly less conciliable contrast between the ambitions of a young, relatively well-off educated modern society with important middle classes and Tunisia's sclerotic political structures. While Tunisia could long pass for a relatively successful example of an authoritarian developing regime, this development model had finally reached its intrinsic limits. In other words, in order to face the social, economic and political challenges of upcoming years, the

Tunisian society was in dire need of more, not less freedom than the institutions of the Ben Ali regime could offer.

The apparent political stability of an electoral authoritarian regime

Politically nothing predestinated the year 2010 to be the last out of the 23 years since (then-) Prime Minister Zine El Abidine Ben Ali had ousted his predecessor and founder of the Republic, Habib Bourguiba, in a bloodless "medical coup" of 7 November 1987. Rather, the cadence of political life in Tunisia in 2010, dominated by President Ben Ali, his state-party Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (RCD) and a fairly efficient security

apparatus, sent a signal of apparent political stability. The years 2009 and 2010 revolved around the renewal of formal institutional structures of the regime and, hence, the presidential and parliamentary elections, held in parallel on 25 October 2009, and the municipal elections of 9 May 2010.

Tunisia has since independence held presidential and parliamentary elections at fairly regular intervals. In this respect, the Ben Ali regime was an archetypical example of an electoral authoritarian regime, in which elections were neither competitive nor fair. Notwithstanding, elections had specific important functions, especially garnering the population around a presidential program and ritually renewing the "unity" between the regime and the population. To a limited extent, elections also provided forums for discussion within the tolerable "limits" and allowed for a controlled rotation (or rejuvenation) of regime elites.

The presidential elections on 25 October 2009 led to the re-election of incumbent President Ben Ali for a third

Tunisia had received a considerable influx of foreign direct investment in recent years, which in contrast to other countries in the region, was increasingly directed toward manufacturing industries higher up in the value chain. It was undoubtedly thanks to these sound economic foundations that Tunisia had managed to weather the global economic crisis.

time in a row with officially 89.62% of valid votes. As in the 1999 and 2004 elections, in an effort to lend credibility to the pseudo-pluralistic elections, a number of handpicked opposition candidates were allowed to stand as candidates against Ben Ali. Among these candidates, Mohamed Bouchiha – Parti d'Unité Populaire (PUP) – and Ahmed Inoubli – Union des Démocrates Unionistes (UDU) –, both representatives of legal opposition parties considered close to the regime, were officially credited with 5% and 3.8% respectively of valid votes. Taking a more resolute oppositional stance, Ahmed Ibrahim, secretary-general of the (ex-communist) Ettajdid – “Renewal” – movement, obtained a mere 1.57% of votes. In January 2011 Ahmed Ibrahim would take a ministerial post in the two transitional governments under Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi that lasted from 17 January until 1 March 2011.

Even more than presidential elections, parliamentary and municipal elections were intended to support the illusion of political pluralism in Tunisia. Political parties under Ben Ali have been subject to a restrictive Parties' Law since 1988, which provided the Ministry of the Interior with much leeway for interpretation. Between 1988 and January 2011 the regime selectively allowed for a strictly controlled façade pluralism intended to bear testimony to the regime's degree of “democratization” to the outside world. Apart from the hegemonic state-party RCD, eight legalized opposition parties existed in late 2010. Some of the parties, for instance the Mouvement des Démocrates Socialistes (MDS), Ettajdid and the PUP do actually have historical roots in the 1970s when they splintered from Bourguiba's (then-) state-party Parti Socialiste Destourien (PSD). A number of other parties, such as UDU, Parti Social Libéral (PSL) and the Parti des Verts pour le Progrès (PVP), had been deliberately launched by the regime in order to cover certain cleavages. Apart from the hegemonic state-party RCD, all opposition parties were hardly known by the Tunisian public, as they had an extremely small member base and were all too often shattered by internal strife. Another reason

was that the regime did not perceive opposition parties as a legitimate emanation of a pluralistic society. Rather, parties were supposed to comply with the government's strategy of a “controlled pluralism” in order to prove the regime's alleged “openness”. Apart from this, parties were supposed, and often forced, to abide to the authoritarian “national consensus”, which included the acknowledgment of the RCD's vanguard role in political life. Opposition parties attempting to free themselves from this imposed consensus or criticizing political stagnation were subjected to different kinds of pressure including legal harassment and government-induced splintering.

This was most prominently the case of two small legal parties, the Parti des Démocrates Progressistes (PDP) and the Forum Démocratique pour le Travail et les Libertés (FDTL), both of which were more outspoken in their criticism of the regime than the other legalized parties and were thus particularly prone to different kinds of pressure. For the parliamentary elections on 25 October 2009, the discriminatory electoral system (plurality in multi-member constituencies) had made sure, as in earlier elections (1989, 1994, 1999 and 2004), that the state-party RCD would win all 161 mandates allocated in the 26 multi-member constituencies. Yet, in order to compensate opposition parties for

their foreseeable (and intended) failure to secure seats the “regular way” and in an effort to artificially “pluralize” parliament, the government had since 1994 granted the legal opposition parties a quota of seats in the Chamber of Deputies (lower house). Technically those parties that did not obtain mandates in the constituencies, i.e. the opposition parties, were allocated a number of compensatory seats according to a PR formula on the basis of their nationwide vote share. For the 2009 elections, opposition parties were thus granted 53 compensatory seats corresponding to 25% of the total number of 214 seats. This is clearly more than the 15.41% all opposition parties together had obtained according to official figures. The participating legal opposition parties MDS, PUP, UDU, PSL, PVP and Ettajdid obtained between 2 (Ettajdid) and 16 seats (MDS). Not sur-

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prisingly PDP and FDTL, the two parties that were most critical of the regime, did not achieve any parliamentary representation. Like Ahmed Brahim (Ettajdid) the secretary-generals of PDP (Ahmed Néjib Chebbi) and FDTL (Mustapha Ben Jaafar) were later to assume temporary responsibility for ministries in the transitional governments under Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi in January and February 2011.

In line with the rhythm of political life in Tunisia, President Ben Ali carried out a partial government reshuffle on 15 January 2010. After Tunisia had successfully weathered the global financial crisis, Ben Ali's economic team remained largely intact. Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi, who had served in his post since 1999, kept his office, as did Ridha Ben Mosbah (Commerce), Afif Chelbi (Industry) and Nouri Jouini (Development and International Cooperation). Renowned for their expertise, these ministers together with the Prime Minister would later remain in office in the transitional cabinets after 14 January 2011 and only resigned on 1 March 2011 together with Prime Minister Ghannouchi. Among the new faces within the cabinet of early 2010, the nomination of Finance Minister, Mohamed Ridha Chalghoum, was interpreted as showing Ben Ali's commitment to further reforming the economy. In his electoral campaign, Ben Ali had promised to bring down Tunisia's jobless rate and further liberalize the economy, most prominently to speed up privatizations and achieve (long planned) full convertibility of the Tunisian dinar by 2014. The nominations of Ridha Grira as Defense Minister and the reassignment of US-educated Kamel Morjane from the Defense Ministry to the post of Foreign Affairs Minister could be seen as an indicator of the President's willingness to upgrade relations with the US. Both ministers were also part of the first transitional government of Mohamed Ghannouchi (17-27 January 2011). The cabinet reshuffle of early 2010 did not affect the Minister of the Interior, Rafik Belhaj Kacem, however. This

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continuity, as well as the nomination of Oussama Romdhani as Communications Minister, coincided with an unprecedented level of intimidation and repression against independent journalists. Under the regime of President Ben Ali, the few independent media, mostly weekly papers edited by opposition parties, were repeatedly hampered in their work and subject to legal harassment each time they voiced criticism. While Reporters Without Borders had ranked Tunisia 143rd out of 173 countries in its 2008 world press freedom index, the country plummeted to 164th position (out of 178 countries) in the report's 2010 edition. Among those attacks on press freedom that received international coverage in 2010 was the arrest of Tunisian journalist Fahem Boukadous on 15 July 2010 and his subsequent detention under inhumane conditions. Boukadous had covered protests in the Gafsa mining region in the spring of 2008, thus defying the authorities' determination to impose a total blackout on news about the local disturbances. Widely associated with the police's ruthless response to the protests in December 2010 and early January 2011, Rafik Belhaj Kacem was finally dismissed by Ben Ali in a vain attempt to appease the protesting population shortly before his own deposal.

The hegemony of the RCD in formal state institutions, as well as the politically intended over-representation of the docile opposition, was again "ritually" reproduced in municipal elections held on 9 May 2010. For the purpose of these elections, municipalities served as multi-member-constituencies. According to the electoral system, those lists that obtained a plurality of votes received an outright of 50% of the seats. The other half of seats was allocated among all lists (including the victorious list) according to proportional representation (with a 3% threshold). At the same time, the electoral law precluded that in those municipalities where more than one list took part in elections, one single list was allocated more than 75% of the seats. Thus, in total, the state party RCD won 4060 seats in 264 municipal councils. In this con-

text, state-media emphasized repeatedly that President Ben Ali had urged local RCD sections to reserve 30% of seats on its lists for women. Since opposition parties and independent lists did not compete in all constituencies, non-RCD candidates obtained 418 seats, i.e. 9.3% of the total number of seats.

A number of handpicked African and Arab personalities, who observed the preparations and conduct of Tunisia's municipal elections in 2010, declared that the elections were in line with international standards.¹ These assessments justly took into consideration the apparent "professionalism" the Tunisian administration had acquired in the management of election procedures in recent years. Yet, such appraisal did unsurprisingly miss the fact that the hegemony of the ruling RCD, the interpenetration between the party and the state apparatus, the lack of press freedom and the absence of effective opposition parties, prevented meaningful competition among candidates more effectively than the sheer manipulation of election results could have possibly done. Also, Tunisians critical of the regime, if not outright discouraged to register in the electors' rolls, seemed to encounter problems in registering. In addition, in the absence of an impartial electoral administration and an effective observation of the entire voting and counting procedures, ex post ballot stuffing seems to have been widespread at the level of regional counting centers.

An apparently minor event of Tunisia's political life in 2010 was illustrative of the authoritarian-corporatist aspect of the Ben Ali regime. On the occasion of a national conference of the national workers' Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT), taking place on 6-7 July 2010 in Hammamet, the secretary-general of the organization, Abdesslem Jerad, announced that the workers' union would take into consideration the difficult economic situation of the country during the upcoming round of wage negotiations. At the same time he reiterated the

pledge of his union toward preserving social peace in the country. Embedded in a long pre-independence tradition, the UGTT had often constituted in recent decades an intra-regime opposition of sorts and the government was well advised to take into account the mobilization power of the UGTT among Tunisian workers. By taking this "responsible" stance, the union leadership reiterated, at least for the moment back then, its commitment to the authoritarian-corporatist scheme providing for regular wage negotiations with the employers' union UTICA under the aegis of the government. This consensus had for some time guaranteed that wages, particularly in the

lower brackets, continued to rise in a controlled manner. Cumbersome negotiations in 2008, though, forebode that this authoritarian corporatist interest representation was progressively reaching its limits in the light of the decreasing purchasing power of average Tunisians. Hence, when the UGTT decided to go on strike on 11 January 2011 this proved very visibly the declining legitimacy of the regime and contributed to its downfall.

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¹ See for instance the interview with Zohra Bitat, Vice-President of the Algerian Senate (*Afrique Asie*, June 2010), p. 57.



Timeline of Events

Algeria

3 February 2011 (Algiers):

President Abdelaziz Bouteflika announced that the state of emergency, in place since 1992, would be lifted in a "very near future".

8-9 February 2011 (Algiers):

Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci met with Iran's recently appointed Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi to discuss bilateral ties.

14 February 2011 (Paris):

Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci said that marches in Algeria to demand a change in the system would remain "minority movements".

14 February 2011 (Washington):

The US State Department urged Algerian security forces to show restraint in dealing with anti-government protests.

16 February 2011 (Algiers):

Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia announced that Algeria's 19-year-old state of emergency would be lifted by the end of month. Ouyahia also promised to issue proposals that would tackle the many social and economic problems that affect the country.

17 February 2011 (Algiers):

A former senior official Abdelhamid Mehri called for sweeping political changes in the country in an open letter to President Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

18 February 2011 (Madrid):

Spanish First Vice-Prime Minister and Interior Minister Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba met with the Foreign Affairs Minister Mourad Medelci.

20 February 2011 (Madrid):

In an interview published in the Spanish newspaper *El País*, Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci said that the recent protests in Egypt and Tunisia will not cause a 'domino effect' in Algeria. Medelci added that "the domino effect is an invention of the media".

22 February 2011 (Algiers):

The cabinet formally approved an order to lift the country's state of emergency. A spokesman said that the order will take effect after its "imminent" publication in the official gazette.

23 February 2011 (Algiers):

Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci said that Morocco and Algeria had agreed to a new political initiative designed to boost bilateral relations. The agreement "will allow three ministers to visit the two countries next March to discuss ways to give much needed dynamism to bilateral relations in sensitive fields, especially energy and agriculture", Medelci stated.

24 February 2011 (Algiers):

The state of emergency was officially lifted.

24 February 2011 (Algiers):

US Undersecretary for Political Affairs William J. Burns met with President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and with Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci. Burns praised Algeria for lifting the state of emergency.

Libya

3 February 2011 (Tripoli):

Authorities freed 12 prisoners after mediation by the Gaddafi Foundation charity led by Saif al-Islam, the son of Muammar Gaddafi. The kidnappers were arrested on the grounds of belonging to the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, a banned jihadist organization.

7 February 2011 (Tripoli):

Muammar Gaddafi met with Malta's Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and Foreign Affairs Minister Tonio Borg.

13 February 2011 (Tripoli):

The government announced programs to improve the lives of the youth through the creation of employment opportunities, the provision of land for housing, and access to credit facilities for the creation of income-generating activities.

15 February 2011 (Tripoli):

The Libyan Foreign Ministry announced its agreement with Switzerland on the appointment of a chief arbitrator to help repair relations that were stretched to breaking point by a diplomatic dispute last year. The appointee is Canadian international law expert Philippe Kirsch.

16 February 2011 (Tripoli):

Libya released 110 prisoners that were jailed for belonging to the banned jihadist organization Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG).

19 February 2011 (Cairo):

The Arab League said that it was important that the March summit in Baghdad still take place in light of "the grave, fateful developments" in the Arab world. Libya, which holds the rotating presidency of the Arab leaders' summit, stated that the Baghdad meeting would be postponed because of the situation in the region.

19 February 2011 (Ottawa):

Canadian Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon urged the Libyan government to engage in "peaceful dialogue", adding that he was "deeply concerned" about a crackdown on protesters.

20 February 2011 (London-Tripoli):

During a phone conversation with Saif al-Islam, the son of Muammar Gaddafi, UK Foreign Secretary William Hague expressed "grave concern" over the escalation of violence. Libya's actions were "unacceptable and will result in worldwide condemnation", Hague added.

20 February 2011 (Washington):

Human Rights Watch expressed mounting concerns over what was described as the ongoing murder of unarmed protesters who are demanding reforms.

21 February 2011 (Brussels):

The European Union's Foreign Ministers released a statement in which they condemn the repression of "peaceful demonstrators" and deplore the violence and the death of civilians. The Ministers added that freedom of expression and the right to assemble peacefully



are fundamental rights of every human being which must be respected and protected.

21 February 2011 (Tripoli):

Saif al-Islam Gaddafi promised political and institutional reforms but also warned of a "civil war" after protests against his father reached Tripoli.

21 February 2011 (Tripoli):

Interior Minister Abdul Fattah Younis al Abidi resigned.

21 February 2011 (Beijing):

China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu said that Beijing is worried about Chinese citizens and businesses in Libya and hopes that the country can restore social stability as soon as possible.

22 February 2011 (Cairo):

A spokesman from the Egyptian Armed Forces said that the military will reinforce the border with Libya with border guards and open the Salloom passage to enable sick and injured Libyans to leave their country.

22 February 2011 (Tripoli):

Muammar Gaddafi delivered a speech on state television saying that he would not leave the country and would rather die like a martyr. Gaddafi claimed that protesters were under the effect of drugs and alcohol, influenced by al-Qaeda, and that they deserved the death penalty.

23 February 2011 (Washington):

US President Barack Obama said that the US is considering a "full range of options" to pressure Muammar Gaddafi.

23 February 2011 (Berlin):

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that Gaddafi's televised speech was "alarming" and called for European sanctions against Libya.

23 February 2011 (Paris):

French President Nicolas Sarkozy called for the immediate adoption of a set of sanctions against Libya, saying that the "international community cannot stand idly by in the face of these massive human rights violations".

24 February 2011 (Canberra):

Australian Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd said that the United Nations must speak with one voice on Libya and should consider a no-fly zone.

24 February 2011 (Caracas):

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez described what was happening in Libya as a civil war and his Foreign Minister Nicolás Maduro said that it looked like some western powers wanted to split and occupy the Mediterranean nation for its oil.

24 February 2011 (Tripoli):

Muammar Gaddafi's daughter Aisha appeared in public to deny reports that she had fled to Malta.

24 February 2011 (Paris):

French Defense Minister Alain Juppé expressed his wish that Muammar Gaddafi's rule come to an end.

25 February 2011 (New York):

During a UN Security Council Meeting, Libyan ambassador Mohamed Shalgham appealed to the Council to save his nation from the violence unleashed on protesters by leader Muammar Gaddafi and to impose sanctions on the regime. France called for an arms embargo against Libya.

25 February 2011 (Brussels):

NATO held an emergency council meeting to discuss the situation in Libya at the request of the organization's Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

25 February 2011 (Cairo):

Libyan Prosecutor General Abdul-Rahman al-Abbar announced his resignation and joined the opposition.

25 February 2011 (Tripoli):

Saif al-Islam, son of Muammar Gaddafi, denied that his family was losing control of parts of Libya, blaming Al Jazeera television "for spreading lies that make the rebellion look larger than it is". According to Saif, most of the country is calm and under the regime's control, with the exception of the cities of Misrata and al-Zawiyaa in the west and Beyda and Derna near Benghazi in the east.

26 February 2011 (Caracas):

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez said that he supports the government of fellow OPEC member Libya but shied away from defending Muammar Gaddafi.

26 February 2011 (Washington -Berlin):

In a telephone conversation with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, US President Barack Obama said that Muammar Gaddafi should step down.

26 February 2011 (Paris):

The French Finance Ministry's Tracking Investigation Unit asked bankers and money managers to pay "particular attention" to any transaction that might be linked to assets owned by Muammar Gaddafi, his family and associates.

26 February 2011 (New York):

The UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1970. The Resolution includes a travel ban and an asset freeze on Gaddafi, his inner circle, and members of the Libyan leader's family. It calls for the International Criminal Court to probe the crackdown against anti-government protesters in Libya and prosecute anyone responsible for killing civilians. It also includes an arms embargo.

27 February 2011 (Washington):

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that the US was reaching out to opposition groups in the eastern part of the country, prepared to offer "any kind of assistance" to Libyans seeking to overthrow the regime.

27 February 2011 (London):

Foreign Secretary William Hague said that the UK has revoked the diplomatic immunity of Muammar Gaddafi and his family.

27 February 2011 (Benghazi):

Libya's former Justice Minister Mustafa Abdul Jalil announced that he was forming a transitional government with a view to replace Gaddafi, which according to the statement allegedly controlled only some western areas around the capital and a few longtime bastions in the arid south.

28 February 2011 (Caracas):

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez called for an international mediation effort to seek a peaceful solution to the uprising in Libya.

28 February 2011 (Washington -Mediterranean):

The US moved warships and aircraft closer to Libya and froze US\$30 billion in assets belonging to the Gaddafi regime.

**28 February 2011 (Washington):**

US President Barack Obama met with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to discuss the situation in Libya. Ban stated that “we agreed that the international community must stand firmly together during this historic transition toward a more democratic, secure and prosperous Middle East”.

28 February 2011 (Brussels):

The Council of the European Union adopted a decision implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1970 and imposing additional restrictive measures against those responsible for the crackdown on the civilian population.

28 February 2011 (Geneva):

In an address to the UN Human Rights Council, US State Secretary Hillary Clinton said that “it is time for Gaddafi to go, now, without further violence or delay”.

28 February 2011 (Tripoli):

In an interview with the Los Angeles Times, Saif al-Islam, one of Muammar Gaddafi’s sons, said that Libyans want “peace and security”, which he said only the government in Tripoli can provide. “They are simple people, farmers, ordinary men. They want peace security, children to go to school, they want to eat, drink. No one wants the chaos”.

28 February 2011 (Tripoli):

Libyan forces loyal to Muammar Gaddafi captured three crew members of a Dutch naval helicopter who were rescuing European citizens.

Mauritania

2 February 2011 (Nouakchott):

Mauritanian soldiers prevented a terrorist attack by killing three terrorists before they could reach their target.

4 February 2011 (Nouakchott):

Defense Minister Hamady Ould Hamady said that Mauritania is stepping up attacks against terrorists belonging to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb across the border in Mali.

18 February 2011 (Vassal):

According to a statement by the opposition party Rally of Democratic Forces “people demonstrating against water scarcity and rising prices faced repression, abuse and arrests by security forces”.

21 February 2011 (Abidjan):

The African Union high-level panel – made up of President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, and also Jacob Zuma of South Africa, Idriss Déby of Chad and Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania – met Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara respectively, who have been locked in a bitter struggle for the Ivorian presidency.

26 February 2011 (Doha):

Prime Minister Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf met with Qatar’s Minister of State for International Cooperation Khalid bin Mohamed al-Attiyah.

27 February 2011 (Doha):

The Qatari-Mauritanian Joint Higher Committee held its first session, chaired by Prime Minister Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf and by the Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabor Al Thani.

Morocco

7 February 2011 (Rabat):

Justice Minister Mohamed Taieb Naciri met with his Russian counterpart Alexander Vladimirovich Konovalov to bolster cooperation in the judicial and legislative fields.

7-8 February 2011 (Rabat):

The European Commissioner for Enlargement Stefan Fule met with Foreign Minister Taib Fassi Fihri and announced that the European Union will increase Morocco’s funding. Fule hailed the “efforts made in Morocco” and stated that “we undertake to support it in the process of its development”.

8 February 2011 (Rabat):

Industry, Trade and New Technologies Minister Ahmed Reda Chami met with Germany’s State Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology Bernd Pfaffenbach and signed a declaration to create a Joint Economic Committee.

10 February 2011 (Rabat):

Foreign Minister Taib Fassi Fihri met with the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Saoud Al Faycal.

14 February 2011 (Rabat):

Prime Minister Abbas El Fassi met opposition parties to discuss parliamentary polls and the

impact the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia may have on the region.

15 February 2011 (Rabat):

Foreign Minister Taib Fassi Fihri said that Algeria and the Polisario Front may use the current political upheavals in some Arab countries to stir unrest in the disputed desert region. Fihri also urged Algeria to turn the page on past disputes and focus on greater bilateral economic cooperation.

21 February 2011 (Rabat):

King Mohammed VI inaugurated a long-awaited advisory body to the government. The creation of the Social and Economic Council is enshrined in the constitution but was delayed for years.

23 February 2011 (Lisbon):

Foreign Minister Taib Fassi Fihri met with Portuguese Foreign Minister Luís Amado. Fihri stated that the Libyan people’s demands are legitimate and that violence against protesters is extremely worrying. Amado said that the situation in North Africa is “extremely dangerous” and may be one of the most difficult challenges for Europe since World War II.

24 February 2011 (Rabat):

The Socialist Union of Popular Forces, one of the biggest parties in Morocco’s ruling coalition, called for a timetable for the implementation of political reforms to meet popular demand.

27 February 2011 (Rabat):

US Undersecretary for Political Affairs William J. Burns met with Foreign Minister Taib Fassi Fihri. Burns underscored the importance of US-Morocco relations in the current regional unrest, and reaffirmed Washington’s support of Morocco’s autonomy plan to resolve the Western Sahara dispute. Fihri said that a military intervention by NATO in Libya would not be useful. Such an intervention would be seen as “a conspiracy” against the Libyan people.

28 February 2011 (Rabat):

Foreign Minister Taib Fassi Fihri held talks with visiting US State Department Coordinator for Counterterrorism Daniel Benjamin on bilateral relations



Tunisia

3 February 2011 (Tunis):

All 24 regional governors were sacked as part of efforts to dismantle the legacy of ousted President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

3-6 February 2011 (Tunis):

A delegation of members of the European Parliament met with Interim Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi.

6 February 2011 (Tunis):

Interior Minister Fehrat Rajhi announced the suspension of ousted President Ben Ali's Constitutional Democratic Assembly.

6 February 2011 (Tunis):

In an interview to the Financial Times, Interim Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi appealed for international funding to "protect the Tunisian experiment", adding that the cost "would be really very modest compared with what is at stake".

7 February 2011 (Tunis):

In a press conference, Rachid Ghannouchi, the leader of the Islamist movement Ennahda, said that it "is committed to democracy and to the people's right in choosing their president through elections". Ghannouchi added that it is vital to build "on the gains achieved by women, as manifested in the Personal Status Code, improving women's lives and underscoring their positive role on the political, social and cultural arena, so they could effectively take part in advancing society".

8 February 2011 (Strasbourg):

Members of the European Parliament called for an international donors' conference to be held for Tunisia.

8 February 2011 (Tunis):

Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi met with UK Foreign Secretary William Hague, who called for greater political openness and economic development and who expressed London's support for Tunisia. Hague pledged US\$8 million in aid.

9 February 2011 (Tunis):

The Senate passed legislation that gave interim President Fouad Mebazaa the power to rule by decree. Interim Prime Minister Mohammed

Ghannouchi said that the legislation was needed to speed up reforms as people were anxious for change.

10 February 2011 (Tunis):

Authorities announced the detention of an armed group linked to ousted President Ben Ali, which they suspected of involvement in a recent wave of violence.

12 February 2011 (Tunis):

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle met with interim Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi and said that Tunisia's democratic revolution was "irreversible". Westerwelle also pledged to assist Tunisia in this "ongoing period of transformation".

13 February 2011 (Tunis):

Foreign Minister Ahmed Ounaies resigned. In France, Ounaies hailed his French counterpart Michele Alliot-Marie as "above all a friend of Tunisia" at the moment Alliot-Marie faced calls to resign after admitting that she used a private plane owned by a Tunisian businessman with alleged ties to the regime of Ben Ali.

14 February 2011 (Tunis):

President of the African Development Bank (AfDB) Donald Kaberuka met with Interim Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi to discuss the many challenges that Tunisia faces. Kaberuka expressed the AfDB's commitment to supporting Tunisia.

14 February 2011 (Tunis):

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton met with Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi and other officials to discuss the situation in the country and to express Europe's support.

15 February 2011 (Tunis):

Interim Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi and Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini agreed on a plan to stem the flow of illegal migration across the Mediterranean after up to 5,000 Tunisians landed on the Italian island of Lampedusa. Italy has pledged to donate €100 million in aid.

15 February 2011 (Tunis):

The interim government extended a state of emergency that was imposed last month before Ben Ali was ousted, but without the overnight curfew.

15 February 2011 (Tunis):

A group of 28 parties and organizations called for the establishment of the National Council for the Protection of the Revolution, destined "to counter all attempts to abort the revolution and shove the country into a state of vacuum".

17 February 2011 (Paris-Tunis):

During a telephone conversation, French President Sarkozy and Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi focused on the developing situation in Tunisia. President Sarkozy emphasized that France "will be in the vanguard in helping the Tunisian people make their aspirations to build a democratic, prosperous Tunisia a reality".

18 February 2011 (Tunis):

Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi granted amnesty to political prisoners and announced new aid programs for the poor.

19 February 2011 (Tunis):

Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi met with Malta's Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Tonio Borg. The meeting addressed bilateral relations.

20 February 2011 (Tunis):

The government formally requested former President Ben Ali to be extradited from Saudi Arabia.

21 February 2011 (Tunis):

U.S. Senators John McCain and Joseph Lieberman met with Tunisian Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi.

21 February 2011 (Tunis):

Turkish Foreign Minister and current president of the Council of Europe Ahmet Davutoglu met with Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi. The Council's Secretary General Thorbjorn Jagland also attended the meeting. Davutoglu said that Tunisia had a chance to become a role model for other countries seeking reform if it can avoid pitfalls on the path to elections.

22 February 2011 (Tunis):

French Minister of Economy and Finance Christine Lagarde and French Minister for European Affairs Laurent Wauquiez met with Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi, Foreign Minister Mouldi Kefi, Minister for Economic and Social Reform Elyés Jouini and Minister for International Cooperation Mohamed Nouri Jouini, to express their support.

**23 February 2011 (Tunis):**

US Undersecretary for Political Affairs William J. Burns met with Foreign Minister Mouldi Kefi and said that Washington would welcome a "solid partnership" with Tunisia.

28 February 2011 (Tunis):

Development and International Cooperation Minister Mohamed Nouri Jouini and Energy Minister Afif Chelbi resigned from the interim government.

27 February 2011 (Tunis):

Interim Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi resigned as security forces clashed with protesters, the latter of whom demanded the resignation of Ghannouchi and other ministers. Béji Caïd Sebti, a lawyer who was an adviser to Tunisia's first President Habib Bourguiba, was appointed Prime Minister.

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- Mireia Delgado, "France and the Union for the Mediterranean: Individualism versus Co-operation" (*Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 2011), pp. 39-57.
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- James McDougall, "Dream of Exile, Promise of Home: Language, Education, and Arabism in Algeria" (*International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 2, May 2011), pp. 251-270.
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- Tobias Schumacher, "Germany and Central and Eastern European Countries: Laggards or Veto-players?" (*Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 2011), pp. 79-98.
- Oliver Schlumberger, "The Ties that do not Bind: The Union for the Mediterranean and the Future of Euro-Arab Relations" (*Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 2011), pp. 135-153.
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