



Resolution 1791 (2011)¹

The situation in Tunisia

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In the last few weeks, Tunisia, one of Europe's closest Mediterranean neighbours, has undergone major changes. Local unrest over poor social and economic conditions evolved into a nationwide protest movement which finally forced President Ben Ali to stand down and flee the country. The situation in Tunisia remains fragile and uncertain and street protests continue.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly pays tribute to the courage and determination of the Tunisian people who, despite violent repression, have clearly shown the will to put an end to authoritarian rule and to transform Tunisia into a free, open and democratic country. The attitude of the Tunisian army, which offered protection to the people during the troubles without interfering in politics, is also to be commended.

3. The Assembly condemns unequivocally the use of violence against protesters, regrets the loss of dozens of lives, and expresses its sympathy to the families of the victims and those injured. The use of arms against peaceful citizens and the police action need to be thoroughly investigated and those responsible must be called to account. It also regrets incidents of violence, looting and destruction of property on the part of some groups of protesters.

4. Even if the main causes for the events in Tunisia have their origin in Mr Ben Ali's policies, Europe also has its share of responsibility since it failed to condemn the nature of the regime, preferring to take advantage of the country's apparent stability to do business.

5. Political forces in Tunisia must not fail the people's expectations and should quickly start political reforms. Political pluralism should express itself. In this context, the Assembly takes note of the formation of a transitional government, which includes several leaders of the opposition. It also notes with satisfaction that politicians and public figures who had lived in exile can now return to the country.

6. The first steps announced by the provisional government, such as the release of political prisoners, the lifting of restrictions on the activities of political parties and human rights groups and the pledge to guarantee the freedom of the media, are welcome.

7. However, Tunisians expect full democratisation of Tunisian society and demand far more comprehensive political reforms that would make the changes irreversible. Moreover, many Tunisians, both in the country and abroad, are disappointed that members of the former ruling party, the Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD – Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique), retain key positions in the transitional government, even if all of them have now left that party.

8. The provisional authorities of Tunisia must move quickly towards political liberalisation with a view to creating conditions for a pluralist political process that involves the whole spectrum of Tunisian society. This includes a speedy announcement of a date for elections and the holding of free and fair elections that are fully in line with international standards. The Assembly encourages all political forces to contribute in a constructive way to the setting up of the agenda for reform.

1. Assembly debate on 27 January 2011 (8th Sitting) (see [Doc. 12497](#), report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mrs Brasseur). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 January 2011 (8th Sitting).



9. The Assembly has repeatedly called for, and expressed support for, democratic transformation in neighbouring countries, including in Tunisia. It has unparalleled experience in accompanying countries in transition and young democracies on the path of reform, which it is ready to extend to Tunisia. In this respect, the recently established Partner for Democracy status provides a concrete framework for sharing this experience with the parliaments of Europe's neighbours.

10. The Assembly hopes that political transformation in Tunisia may set in motion democratic changes both in Tunisia and in other countries of the region. It notes that the developments in Tunisia have already triggered a domino effect in Egypt.

11. It recalls its [Resolution 1731 \(2010\)](#) on the Euro-Mediterranean region: call for a Council of Europe strategy, whereby it stated that peace and stability in the Mediterranean can only be secured on the basis of democracy, the respect for human rights and the rule of law. In this context, the Assembly welcomes the readiness of the European Union to assist Tunisia in the process of reform, and in particular to help the country in organising elections, and reiterates its call that the activities of the Union for the Mediterranean should be extended in order to include the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It further appeals to the European Union and its member states, and the Council of Europe member states taking part in the Union for the Mediterranean, to involve the Council of Europe in its activities.

12. The Assembly, aware of the danger that extremist elements may take advantage of any political void and in order, *inter alia*, to avoid any risk of the military being involved in politics, calls on the provisional Tunisian authorities to respond to the people's aspiration for democratic reforms, and as a matter of priority to:

12.1. guarantee fundamental political freedoms, such as freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of religion, freedom of expression and freedom of the media, as well as the protection of individual rights;

12.2. abolish the death penalty and, in the meantime, maintain the moratorium on executions;

12.3. set up a "truth and reconciliation commission" in order to establish the facts and the responsibilities of those involved in abuses committed by the former regime, as well as the means of redress for those who suffered from such abuses;

12.4. create the conditions for citizens' participation in political and public life;

12.5. engage in a comprehensive constitutional reform with a view to creating genuinely representative political institutions, and to consolidating the rule of law and the judiciary;

12.6. take resolute steps to curb corruption and nepotism, to investigate abuses of power committed by the former ruling elites, and to implement urgent social and economic reforms with a view to creating normal and equitable conditions for all those involved in the economy.

13. The Assembly encourages the provisional Tunisian authorities to intensify and broaden co-operation with the Council of Europe and to take advantage of its experience during the country's transition towards democracy, and in particular to:

13.1. accede to those Council of Europe legal instruments which are open to non-member states, in particular to those in the fields of democracy, human rights and the rule of law;

13.2. make full use of Tunisia's membership in the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) in the future constitutional reform process;

13.3. accede to the Council of Europe's enlarged partial agreements such as the North-South Centre and the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA);

13.4. establish contacts between the Council of Europe and the authorities in Tunisia responsible for questions of justice, sustainable development, culture, education and higher education, youth and sport, gender equality and the rights of the child;

13.5. study and use, in their respective activities, the experience of Council of Europe human rights institutions and monitoring mechanisms, including notably the European Court of Human Rights and the Commissioner for Human Rights;

13.6. foster contacts between Tunisian and European parliamentary and civil society representatives;

13.7. consider the prospects for parliamentary dialogue offered by the Partner for Democracy status recently established by the Assembly.

14. The Assembly resolves to follow closely the political developments in Tunisia, strengthen its dialogue with the parliament of that country and, in particular, with the new institutions following the forthcoming elections – which the Assembly hopes will be free and fair – and find appropriate ways for assisting Tunisia in its progression towards democracy.