



Resolution 1831 (2011)¹

Final version

Co-operation between the Council of Europe and the emerging democracies in the Arab world

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly has been following with great interest and concern the evolution of the “Arab spring”: the popular protest movements, which have been breaking out throughout the Arab world since the beginning of the year and which have already brought about the most dramatic changes in the region since the 1950s. Referring also to its Resolution 1791 (2011) and Resolution 1819 (2011) on the situation in Tunisia, the Assembly welcomes, in particular, the encouraging developments in Tunisia and Egypt and fully supports the process of democratic transition in these countries.
2. The Assembly pays tribute to the memory of Mohammed Bouazizi, whose desperate act of protest instigated the uprisings taking place in the Arab world, and to that of the victims of repression who have lost their lives in the struggle for democracy. It deeply regrets the significant loss of human life and extends its sympathy to the families of those killed and to those injured.
3. The Assembly welcomes the success of the democratic forces in Libya. It supports United Nations Security Council Resolution 2009 aimed at assisting the transitional authorities in Libya and is ready to assist the authorities if they so wish. It calls on the National Transitional Council to do its utmost to prevent human rights abuses by the forces under its control and to bring to account those responsible for alleged abuses.
4. The Assembly is particularly disturbed by the situation in Syria, where the authorities have launched brutal repression against their own people resulting in thousands of deaths. It unequivocally condemns the use of violence against the populations and urges its immediate cessation. It calls on the authorities of the Council of Europe member states to impose firm and effective sanctions on those who have contributed or are contributing to violence against the people. There must be no impunity for crimes against humanity, whoever committed them. The Assembly therefore calls on the international community, including, as appropriate, the International Criminal Court, to ensure that all such crimes are investigated and punished.
5. The Assembly calls for the release of all those arrested for their political support for democratic changes. It also urges the *de facto* and *de jure* authorities in the countries experiencing unrest to facilitate the departure of foreigners wishing to leave. It asks them to allow medical relief teams and representatives of humanitarian organisations to have free access to the areas where clashes occur.
6. The Assembly regrets the tragic fate of refugees who drown in the Mediterranean and calls on all member states to provide additional aid in this humanitarian emergency situation and to honour their commitment to the Geneva Conventions.
7. The Assembly also regrets that the countries of the Arab world have failed to take advantage of the important oil-generated resources to ensure the implementation of social progress, either for their home state or to assist their neighbours, in a spirit of solidarity. However, it recognises that some part of the responsibility for past failures rests with Europe which, in its dealings with the Arab world, has given excessive weight to factors affecting short-term stability to the detriment of those affecting longer-term development consistent with the values upheld by the Council of Europe.

1. Assembly debate on 4 October 2011 (31st Sitting) (see Doc. 12699, report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Gardetto). Text adopted by the Assembly on 4 October 2011 (31st Sitting).



8. Today, Europe must help bring about a peaceful transition to democracy and respect of human rights in the Arab countries concerned, some of which are its immediate neighbours, with humility and mutual respect, and prevent the emergence of military or theocratic regimes, or degeneration into chaos following a prolonged absence of authority. In particular, it is essential to:

- 8.1. engage in a dialogue with the democratic forces in the countries concerned;
- 8.2. encourage respect for public liberties, including freedom of religion and the right to change one's religion, and allow all religions to be practised openly;
- 8.3. implement paragraph 15 of Assembly Recommendation 1957 (2011) on violence against Christians in the Middle East;
- 8.4. review and, if necessary, reform national laws, including family law, so that they comply with international law on gender equality guaranteeing that women have equal rights and opportunities, and ensure that women are able to exercise these rights and to participate fully and equally in social and political life, particularly in the democratic processes of transition, in voting and standing for elections, and in the setting up of businesses;
- 8.5. assist the countries concerned in developing regional and local democracy;
- 8.6. take into account the opinions of those civil society bodies which promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law, develop a dialogue with them and help them become stronger.

9. The Assembly believes that the stability of the Arab world aspiring to democracy would be facilitated by finding a solution to the main conflicts which remain in the region; it calls, in particular, on the Israelis and the Palestinians to take advantage of the opportunity brought about by the Arab revolutions to reopen peace negotiations, on the basis of the principles it already set out in its Resolution 1700 (2010) on the situation in the Middle East.

10. The Assembly takes this opportunity to call on the members of the United Nations Security Council – and in particular on France, Russia, the United Kingdom, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany and Portugal, all Council of Europe member states – to support the Palestinian formal request to join the United Nations as a fully fledged member.

11. The Arab countries in the vicinity of Europe can benefit from the Council of Europe's experience in the field of democratic transition and in particular from the status of partner for democracy with the Parliamentary Assembly, recently established for the parliaments of these countries. In this respect, the Assembly refers to its Resolution 1818 (2011) whereby it granted this status to the Parliament of Morocco on 21 June 2011 and expects to be fully accredited to observe the parliamentary elections to be held in Morocco on 25 November 2011 in accordance with the terms of this resolution. It also notes that the Palestinian National Council was granted the status of partner for democracy on 4 October 2011.

12. The Assembly undertakes to continue its close monitoring of political developments in each of the Arab countries in Europe's neighbourhood and to strengthen its co-operation with the parliaments of the countries engaged in the democratic process. In particular, it is ready to invite parliamentarians representing the democratic movements in the countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean to take part in the Forum for the Future of Democracy, the next session of which will be held in Cyprus in October 2011.

13. The Assembly calls on the authorities of Tunisia and Egypt to create a climate of trust before and during the forthcoming elections in their countries, so that the populations go to vote, and to take all adequate measures to ensure that these elections are free and fair in order to give appropriate legitimacy to the new institutions.

14. It encourages the authorities of the Arab countries in the neighbourhood of Europe, which are engaged in the democratic process, to intensify and broaden their co-operation with the Council of Europe, and in particular to:

- 14.1. be guided by the standards of Council of Europe conventions in the field of human rights and consider acceding to the Council of Europe legal instruments open to non-member states and enlarged partial agreements, in particular the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (North-South Centre) and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission);
- 14.2. promote dialogue and co-operation between their parliaments and the Assembly, particularly in the light of the recently established partner for democracy status;

14.3. abolish the death penalty and, in the meantime, introduce or maintain a moratorium on executions.

15. The Assembly welcomes the Council of Europe policy towards its immediate neighbourhood aimed at promoting dialogue and co-operation with the countries and regions in the vicinity of Europe, proposed by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and calls on him to:

15.1. establish contacts with the authorities of Arab countries in Europe's neighbourhood which are engaged in the democratic process, and to consider measures to support civil society in those countries;

15.2. consider ways in which representatives of young people in those countries can be involved in Council of Europe activities in the youth field;

15.3. consider ways of involving representatives of those countries in the Summer University for Democracy and in the Strasbourg International Forum for Democracy, the setting up of which was proposed by the Assembly, in particular by promoting initiatives such as the schools of political studies;

15.4. co-ordinate his action with that of Council of Europe member states and the European Union;

15.5. establish contacts with the League of Arab States and explore the possibilities to share the experience of the Council of Europe with Arab countries in the fields of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

16. The Assembly calls on the Council of Europe Development Bank to examine the possibility of helping emerging democracies in the Arab world in Europe's neighbourhood and civil society in the countries concerned to the fullest extent possible and on the basis of specific arrangements.

17. The Assembly urges the principal international partners of the southern Mediterranean countries engaged in a process of democratisation, the European Union and the Union for the Mediterranean, international organisations with a financial remit and the member states of the Council of Europe to provide support for their recovery. It particularly urges Arab countries with substantial financial resources to contribute to this effort.

18. It is essential to follow the welcomed initiative of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to encourage and facilitate investment in the countries of the Arab world on the path towards democracy, facilitate their access to European markets, in particular agricultural markets, trade, enterprise start-up, as well as the creation of infrastructures and jobs. In this perspective, and taking into account the Euro-Mediterranean association agreements with the Maghreb and Mashreq countries, it is important to call for the establishment of funds specifically designed for investment in the Arab countries in the neighbourhood of Europe which are evolving towards democracy.

19. It is also imperative to create *de facto* solidarity between the two shores of the Mediterranean and to meet the needs of young people of the south in terms of communication with the outside and of belonging to the community by:

19.1. facilitating a greater number of exchanges between young people from the north and the south, as well as mobility, through the granting of visas and facilitating the acquisition of experience by students who will have demonstrated their skills;

19.2. turning to good account the diaspora networks of the countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean that have been successful abroad and enabling young people from the south to look to them for support;

19.3. allowing the youth of the south to benefit from the European institutions and programs and helping them realise projects;

19.4. building connections between universities and between NGOs on both sides of the Mediterranean;

19.5. developing networks of entrepreneurs;

19.6. assisting civil society and facilitating access to information, in particular through opening access to the Internet and giving journalists and bloggers the opportunity to be heard.

20. The economic recovery and expansion of the countries concerned, and consequently their transition to democracy, will not be sustainable unless there are resolute efforts to combat corruption at all levels of society, to remove bureaucracy, which stifles energy, and to put a stop to the distribution of advantages based on tribal or religious affiliation.

21. Europe must realise that reducing the gap in development between the countries in the north and the south of the Mediterranean should be a priority, in the interest of Europeans themselves and of course of the populations of the south, the aim being to enable the men and women of the south who so wish to remain in their countries, find employment there and enjoy fundamental freedoms and a good quality of life.

22. The Assembly wishes to prompt discussion with all parties concerned on the desirability of convening a summit of heads of state and government of the democracies of Europe and the southern Mediterranean to discuss co-operation between the Council of Europe and the emerging democracies in the Arab countries in Europe's neighbourhood.