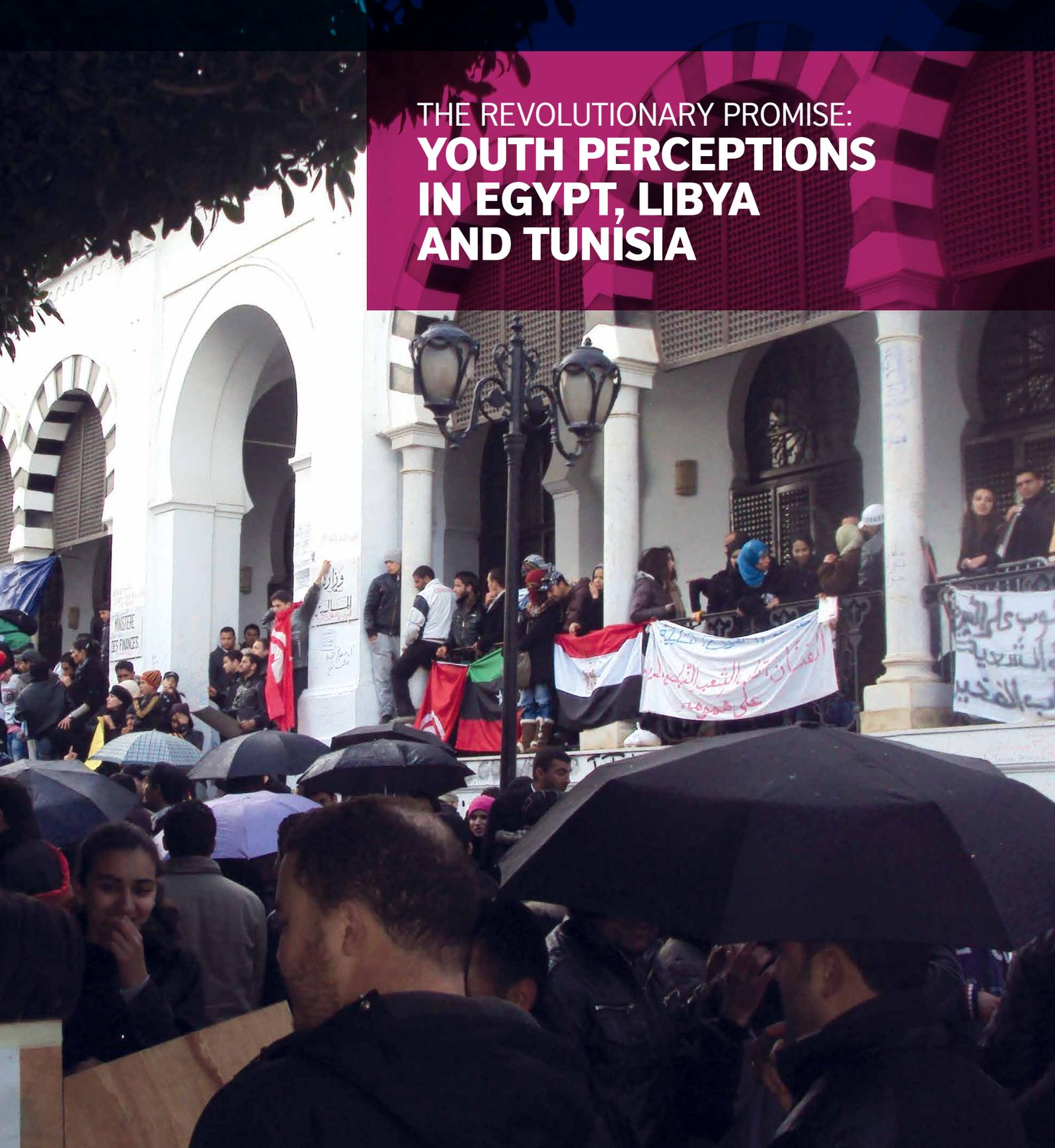


# THE REVOLUTIONARY PROMISE: YOUTH PERCEPTIONS IN EGYPT, LIBYA AND TUNISIA



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# FOREWORD

One of the iconic hand-written posters in Tahrir Square during Egypt's 18-day mass uprising caused amusement and empathy: "Mubarak, please leave. I just got married and I want to go home to my wife." This lament reminds us that the demonstrators were mostly young, and that despite bravery and determination, they also had hopes of returning to normal everyday life. This tension between revolutionary national goals and more basic personal aspirations colors many political movements, but it has been especially strong in the cases of Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt over the past two years.

The massive street protests of 2010-2011 were fueled by the largest ever cohort of under age 30 Arab youth. They had experienced exclusion and 'waithood' in all facets of their lives, facing high unemployment, delayed marriages, and restricted access to civic or political roles. Then an opening occurred – a tipping point of anger and new purpose – and in Tunisia then Egypt and then Libya young activists and ordinary kids set out to make their own history. For those who had envisioned an inclusive, tolerant, and non-violent future, the messy postrevolutionary period has been bitterly disappointing.

Most disappointing of all, young people had imagined that their voices and needs would be attended to in the national rebuilding phase. But the patterns of many generations are not easily supplanted, and instead older and more experienced military and political actors have dominated public space in the ensuing two years. And still, young Arabs continue to struggle, innovate, push boundaries and insist on having their say.

At the Gerhart Center and the British Council, we watched these developments unfold and felt that it was important to document youthful voices and ideas in a more profound way than came through in the journalistic sound-bites. We wanted to give young researchers a

chance to collect some of the stories and opinions of their peers that were in danger of being buried or forgotten. Our hope in launching this project was that by bringing to light the potentials and assets of young people, we could provide important evidence to those in decision-making positions who believe it is high time to bring youth into the processes of societal rebuilding.

Watching the research process and meeting the youthful authors was inspiring to those of us who oversaw it. We know what could be unleashed in terms of creativity, enterprise, and progress if more young citizens are allowed to fully participate. And the dangers of closing the door once again on youthful aspirations is that we will be responsible for a 'lost generation' and also lost opportunities to move forward as cohesive societies.

We hope that you are also inspired by reading the findings culled from these interviews with young social and political activists. And that you will be motivated to support their visions for a more inclusive future.



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Cairo, May 2013

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study explores the gap between the expectations and aspirations of young people in light of revolutionary promises made in 2011–12 on the one hand, and their actual experiences on the other. It analyses youth perceptions towards sociopolitical changes happening in their environment over a period of eight months (May–December 2012) in three key countries of the Arab transition: Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. In addition to making a contribution to existing literature on Arab youth and to its vocabulary, this study seeks to provide key stakeholders with up-to-date information on the extent to which youth aspirations are being met and on how development activities can better meet the needs of young people at such a turning point in the history of the region. The population of interest was defined as active youth<sup>1</sup> between the ages of 18 and 35 years of age. Per country, a panel study was conducted, as well as a series of five to eight in-depth focus-group discussions with young people and a parallel series of ten short semi-structured interviews over the study period.

The study demonstrated that discussing youth issues does not necessarily translate into improving their lives and that there is a need for informed action grounded in an understanding of how young people perceive challenges around them. This study seeks to make a contribution to identifying and better understanding youth expectations and challenges beyond existing literature. A number of themes were addressed in three countries of the Arab Awakening; similarities across all three have been noted, coupled with recognition of the specificity and complexity of each country's context.

## EGYPT

Young Egyptians rhetorically ask, 'Did we have a revolution?', a comment that reveals deep frustration with the current situation and a lack of hope for the future. The revolutionary youth<sup>2</sup> say that their demands have still not been met and that justice has not been served, especially with regard to the protestors who were killed in Tahrir Square. Participants observed that the solidarity witnessed in the square during the 18 days of demonstrations has now splintered into polarised groups with reductivist labels: Islamists, liberals, *felool* (those affiliated with the old regime) and the 'couch party' (those who completely disassociated themselves from the political and activist scene). Shortly after Mubarak left power in 2011, an interim military council decided to poll citizens on whether elections or a new constitutional drafting process should be held first. The March 2011 referendum laid the foundation for the polarisation of Egyptians by ideological orientation and religious belonging, which has led to a climate of distrust marked by sectarian difference. Participants in our study highlighted how mosques and churches are becoming politicised in ways that conflate politics and religion for political gains.

Our research reveals that the rise of civil society and a concomitant upswing in informal initiatives are allowing Egyptian youth to create their own public spaces. The participants of our survey, however, argue that these nascent movements and institutions lack organisation, while existing NGOs lack the vision, theory of change and willingness to collaborate with other civil society organisations (CSOs). After 25 January 2011, none of the CSOs was actively involved in facilitating a smooth transition period. Human rights organisations are an

1. By active youth we mean youth who are affiliated with civil society organisations and/or who have engaged directly or indirectly in activist groups.
2. In this study, 'revolutionary youth' is a term that comprises young activists who are affiliated with both formal and informal political groups/parties, as well as those who are unaffiliated but have been engaging in different forms of civic and political activism without adhering to a particular political group. The term comprises young people who are affiliated with Islamist groups. There are instances, however, when Muslim Brotherhood youth are distinguished by an opposing opinion to the majority of young people interviewed and in that case, it will be noted in the text. It was important for this research not to fall in the trap of polarisations in our analysis, especially as it is one of the objectives of this study to go beyond dichotomies and understand the different nuances of youth perceptions irrespective of their affiliations.

exception to this rule: they have been very active and supportive of the revolutionary momentum. Universities and student unions have also played an important role in the growth of youth activism; before the revolution, student unions were a tool for the Mubarak regime to suppress dissent among the youth. In the post-Mubarak era, newly formed student unions have found themselves struggling with battles against older unions and students aligned with the old regime, in addition to overcoming obstacles imposed by university management.

The media, whether state-owned or private, has been deeply criticised by the participants as biased, not credible and lacking objectivity. Participants have also accused it of actively spreading lies that have contributed to the current fragmentation of Egyptian society. Many youth feel marginalised by a media that once held them up as heroes of the revolution but now regularly stereotypes them as inexperienced. By emphasising sectarian rhetoric, the media has created parallel worlds that enhance intolerance to difference, casting Egyptians into virtual islands. Accordingly, the youth have changed their mobilisation strategy: instead of relying on social media alone to convey their messages, they now screen videos live in the streets and squares, marking an important shift from collectivism to activism.

Young people's vision of the future is largely influenced by their political positions and communal affiliations. Scepticism was prominent among study participants who were not affiliated with Islamist groups and these contributors exhibited great uncertainty about their future. In their view, the current leadership of the country will not lead to meaningful change in Egypt and it remains a great concern that a Mubarak-style authoritarian regime will be in place once again. A second revolution is anticipated by these youth as they feel that neither progress nor reform is taking place. Further, there is deep fear that a second revolution will lead to increasingly violent confrontation between protesters and state authorities. Participants

of the study believe that to fulfill the demands of the revolution and to welcome and invoke the benefits of this new generation of highly creative and innovative youth, Egypt will have to revise its public policy strategies to make room for young people to enter the political arena. Those affiliated with Islamist groups have a different perspective, not entirely in contrast to the other youth, but certainly a more optimistic outlook: they believe that the current leadership should be given a chance.

## LIBYA

Participants in our study indicate that Libyan society trusts its youth more than it does its older generation. Nevertheless, increased trust in youth since the revolution has not been translated into youth participation in political positions, and youth overall are still politically marginalised. The reasons for this marginalisation are equally attributed to both society and to youth themselves. Our respondents strongly object to the amount of experience required to enter into politics. In their opinion, no one in Libya has political experience unless they were working with Gaddafi, which should now make them illegitimate to lead. The youth conclude that a better measure for capability is educational qualifications.

Gender emerged as a strong theme among Libyan youth participants. Although women have managed to become successful in civil society, it is recognised that significant barriers still exist for their gender to participate politically. Despite these challenges, most activists believe that women have significantly benefited from the revolution. Now, they say, women can participate in any activity. On another note, despite the noted rise in tribalism and regionalism in the social structure, most activists believe that social cohesion has improved since the revolution. Most activists described the level of cohesion and trust as being at its peak during the revolution and up until the liberation. The reason for this

was that until liberation there was one common goal: defeating the Gaddafi regime. Trust in groups began to deteriorate, however, as soon as the political process was initiated following the liberation of Tripoli.

Despite their desire to lower the barriers to entry for youth engagement in politics, most of our study participants voiced a reluctance to take on political work. Elections are still new and young people feel that they are ill equipped with information on how to enter politics. Instead, youth's route to politics seems to be indirectly through involvement in the work of CSOs that engage in politics, and the most successful CSOs are managed by youth. Some participants believe that youth have not yet earned society's trust and should therefore orient themselves towards earning that trust to prove that they are capable of handling responsibility.

In assessing the role of youth in civil society, our participants from Libya are all adamant that youth are civil society and all civil society is youth. This claim is not without grounds as civil society was non-existent before the 17 February revolution. They concede that while older generations provide a great deal of support, all of the reform work itself is done by the younger generation. Participants are confident that young Libyans are the ones who are most creative and contribute more ideas and work than their elders. However, in assessing the current state of civil society in Libya, the picture is less than perfect: participants think civil society is growing weaker over time, and there is a negative attitude towards those organisations that have transformed themselves into political parties.

Participants in our study view the current media channels in a negative light. Although the media played a critical role throughout the transitional period and during the revolution itself, right now trust in the media has drastically diminished. Despite the fact that media channels have increased in number, they are still viewed with suspicion, and it is felt that many of the problems plaguing politics and society occur as a result of the

media. Whether publicly or privately owned, the media is seen as politically biased and as taking a subjective approach that has diminished its integrity in the eyes of young Libyans.

## TUNISIA

Despite revolutionary demands for social justice, respondents consider that politics in Tunisia still remains a restrictively elite domain, and that political parties are out of touch with current realities. Youth feel persistently marginalised in the political process and view the older generation as reaping the benefits of the youth-driven revolution they have hijacked and steered off course. Nevertheless, Tunisian youth are struggling to find their space in the public realm and a sense of ownership of the revolution is guiding Tunisia's youth towards demanding more significant political participation. The change that youth most demand is a change in leadership towards 'opposition, dialogue and freedom of expression' as the guiding characteristics of the nascent public and political sphere. Notably, in the midst of a climate of political division, young people have come up with an informal and indirect type of political participation that rejects tradition and views hierarchy within political parties in a negative light. Youth feel a strong desire for a break with the past in order to reinforce the revolutionary agenda and to set it back on track.

Civil society stands as the ultimate third way for the frustrated youth whose collective discontent with the performance of the political leadership has been building up over the past year. Although the civil society of Tunisia has been accused of being overly politicised, the legal and regulatory environment of post-revolutionary Tunisia facilitates the creation of NGOs. The expansion of civil society in Tunisia is a key achievement of the revolution. The number of organisations that focus on civic engagement has increased, along with informal initiatives and un-institutionalised citizen engagement. Trade and student unions play a significant role in Tunisian

civil society and there has been an expansion in youth leadership and organisations. Our research shows that civil society faces a number of challenges, namely, the need to synergise efforts and build sustainability, and there is a lack of funding. While a lack of local funding poses a problem, there is concern about foreign funding and the consequent imposition of foreign agendas, especially since the foreign funding of NGOs is not subject to strict regulations in Tunisia.

Media in post-revolutionary Tunisia is viewed as commercial and manipulative, and as being agenda-driven rather than truth-driven. The media is denounced by most of our study respondents as being unprofessional and spreading bogus news. Further, while the role that social media played in the revolution is undeniably positive, our research highlights the perception among youth that its influence has shifted increasingly from a positive to a negative one. Though social media previously contributed towards awareness, it is now feared as an unwieldy tool for fostering division and spreading rumours. Social media's current use for political mobilisation has further led to stereotyping and manipulation that have made many of our study participants consider its revolutionary role to be over. A positive but cautious attitude towards media and the newly experienced freedom of expression was the general feeling among study participants. However, overall the changes were considered important and positive by youth. There remains a persistent conviction that media can be used as a tool for democracy. It is expected that it will still play an important role in helping raise awareness and in promoting collaboration among civil society.

# INTRODUCTION

## YOUTH AND THE TRANSITION FROM 'WAITHOOD' TO REVOLUTION

The story of the Arab youth who grew up under the autocracies of Mubarak, Qaddafi and Ben-Ali is not a happy one. In 2009, a study released by the Middle East Youth Initiative (MEYI)<sup>3</sup> titled *Generation in Waiting: The Unfulfilled Promise of the Young People in the Middle East* highlighted the expanding numbers of youth in the Middle East – 100 million young people between the ages of 15 and 29 – with dwindling opportunities. It described their transition to adulthood as thwarted by restrictive political, social and economic realities. More specific to the Arab region, the Arab Human Development Report (2009) underscored the 'youth bulge' as the 'most evident and challenging aspect of the region's demographic profile'. According to the report, 60 per cent of the population was under 25 years of age with a 'median age of 22 compared to a global average of 28' (AHDR 2009)<sup>4</sup>. These facts were observed and noted with much consternation, but little action followed. Limited attempts towards the inclusion of this demographic 'problem' were made and it was subtly understood that these young people were waiting – albeit, not for long.

The year 2011 would change that landscape, as uprisings swept across what had been considered one of the most stagnant parts of the world: the 'waithood' was over and a new era for young Arabs was launched – or so it seemed. A new discourse was born within academic, professional and even policymaking circles in which youth were front and centre; the meaningfulness of this discourse, however, warrants close investigation and is at the heart of the study at hand, presented from the perspective of the youth themselves. The Arab Awakening testifies to the magnitude of change than can be wrought by the mobilisation of young people and how civic action can be used to carve out a public space that had been forcibly kept in check by autocratic regimes. In spite of an awakened attention to the role of youth, young people's voices remain faintly

heard in the midst of political, economic and social flux and their changing perceptions and needs are undocumented, and yet critical to the success of the transition.

Youth thrive on citizen engagement. In the many seasons of the Arab transition, both formal/institutionalised and informal types of civic engagement are growing rapidly, though in a somewhat sporadic manner and as such, run the risk of diffusion. In order to sustain momentum and to maximise the impact of youth capital, the active involvement of various stakeholders such as civil society, the private sector, the state and the media are needed. It is critical that this involvement is matched with an understanding that goes beyond the existing literature on youth and that takes stock of the dynamics of youth engagement and the environment in which they operate.

A quick scan of the current political landscape testifies to the confusion about youth's place in society despite the critical role they played in bringing down autocracies that were decades and generations old. This confusion warrants explanation through the eyes of the young people themselves. In Egypt, the parliament elected in January 2012 and in which more than 70 per cent of the seats were won by Islamists barely had any representation of the youth who launched the revolution. In Tunisia, where Mohammed Bouazizi sparked the revolution, young people are now retreating within themselves due to rising unemployment and a declining economy. Old and newly established political parties that do not represent youth interests and which have little representation of the youth themselves are now occupying the political void created by Ben Ali's departure. In Libya, still unstable and groping for a path towards democracy, armed conflict still persists and young people remain uncertain about their future.

This brings us back to asking whether Arab youth have indeed meaningfully broken their 'waithood'. They have made a transition towards what appears to be continuous mobilisation, but has the revolution broken the 'waithood'

3. The Middle East Youth Initiative is a regional project founded by the Dubai School of Government and James D. Wolfensohn of the Wolfensohn Center for Development at Brookings. More information is available at [www.shababinclusion.org](http://www.shababinclusion.org)

4. The complete report is available at [www.arab-hdr.org/contents/index.aspx?rid=5](http://www.arab-hdr.org/contents/index.aspx?rid=5)

period or are they still waiting? Recent figures on unemployment and poverty demonstrate that young people are waiting in yet another era of unfulfilled promises. Beyond the limited quantitative data available, little if any qualitative research has been conducted on how young people perceive the changes happening to and around them and how they imagine their future. There is a need to revisit the vocabulary we have been using since 2011 and explore how much of it has changed in order to craft new frameworks of understanding in addressing young people in the region. This need to bridge the gap between scholarly discourse and the changing reality is the thinking that informed this study in 2012.

Jointly conducted by the Gerhart Center and the British Council, this study tracks the changing perceptions of youth towards their political, economic and social situation in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. In addition to making a contribution towards existing literature on Arab youth and to its vocabulary, this study seeks to provide key stakeholders with up-to-date information on the extent to which youth aspirations are being met and on how development activities can better meet the needs of young people at such a turning point in the history of the region. The population of interest was defined as active youth<sup>5</sup> between the ages of 18 and 35 years of age. Per country, a panel study was conducted, as well as a series of five to eight in-depth focus-group discussions with young people and a parallel series of ten short semi-structured interviews over a period of eight months (May–December 2012).

As part of the study, the researchers met and spoke with young people who were engaged in different forms of activism: institutional (within civil-society organisations, political parties and other formal consolidated groups) and informal. To stay true to the leadership exhibited by Arab youth of this generation, the study was conducted by young researchers who did not have years of experience in the social sciences but demonstrated an understanding and a passion to take a step back and

analyse their situation as well as that of their peers – to tell that story from their perspective and in their own words. The freshness and ingenuity of their analysis was evident in the process of working together on the analysis and is clear in every page of the report. The Research Manager’s role was that of a conduit, and ownership of the analysis was given to the young authors’ voices to analyse their situation and that of their generation.

A baseline document was circulated among the researchers by the Research Manager at the launch of the project. Two meetings were held in Cairo that brought the researchers together (September 2012 and December 2012); one after the first round of interviews was conducted and another after the data collection had been completed and the researchers had embarked upon analysis. The first meeting was led by Dr Mona Amer, Assistant Professor of Psychology at the American University in Cairo, who delivered an intensive workshop on conducting and analysing focus-group discussions. A second meeting was led by the Research Manager and helped refine focus as well as research questions in light of the interviews and discussions conducted by the researchers.

In general, both meetings had the following objectives:

- to reflect on the research progress (data collection and analysis) in each country
- to promote comparability by refining research protocols and tools
- to generate multicountry comparisons and context-specific insights
- to co-ordinate the dissemination of findings and recommendations and to streamline communication with the relevant stakeholders
- to provide a platform for sharing expertise and the exchange of ideas and feedback across the three countries.

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5. By active youth we mean youth who are affiliated with civil society organisations and/or who have engaged directly or indirectly in activist groups.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following overarching goal was developed to guide the study:

**‘To track the changing perceptions of youth towards their political, economic and social situation in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. This is in order to provide key stakeholders with up-to-date information on the extent to which youth aspirations are being met and on how development activities can better meet the needs of young people at such a turning point in the history of the region.’**

In pursuing this goal, other key objectives were pursued.

- Profiling the current experiences, expectations, and perceptions of young people towards social, political and economic changes around them in each country.
- Identifying gaps between scholarly discourse on youth and their reality and exploring ways to bridge that gap.
- Providing research findings that will further enhance development activities’ ability to establish effective, evidence-based responses, policy decisions and recommendations regarding youth.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to better understand youth perceptions of change and to allow them to have a voice, a research approach that was qualitative and participatory was designed. Selection of this methodology was ‘geared towards planning and conducting the research process with those people whose life-world and meaningful actions are under study’.<sup>6</sup> Data for each country was analysed at the national level to produce three studies and then they were combined into the seven chapters of this report. The approach was both longitudinal and vertical. Per country, in addition to a review of the literature, a series of five to eight in-depth focus-group discussions with young people and a parallel series of ten in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted over a period of eight months (May–December 2012).

A panel study of key informants was conducted in each of the countries with a select group of activists in order to track changes over the period of the study.

The age parameters set for the research was between 18 and 35 years of age. The interviews were conducted with active youth, an umbrella term for young people who may not necessarily be activists but who are engaged on one level or another in the public realm. The other key condition or prerequisite for participation in the research was the ability to speak, with first-hand knowledge, of their experience in the revolution. The focus-group discussions were exploratory and the prompts allowed the participants to voice their ideas and tell their own story. Group members tended to be very forthcoming when reflecting on their individual experiences and in describing the often very personal feelings. Much of this comes through in the report. Focus-group discussions were governed by a discussion guide, a copy of which is included in Appendix One.

Focus-group participants were recruited using ‘on the street’ and peer engagement. On a number of occasions, and due to the uncertainty and unpredictability of the political situation, participant turnout did not occur as planned, but the researchers were sufficiently determined to pursue other options and find other participants. In general, the ideas expressed by the participants were influenced by political events that were happening at the time the interviews were conducted and they were asked to comment on them.

A series of in-depth interviews (ten per country) were conducted to further enhance the study. Those interviews later helped refine the study questions and frame the discussion guides as well as contribute to the development of key conclusions and recommendations. A range of ethical and safety considerations was built into the study design to ensure that the identities of the participants remained confidential and that the original recordings of the interviews were destroyed once the analysis was conducted.

6. Bergold, Jarg and Thomas, Stefan (2012). Participatory Research Methods: A Methodological Approach in Motion [110 paragraphs]. Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 13 (1). Art. 30, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1201304>.

In the following section, a more detailed overview of the methodology as implemented in each country is presented.

## EGYPT

A literature review of pre- and post-25 January analyses was conducted at the beginning and during the data collection and analysis process. For the panel study, four young activists from different backgrounds or affiliations were interviewed twice, once at the beginning of the data collection phase in May 2012 and again at the end of December 2012. The activists included:

- a member of the Muslim Brotherhood
- a member of one of the newly established political parties
- two independent activists unaffiliated with political parties. One of them a social-media activist from the 'We are all Khaled Said' Facebook page; the other an independent writer and youth-development activist.

Five focus-group discussions that included a total of 25 participants were conducted for the study (May 2012 to December 2012) as follows:

- FGD 1 and 2: during the presidential elections of 23–24 May and 16–17 June 2012
- FGD 3: after the constitutional declaration on 22 November 2012
- FGD 4: after the constitutional court was besieged by the Muslim Brotherhood in December 2012.
- FGD 5: after the issuing of the new constitution on 26 December 2012.

In addition to the focus-group discussions and panel study, a total of ten interviews were conducted, with different political and civic actors for inclusive consideration of the all the different voices, and these included the following:

- Salafis
- Ultras football-fan groups
- artists, graffiti painters and cultural activists.

## LIBYA

In conducting this explorative research, four focus groups each were held in Tripoli and Benghazi. Though the initial scope of the focus groups was Tripoli, it was judged important to include Benghazi to reflect a variety of opinions and to give consideration to the importance of geographical representation.

The focus groups were conducted in December 2012 and early January 2013 using different moderators in each of the cities. One focus group was conducted in early September 2012 as a pre-test and its data has not been included in the analysis. The purpose of the pre-test was to try the discussion guide and understand the dynamics of the discussion.

The participants were recruited randomly and through a snowballing technique. Special attention was given to factors such as political orientation, age, education, gender and level of activism in choosing the participants. Both men and women attended the focus-group discussions. Audio recordings were made with participants' consent.

The details of the focus groups are as follow:

FGD No.	Date	City
FGD 1	Saturday 15 September 2012	Tripoli
FGD 2	Monday 10 December 2012	Benghazi
FGD 3	Tuesday 18 December 2012	Benghazi
FGD 4	Sunday 23 December 2012	Benghazi
FGD 5	Tuesday 25 December 2012	Benghazi
FGD 6	Thursday 27 December 2012	Tripoli
FGD 7	Thursday 3 January 2013	Tripoli
FGD 8	Saturday 5 January 2013	Tripoli

## TUNISIA

The eight focus groups were conducted from July to December 2012 in the capital of Tunisia, Tunis. A total of 43 active youth from different parts of Tunis, Sousse, Monastir, Nabel and Bizerte (19 young women and 24 young men) were interviewed. Their ages varied between 18 and 26 years old. Most of them were university students while some were young professionals. They all shared a passion for social work and a motivation for change and to play an active role in different nongovernmental organisations working on youth empowerment, sexual and reproductive health, leadership, citizenship and human rights. Discussions were conducted in the Tunisian dialect to allow participants to express their views spontaneously. They were then transcribed using the voice recordings and translated into English for the purpose of analysis in English. The English translation respected, as much as possible, the original linguistic expressions of the participants, with no corrections or adjustments.

Details of each focus-group discussion are provided below.

**FGD 1:** conducted on the third week of July 2012, this was marked by the dramatic cut in electricity and water in six main cities of the country. This was a particularly frustrating event at a time of year when the weather was extremely hot and when people were fasting for Ramadan.

**FGD 2:** conducted on the second week of August at a time when Article 27 of the constitution was being discussed at the Constitutional Assembly. This Article defined the role of Tunisian women as 'complimentary' to that of men, as opposed to being equal. This triggered widespread demonstrations demanding equal rights for women and fed a heated discussion in media and public spaces between politicians, activists, journalists and citizens.

**FGD 3:** conducted on the day a large group of Salafis attacked the American Embassy in Tunis following the short movie on Islam that was considered offensive to Muslims. That week witnessed public anger towards the movie and any production insulting Muslims, leading to massive demonstrations after Friday prayers. As the focus-group discussion was being conducted, several demonstrators attacked the embassy's building.

**FGD 4:** conducted on 5 October 2012. The appointment of a newspaper's chief editor by the ruling parties marked the week of the fourth focus groups, when participants mainly discussed the state of the freedom of expression and the control of media by the state. This week also witnessed demonstrations and strikes by media staff, particularly newspapers journalists.

**FGD 5:** conducted on 17 December 2012, the fifth focus group followed the tragic events of Siliana, where police responded to local demonstrators using real bullets, causing deaths, injuries and reported cases of blindness.

**FGD 6:** the sixth focus group was also marked by protests across Tunisia following events in Siliana when citizens demonstrated in different cities condemning the actions of the Ministry of Interior Affairs and its response to Siliana's protest and demanding the resignation of the minister.

**FGD 7 and 8:** conducted in December 2012. The call for a general strike had been announced by the Tunisian General Union Syndicate, a significant civil-society player that is well respected and that had a lead role in mobilising people when the revolution started. After political negotiations, the strike was cancelled. The last two focus groups were conducted after this announcement.



CHAPTER ONE:  
**POLITICAL  
PARTICIPATION  
AND OWNING  
THE MIDAN**

# EGYPT

## SOCIAL JUSTICE, NOT DEMOCRACY

The Egyptian revolution's demands for socio-economic justice are at the forefront of the concerns of the participants of our study. They challenge the accepted notion that this was a revolution for and towards democracy. Despite electing a president democratically, they stressed that protests and demonstrations did not stop in Egypt and the democratic process has not yet led to stability. An ongoing unfolding of the definition of revolution is being formed as the youth negotiate its boundaries: what triggered it, what it was for, and where it was and is headed. In particular, the study's participants stressed the importance of recognising social justice as the paramount demand of the revolution. According to this view, the demand for democracy was not the driving force behind the 25 January revolution. In their own words,

**'I revolted for justice. Democracy wasn't in my mind.'**

**'If democracy will come with Mubarak's regime again, we do not want it.'**

**'I want to justice brought to anyone who has ever murdered an Egyptian, that is what I want, not democracy.'**

**'Our problem wasn't with Mubarak himself, it was with his unjust regime and until this moment Egypt is ruled with an unjust regime.'**

**'When I demonstrated on 25 January, I wasn't calling for elections but I demonstrated because I had problems with the way the policemen were treating us. I was calling for police reform and to live with dignity. I don't find that the results of the elections are achieving any of these things.'**

A disconnect between social justice and democracy was noted by the participants. Democracy, according to them, has become a buzzword that does not reflect their aspirations for social and economic justice. It is within this context that some of the participants have started questioning their readiness for the launch of a democratic process. As one of the participants says,

**'Sometimes I think that Omar Suleiman was right when he said the Egyptians aren't ready for democracy. We need to learn and it will take time.'**

Similar to the youth in Tunisia, the youth of Egypt are unsure about the outcome of the 25 January revolution. On the one hand, the revolutionary youth believe that their demands have still not been met and that justice has not been served, especially with regard to the protestors who were killed in Tahrir Square. On the other hand, those affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood consider the confusion happening now in Egypt is to be expected in any transitional period.

## GATEKEEPERS OF THE REVOLUTION: YOUTH LOSING OWNERSHIP

In light of the increasingly diversified number of political actors, the question of who has ownership of the revolution was brought up several times by study participants. The general view was that the revolution has been hijacked away from the emerging political parties and that young people are therefore losing ownership of that space. Study participants describe established political groups as unrepresentative and as wrongfully calling themselves the gatekeepers of the revolution. To each of those actors, however, the revolution meant something different. To the Muslim Brotherhood, their role as gatekeepers was explained on the basis of the ballot box and on winning the majority of the votes, while the consolidated opposition justifies its role on the basis of having launched the revolution. At the crossroads between both, young activists – who are unaffiliated with either group – perceived themselves as marginalised and excluded from the revolutionary process they initiated and for which they sacrificed everything.

**‘Who owns the revolution? Who has the right to talk in name of this revolution and defend it? ... Is it the ones who sparked it? Is it the ones who sacrificed the most for it? Is it the ones who have managed to collect the majority of votes? Is it the ones who are occupying Tahrir Square? Or is it the ones who are protesting and demonstrating?’**

It is significant that despite being actively involved in political parties, almost none of the youth that were interviewed in this study currently had membership affiliation. Those who had been members at the beginning of the interview process left these parties a few months later.

Political allegiances are described by our participants as capricious and unsustainable. For example, the Islamist elite (Muslim Brotherhood or El Nour Salafi party) has been blamed for being aligned with the Military Council during the transitional period, which the youth feel has not made any progress for a year and a half. On the other hand, liberal parties are blamed for being unable to reach out to the wider Egyptian society and gain their trust. The Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) is blamed for the mistakes and violations of human rights that occurred during the transitional period. All of these mistakes and violations created a strong backlash among the youth against military rule or any interference made on the part of the military leaders in politics. Finally, the lack of statesmanship on the part of the elected president was also underscored.

**‘In my opinion, up to now we don’t have political parties in Egypt. What we have is mostly political caucuses rather than institutionalised parties.’**

## ISLAMIST-SECULAR POLARISATION

Participants emphasised a disjunction between the Egypt that they aspire towards and the Egypt that the various political actors are working towards. These differing visions of the future of Egypt plunged many young people into uneven battles that were not of their choosing and that further prevented the realisation of the revolution’s promises. The presidential elections were mentioned as an example where public space was inundated with campaigns of defamation between the Islamists, who wanted the imposition of Sharia law, and liberals, who called for a civil state. Such ideological battles manifested themselves on the ground, with the most ugly battle waged when protestors clashed in front of Presidential Palace (Etihadeya) in December 2012. The confusion of the presidential decrees given by the democratically elected President Morsi also fed into the already strong frustrations.

## FIVE RETREATS ON MAJOR PRESIDENTIAL DECREES

During his first six months in power, President Mohamed Morsi has withdrawn five significant decrees. The major decisions that Morsi has made and upon which he later retreated are:

- the decision to reinstate the dissolved People's Assembly
- the appointment of former Prosecutor General Abdel Meguid Mahmoud as Ambassador to the Vatican
- the decision to force stores and restaurants to close by 22.00
- his 22 November constitutional declaration that protected the Constituent Assembly from dissolution.

Political parties are criticised by youth as being individual-driven and lacking in strategies that can inform a long-term vision that would include young people. Within these political parties, youth are not sufficiently empowered to have influence on the parties' decisions and positions.

**'It's clear that the Muslim Brotherhood uses confusing rhetoric. For example, they keep depicting Israel as an enemy of the state and yet to the contrary it is discovered that Morsi sent a very kind letter to the Israeli President addressing him 'dear and sincere friend'. Other contradictory examples include the issue of minimum wages, the IMF loan and the decision to close shops at 22.00.'**

**'Political imagination is still missing. No one possesses a vision for the country. All focus is on the current situation and its contradictions. For example, we agree that lack of security has become a big problem now; everybody talks about how to solve this problem and yet no one addresses the root causes**

**behind it [...] Security should be broadened to include other kinds like social and economic securities [...] We need to draw an Egyptian dream.'**

An overlapping between the Muslim Brotherhood, the presidency and the Freedom and Justice Party was highlighted as one of the causes of confusion in the political landscape. Dr Saif El Din Abdel Fatah, a former advisor of President Morsi who resigned in response to the Etihadeya clashes of December 2012 confirmed this. He pointed out that there is

**'...a deep overlapping between the President, the presidency and the Muslim Brotherhood. They are now all mixed to the extent that you find the Brotherhood inside the Presidential Palace [...] He [the President] should warn leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood not to act on behalf of the presidency and to stop acting like a tribe favouring its members with governing positions on the basis of trust instead of merit.'**

The Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) is the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, it emphasises its independence from the Brotherhood. A clear confusion about the relationship was pointed out throughout the interviews. Although Brotherhood members are completely aligned and very active at mobilising for their political party, they are not members of FJP. Some study participants interpret the existence of the FJP as a means for the Muslim Brotherhood to avoid having its real number of members made known. 'Who really rules Egypt? Is the leadership Egyptians voted for the actual one?' Such questions are raised in a way that denies the presence of some of the Muslim Brotherhood leaders in power, although they do not have any formal positions in the majority party (FJP) or in any of the state institutions.

Since 25 January 2011, Egyptians have chanted the phrase 'topple down the regime' three times. The first time was for Mubarak, the second time was for the Military Council, and the third time was for toppling the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood (Al Murshed). This indicates that there is a growing suspicion that the

leadership the Egyptians voted for is not the actual leadership that is ruling the country.

Before the 25 January, syndicates and trade unions were politicised in favour of Mubarak's party. Today, these same organisations remain politicised. However, they have shifted their allegiance from the former regime towards the Muslim Brotherhood. The Medical Syndicate provides a clear example of this. The Head Council of the syndicate forced its members to end their strike demanding increased state subsidies for health care as a kind of a political compromise with the Brotherhood and disregarded attempts to improve healthcare.

**'When I visited my syndicate (the Medical Doctors' Syndicate), by coincidence, I came upon a large conference that the Syndicate Council was organising to support Morsi's decisions. Regardless of the outcome of these decisions, the Syndicate Council doesn't have the right to speak in our names about any political issues that we didn't delegate it to.'**

## THE PERSISTENCE OF THE ANCIEN RÉGIME

Mubarak's Egypt, even without Mubarak, is alive and well. Violations of human rights are rampant and Egyptian blood is shed in demonstrations with impunity. In general, the participants of our study feel that the new leadership is following in Mubarak's footsteps. Young people seek a break with the past, but the past is still present everywhere. The leaders of Mubarak's former regime, for example, have not been punished yet for their crimes. In addition, young people still perceive themselves, as well as opposition voices, as being excluded from the public realm. As one of our participants says,

**'The Muslim Brotherhood and Morsi use the same tools of suppression and domination as Mubarak's era.'**

## CONTINUOUS KILLINGS – KILLINGS AND TORTURE MADE BY POLICE PERSONNEL DURING THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS OF PRESIDENT MORSI'S RULE

From July to the end of October 2012, 16 violent incidents were perpetrated by police personnel. This represents only a portion of the continuing violations that occur on a daily basis at the hands of the police. Some 11 people were killed by the unlawful use of force or the indiscriminate use of bullets in the public domain. Three others have been tortured to death inside police stations. Further, many cases of torture and ill treatment are taking place across police stations and detention centres. In addition, another seven deaths occurred inside prisons and police stations with torture suspected as the cause.

'Continuous killings' report, The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, January 2013, <http://eipr.org/report/2013/01/22/1603>

## BETWEEN SHARIA AND SHARE3 (THE STREET)

Participants in our study are divided on the question of legitimacy. Islamist-driven respondents hold an electoral understanding of legitimacy; the remainder of the participants reject electoral legitimacy and hold a revolutionary understanding of it. This, again, is closely linked to the question of ownership and the Islamist-liberal polarisation, as explained in previous sections.

Regarding the legitimacy issue, the position of the Muslim Brotherhood has undergone a number of shifts. For example, when it was dominating parliament with a 65 per cent majority in conjunction with the Salafists, it described legitimacy as being based only on parliament. When parliament was dissolved, however, the Muslim Brotherhood shifted legitimacy from parliament to Tahrir Square. Afterwards, it returned to advocating electoral legitimacy when the protests backfired following the controversial constitutional decree issued in November 2012 and it called for Morsi to be given the opportunity of serving the four years for which he was elected.

Interestingly enough, President Morsi's legitimacy as president of Egypt had undergone its own share of confusion. He took the oath three times, which demonstrates the many faces of legitimacy in revolutionary Egypt. He took the oath for the first time in front of the crowds of Tahrir Square as an admission of revolutionary legitimacy. In addition, he took the oath in front of the previously dissolved parliament, which was interpreted as referring to electoral legitimacy. Thirdly, he took the oath in front of the higher constitutional court as the temporary constitution demanded at that time.

Confusion about whether legitimacy emerges from Sharia or from the street (Share3) has also been debated. Islamist respondents assert that a Sharia-based definition of legitimacy is necessary while other respondents assert to the contrary that legitimacy's stronghold is the street – the public.

**'Everyone wants Egypt to be similar to him. If you are a revolutionist, you will want Egypt to be a big Tahrir Square. The same if you belong to the Muslim Brotherhood, you will wish all Egyptians to be supporters of the Brotherhood, etc.'**

The participants highlighted that Egyptians have never been given a chance to vote for the candidates they wanted. Their vote was, for the most part, against, not for, the available candidates. This explains why many Egyptians are not satisfied with the currently elected leadership.

**'We don't have an alternative scenario. If Morsi stepped down, for example, would the Military Council return to ruling Egypt? We don't want this either...'**

## POLARISED WORLDVIEWS: BETWEEN THE POLITICAL AND THE SACRED

Participants highlighted how mosques and churches are becoming politicised in ways that conflate political and religious spheres for political gains. Islamist participants see this confusion as normal and hold that Islam is inherently political. Other participants assert that this confusion is not to the benefit of either politics or religion. On 14 December 2012, clashes erupted following Friday prayers at the Qaed Ibrahim mosque in Alexandria, where prominent preacher Ahmed El-Mahalawy had urged worshippers to vote yes in the constitutional referendum scheduled for the following Saturday. Sheikh Ahmed El-Mahalawy and worshippers were trapped inside the city's mosque for 14 hours by anti-constitution protesters. On the other hand, a number of Islamist groups called for a rally 'to defend scholars and mosques' in front of the Qaed Ibrahim mosque.

Another example of the blurring between religion and politics is Islamic bonds (Sukuk). The Egyptian government proposed a draft law in January 2013 to allow the Finance Ministry and state-run administrative

bodies to issue bonds that are in compliance with Sharia law. It was called the Islamic Bonds (Sukuk) Law. According to this law, new sectors, such as individual and investment funds, would now be able to lend money to the government using this financial tool (Sukuk). Ironically, Islamic Research Academy members, one of Al-Azhar's affiliated institutes, rejected this bill of bonds, which had recently been approved by Egypt's cabinet, as not being in compliance with Sharia, as the government had alleged.

These incidents indicate to non-Islamist youth that the government and current leadership are manipulating faith and mixing religious and political discourses. Some of the interviewed youth expressed concern regarding the failure of the Islamic state project because it seems to be driving people away from the faith.

### LOCKING THE REVOLUTION: MANY-WALLED NEW REGIME

The below map describes ten walls that have been built in the Tahrir Square area, and within those walls the heart of the Egyptian Revolution remains locked.

Wall	History of the wall	Notes
Sheikh Rihan Street Falaky Street Abdel Megeid Al Ramaly Street Yousef El-Gendy Street Mansour Street Kasr Al Aini wall	These walls have been built after the cabinet clashes in mid December 2011 after the army crackdown on protesters in front of cabinet headquarters near Qasr El-Aini Street, Downtown Cairo. Many attempts have been made to remove them but all so far have failed.	Most of the walls were built after cabinet clashes in December 2011.
US embassy walls	This was built on 14 September 2012 after the US Embassy incidents: several hundred protesters rallied in front of the embassy, chanting 'leave Egypt' and demanding that the US apologise for an American-made film that mocks Islam's Prophet Muhammad. Protesters hurled stones at a police cordon around the embassy after climbing into the embassy compound and tearing down the American flag.	These are the most recent walls to have been built.
Kasr Al Aini second wall	This blocks the way to the Egyptian cabinet from the other side. It was built after cabinet clashes in December 2011. The wall was originally constructed from barbed wire; it was rebuilt using cement blocks on 28 January 2013 after clashes in Tahrir Square area.	
Nubar Street wall	This blocks the way to the Ministry of the Interior. This wall was built after cabinet clashes in mid December 2011, removed by armed forces after the presidential election in June 2012, then rebuilt on 28 January 2013 after clashes between protesters and security forces.	The only wall that was removed but rebuilt again.

## THWARTED POLITICAL PARTICIPATION EQUATES TO VIOLENCE

### 841 KILLED; JUST TWO SENTENCED

During the period 25 January to 11 February 2011, 841 protesters were killed and 6,467 were injured. Just 36 cases have been taken to court. Some 164 policemen have been accused of murder: 103 of them have been acquitted and 13 have been sentenced with execution suspended. In addition, five have been sentenced in their absence. Just two police officers have been sentenced with immediate execution.

Cited from the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, info-graph about 'sentences of protesting killing cases', 11 February 2011 <http://eipr.org/en>

Just two of the 164 policemen charged with violence during the 25 January revolution have been sentenced for the killing of 841 protesters. This has been cited as an example of the disintegration of the rule of law in Egypt. The besieging the the higher constitutional court on 2 December 2012 by groups of Islamists has also raised questions about the rule of law. This protest resulted in the court suspending its operations, which included a scheduled hearing for cases challenging the legitimacy of the Constitutional Assembly and the Shura Council. This was not the first time that a court was besieged: before the presidential elections in April 2012, the administrative court had been besieged by supporters of Hazem Abou Ismail, the presidential candidate.

Violence was very prominent in the Etihadeya clashes in front of the presidential palace in December 2012. It is quite a serious indicator in Egypt that politics have tended increasingly towards a violent path. The concerns about violence and the rise of intolerance have been widely addressed by the opposition. Despite this fact, violence on the part of the opposition has also expanded. The emergence of the black bloc is another indicator of the direction that the political participation of youth is headed.

### THE CASE OF THE BLACK BLOC AND VIOLENT ACTIVISM

In January 2013, the second anniversary of the Egyptian revolution, a group of young protesters appeared with masked faces and dressed all in black. They attacked various Muslim Brotherhood headquarters and government buildings and stopped traffic and metro lines in more than eight cities.

The 'black bloc' is so called because protesters wear black clothing and face-concealing items in order to appear as a consolidated group and to be identified as showing solidarity.

Egyptian Prosecutor General, Talaat Abdallah, ordered the police and armed forces to arrest any member of the black bloc, pointing out that the group was carrying out 'terrorist activities' and is considered by the government and under the new constitution a violent, radical, outlawed group.

The emergence of such a violence-based group among Egyptians indicates the level of frustration they have reached about bringing change to Egypt in a peaceful way, and at the same time it is serious indicator of how the political scene in Egypt is taking a more violent course.

## THE NEED FOR ORGANISED POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Participants described how Egyptian youth have failed to organise themselves into political groups or parties in which they could be actively represented. However, this failure to organise and consolidate is matched by reluctance on the part of political parties to include them. The only prominent youth movement that was able to survive up to the time of writing is the April 6th Youth Movement. More than 35 new political parties were established after 25 January 2011, but only a few have carved out a space for youth. Participants mentioned the following parties as somewhat inclusive of youth: Al Dostor (the Constitution Party led by Mohammad ElBaradei), Al Wasat and Masr El Qawia.

Attempts to consolidate youth groups and movements into credible organisations floundered and were not sustainable. Masrena (Our Egypt) is a prominent example of such a group; it had been active since the bloody clashes of November 2012. Masrena was established in December 2011 by a group of youth activists who called for the establishment of a youth entity that could turn their dreams of freedom, justice, equity and dignity into reality. Under the leadership of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces, Masrena was called for presidential elections and turned to support from Abdel Moneim About Fotouh. Since the presidential elections, Masrena is no longer active. One explanation is that Masrena members joined About Fotouh's presidency campaign during the elections, which was later consolidated into the Masr Al Qawia (Strong Egypt) political party under his leadership.

Another example of an unsustainable youth group is the Egyptian Mainstream Party (EMP), which was founded in late June 2011 by a group of young liberals and leftist independent activists who used to be members of the Revolutionary Youth Coalition, along with a group of youth that had been dismissed from the Muslim Brotherhood due to their differing political positions. The EMP has announced that its party does not have a particular ideological base but instead is a programme for change based on the principles of democracy and a civil state.

The Egyptian Mainstream is considered to be the only political party that is led explicitly by youth. However, it could not manage to get any seats in the parliamentary elections in 2012.

Conversely, there are apolitical, youth-organised groups, such as the famous football-fan group Ultras, which has been highly active on the emerging political scene. This was one of the core groups that joined the first 25 January demonstration. It remains nonpartisan and apolitical and instead aims to represent the voices of the youth who have been calling for justice and police reform. Following the February 2012 bloody massacre in the Port Said stadium, in which around 72 fans of the Al Ahly club were killed, the Ultras became increasingly vocal in calls for justice and the sentencing of those responsible for these deaths.

The actual positions of four young Egyptians are tracked below across three prominent phases of 18 revolution days after 25 January:

- Y#1: aligned with the liberal political elite and actively involved in a protest movement like the April 6 Youth Movement
- Y#2: independent and actively involved in development efforts
- Y#3: aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamist political groups
- Y#4: pro-Mubarak and aligned with Mubarak's regime leaders liked Ahmed Shafiek.

The following table highlights the major shifts in positions.

**TRACKING THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF FOUR YOUNG EGYPTIANS (Y#1, Y#2, Y#3 & Y#4)**

	Y#1	Y#2	Y#3	Y#4
During the 18 days of the revolution	Joined the 25 January protests.	Joined the 25 January protests.	Joined the 25 January protests.	Did not join the 25 January protests.
Under SCAF	Actively engaged in protests against SCAF.	Actively engaged in protests against SCAF.	Engaged in activism against military rule only after dissolving parliament.	Did not support activism against SCAF.
After elections under Morsi	Actively engaged in protests against the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and Morsi.	Occasionally protesting against MB and Morsi.	Did not join protests against the MB and Morsi.	Joined protests against the MB and Morsi.

According to the initial analysis of the positions of the four young Egyptians, four trends can be highlighted:

1. A group kept in constant opposition from 25 January, regardless of who was in power. No developments since 25 January have met any of their aspirations but they still have the motivation and insistence to keep protesting and demonstrating.
2. A group shifted from being active to occasional protestors. This group had stronger motivation for activism against military rule than against the Muslim Brotherhood and Morsi. Revolution fatigue may explain this, as well as the desire to give the democratic process a chance.
3. A group of protesters who joined the 18 days of revolution and then stopped protesting; most of these are members of the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists.
4. A group of protesters who joined protests after the election of Morsi; these are driven by a fear of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamists and seek to salvage the civil state.

# LIBYA

## RESTRUCTURING: BIG CHANGES AND BIG CHALLENGES AHEAD

Considering the scope of the Libyan revolution, participants defined their revolution as more holistic than the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia. While the scope of institutional change in Egypt and Tunisia was limited, in Libya the change was drastic. There is zero resemblance between the Libyan political system that exists today and that which existed two years ago. The name of the country, its anthem, flag, political structure, terminology and political orientation are but a few examples of the numerous changes that have occurred in a mere eight months. After almost 42 years of political stagnation, the political life in Libya is bursting with new opportunities and aspirations. But this has raised the question of what political participation is and who can participate?

Political participation in Libya is defined by taking part in the decision-making process, but it is not limited to the political process. Political participation is not only taking part in leading political institutions such as the government and the recently elected General National Conference, but also includes aspiring to managerial positions in governmental and diplomatic posts. These positions range from the Prime Minister down to heads of departments and administrative sectors. However, the distinction between administrative jobs and political posts is still blurred. The crux of the problem is at what position one's political affiliation stops being a criterion for recruitment. Incumbents in academic institutions are also scrutinised for their political beliefs and past activities. So far, any managerial position that is funded by the Libyan treasury is considered to be political.

After liberation in October 2011, the National Transitional Council (NTC) and its Executive Office attempted to draw a line between the bureaucracy and former political figures by retaining some of the technocrats of the former Gaddafi-regime in posts during the transitional period. Yet the public not only refused this approach but also berated the NTC and its Executive Office for being sympathetic towards the *azlam*<sup>7</sup>.

7. A term coined for Gaddafi loyalists.

## THE NATIONAL INTEGRITY AND PATRIOTISM AUTHORITY

Public pressure led the NTC to establish an entity called the National Integrity and Patriotism Authority and issued Law No. 26/2012. The purpose of this authority is to review all incumbents of managerial positions and grant them permission to work.

According to Law No. 26, political posts are defined as:

- President, members, and the secretariat of the National Transitional Council
- Head and members of the transitional governments and its secretariat
- Deputies and assistant deputies of ministries
- Ambassadors and diplomats
- Heads and members of local councils and local administrations
- Presidents and board members of government agencies, institutions, and state-owned companies
- Executive managers in state-owned companies
- First and second line of command in all security and military entities
- Financial auditors
- University presidents, deans, and heads of all educational institutes
- Candidates for the General National Congress (GNC)
- GNC members, its president and secretary.

All candidates for the above-mentioned positions are to be screened politically and allowed to continue in their jobs.

The law also defines who is allowed to participate in political posts and who cannot.

The first category is a group of positions where their holders took an early and decisive position to support the 17 February revolution. These jobs are ministers, ambassadors, heads of security and army entities, co-operating members with the internal and external security agencies, and members of the former regime's political administrative organisation. If any of the above defected from the Gaddafi regime before 20 March, they are legally allowed to undertake new political posts.

However, the second category are the following people who are forever banned: all members of the Revolutionary Guard, Revolutionary Committee, presidents of student unions after 1976, all people known to praise Gaddafi and the Green Book, those who opposed the 17 February revolution, those who were legally convicted of embezzlement, those who took part in torture or had a role in prisons, those who participated in action against political opposition, business partners of Gaddafi's sons, those with leading positions associated with Gaddafi's sons, all opposition abroad who reconciled with Gaddafi, those who have had post-graduate studies published in the Green Book and other related jobs.

Ali Zidan, the new Prime Minister, formed a government that included Ali Oujly, the Libyan Ambassador to the US, who served for decades in the old regime yet publicly defected and supported the revolution. The appointment of Ali Oujly instigated a public outcry against the appointment of former Gaddafi loyalists and the government and GNC were castigated as ineffective leaders. Though Ali Oujly was cleared by the National Integrity and Patriotism Authority and was legally allowed to take his new position as the Foreign Affairs Minister, under public pressure he resigned from the new post. It was becoming clear that the public was determined to remove any vestiges of the previous regime. The appointment of Ali Oujly precipitated political movements to introduce the Political Isolation Law.

## THE POLITICAL ISOLATION LAW

The Political Isolation Law was intended to legally prevent people who held certain positions in the former regime to participate in the political arena whether in government positions or elected offices. The returning opposition from abroad, considering themselves to be the political gentry because of their past positions, took the lead in producing a draft law to the GNC. Yet its critics argued that motivation for issuing the Political Isolation Law was disingenuous and politically motivated and supported by specious arguments. The National Force Alliance believes it was targeted by the Political Isolation Law, and returned with another draft law that was much wider in scale of exclusion and would have prevented key members in the Jabha party and returning opposition figures from taking any positions.

The country is still facing the question of who can participate in the political arena of new Libya. Political groups are attempting to exclude each other. The returning opposition believes that they have more political purity than other groups, who may have engaged under a different capacity with the former regime. The opposing argument is that the returning opposition has spent decades out of the country and has lost touch with the daily challenges facing normal Libyans.

The other critical group is the *thumar* (armed groups who comprise former freedom fighters). Though they are not formally represented in the political process, the *thumar* believed it was their prerogative to veto the establishment of any government – they tried, unsuccessfully, to halt the formulation of the latest government because of Ali Oujly's appointment.

During the formulation of the new government, non-political factors were taken into consideration, the most important factor being geographical representation. The second factor was the representation of women. The Prime Minister responded to the criticism of the fact that there are only two women in his lineup of 33 ministers by saying that he will not choose ministers just for the sake of being women, but instead invites only qualified candidates to join.

## THE POLITICAL MARGINALISATION OF YOUTH

Concerning the representation of young Libyans, our participants believed that they were not integrated into the government and are not empowered to participate politically. Young Libyans believe, however, that society is becoming more accepting of an increased participation of youth in politics. Indeed, Libyan society trusts youth more than it trusts the older generations. Unfortunately, this increased trust so far has not materialised in tangible participation in political posts. Youth believe that they are still politically marginalised. The reasons were equally attributed to society and to the youth themselves.

According to one of the participants, a 24-year old male with secondary education,

**'[The] youth did not get a chance to run for the local council or the National Congress to exercise political action [...] There are some youth coalitions, but they did not gain the opportunity to vote for them because people consider them young and without understanding'.**

Young Libyans think that general society still does not believe that youth are capable of playing a key role in politics. In response, young Libyans object that no one who lives in Libya has political experience and if they do have experience then they must have worked with Gaddafi; to youth, therefore, educational qualifications are a more important criterion than experience for appointment.

However, one of our participants, a 25-year old engineer from Benghazi, believes that youth also share the blame for their lack of inclusion:

**'The youth must show more initiative. Most of the young Libyans during the revolution worked in charity and civil-society organisations but not in politics because they were intimidated by it. They say we are still young, how could we enter politics? As youth, we lack initiative.'**

This quote highlights the reluctance felt by most Libyan youth for entering political work. Both youth and women are struggling to increase their political participation in the current environment. Of the two, youth have the advantage of winning public acceptance: while the majority of Libyans support increased political participation of women in principle, they believe that this is not the right time for it due to the perilous conditions that the country is currently undergoing.

# TUNISIA

## REVOLUTION FATIGUE

A sense of revolutionary fatigue has swept over Tunisia, and its idealistic youth who managed to topple a dictator have gained a more sober acknowledgement of Tunisia's political realities and social challenges. While Tunisian youth recognise that the results of the revolutionary path will not be instantaneous, they nevertheless feel a great deal of disillusionment with the direction it has been heading, feeling that it is in violation of the principles of social justice the revolutionaries originally stood for. Instead, people are now self-interested, vying for monetary or power-related benefits merely to make a profit out of the revolution. As one of our study participants says,

**'I participated in the 14 January protest and I was screaming with the people *5obz w mé w Ben Ali lé* ("water and bread and no to Ben Ali"), but then a lot of people went out asking for job raises and for compensation and betrayed that slogan. [...] It turned out to be all about power and money and that's it.'**

This was the general consensus across all our focus groups. Some of the youth denied the fact that there was a revolution. Others suggest calling it an uprising because of the lack of changes that have occurred. This lack of substantive change is tied to what most participants say is a lack of strategic vision and leadership in decision-making. They express their worries about the unclear direction the post-revolution democratic transition is heading. As some say,

**'Any government at this time doesn't have the magic stick to solve issues but some make strategies and our government does not have one.'**

There is a collective sense of discontent with the performance of the political elite on the part of youth and this has been building up over the past year. The National Constituent Assembly, charged with drafting Tunisia's post-revolutionary constitution, has received sharp criticism. Plenary sessions are aired live on Tunisian national television, which has enabled most Tunisians to follow the discussions between the deputies that seem a mockery to many of our participants,

**'When I watch sessions of the National Constituent Assembly on TV I feel like I am watching children who have a new toy they don't want to share or know how to play with.'**

Our research shows that Tunisian youth are overall feeling excluded from this political process. They believe that political participation in the country is unrepresentative. The process itself was a confusing one, as one study participant says,

**'I felt that my vote, well, I lost it. I did not vote for a political party but rather for a person. I come from a small town in Sfax and I felt that I trusted that person who was head of the list there. But half of the people that voted don't even know the head of the list they voted for, they just know which political party they like.'**

The youth feel that they paid for the revolution with their lives, but that the benefits and the current path of the revolution has been swept away from them now by others who did not make such sacrifices:

**‘Young people are the fuel of revolutions, because being young means being creative and innovative. This revolution – let’s agree between parentheses that it is a revolution – was led by youth, from the people who organised it to the people who died in it.’**

Our survey participants all desire a definite break with the past to reinforce the revolutionary path and put it back on the right track. According to one study participant, this post-revolutionary phase represents what he described as a phase of rupture and that the transitional phase has not yet been reached:

**‘There are two forces in the country. There are forces who want to put an end to the old system, the old regime, and others who want to move forward with their own project. What matters is that there’s a rupture with the past’.**

## LIMITS ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Participants in our study discussed their political participation in its wider sense, as citizens who vote for their representatives and as a generation that wants to be listened to and get engaged in the decision-making process. The majority of the participants believe that they are not being involved enough in politics. Several factors are considered to be the cause for this low political participation. Politics is viewed as being restricted to elite circles and political parties are described as outmoded. As one participant says,

**‘Political parties in Tunisia failed to update themselves. Those we see on TV speaking in the name of the revolution are the same ones we saw in the 1970s and they believe that they speak in our name.’**

Several participants expressed frustration at their exclusion from the political process:

**‘There is no political will to encourage youth to become engaged. There are no youth in the government [...] We are engaged and everything but young people are less engaged and motivated than before. We are deceived now. We are giving up.’**

They feel that the current leadership is not listening at all to the aspirations of youth but are viewing them only as numbers at the voting box. This is frustrating because young people want political inclusion and yet see the total numbers of youth actually entering the system is still marginal.

**‘In the Constituent Assembly, if we were to consider it as the highest power in the country, out of the 217 members not more than 10 per cent are young people.’**

Youth leadership has been limited by the older generation who, as one participant put it, ‘see youth as irresponsible. They don’t trust youth capacities and they don’t want to encourage us’. Another participant highlights the fact that, ironically, even the Youth Ministry’s consultants and advisors are old:

**‘In the Youth Ministry, there isn’t even a youth consultant. The Employment Ministry as well doesn’t have a young consultant [...] It was the youth who made the revolution but now they are just cards that politicians use for their own gain.’**

Study participants point out that politicians who are looking to gain power and numbers find uneducated youth to recruit so that they can, ‘attract, hem and influence them.’ This is interpreted as a societal issue and not just a political one: a heritage of patronage that reigned during Ben Ali’s rule. There was a break in this system with the revolution, a spark by the youth that severed the bonds of loyalties. However, this has regained acceptance, even on the part of the youth. As one youth says,

**‘Our society is patriarchal [...] We always wait for superiors to take decisions and give orders [...] I don’t know how in the revolution we broke this rule but then we came back to it.’**

Aware of the importance of being active and that political participation plays a significant role in influencing the model that Tunisia is going to adopt, one participant stressed the need to get involved in the process and said,

**‘It is better that I, as a Tunisian, contribute to changing the situation in Tunisia, which is my country, than having someone else come and impose his vision of the new Tunisia for me.’**

## **MIXED PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE: THEN AND NOW**

Although the question of change was not explicitly raised in the study, it appears as a central theme in all of their answers. Change seems to be measured by the time parameter of the revolution (January 2011), as most of the answers convey a comparison between ‘then’ and ‘now’ with the revolution being the delineating boundary between the two timeframes. The change participants referred to the most is a change in leadership, with ‘opposition, dialogue and freedom of expression’ emerging as new characteristics of the public and political sphere. The attitudes of the participants towards this change were divergent, with some assuming that change is necessary and good:

**‘If Nahdha let others rule and then they come back, it’s good because there is a change and democracy.’**

Whereas others were more hesitant and suspicious of the changes now occurring:

**‘They would even tell you to bring us back Ben Ali [...] because during his time, things like access to water, electricity and security were constant. Now, nothing is constant or can be taken for granted.’**

The last statement conveys a negative representation of change as related to the lack of vital services (water and electricity) and the risk of a human need (security) assumed to be well provided for by the last regime.

## THE QUESTION OF LEGITIMACY: THE POLITICAL AND THE SACRED

A date that marked a significant milestone for Tunisians was the 23 October 2011, when Tunisia witnessed the first transparent elections in its history, registering only 17 per cent of youth participation (18 to 25-year olds). Most participants in our study expressed their positive evaluation of this remarkable moment, considering it a political ‘achievement’. As one participant expressed it, ‘the most important thing that has been made so far is the elections. For the first time, we discovered this thing that we only used to watch on TV.’

The Islamist party, Ennahdha, gained the majority of seats in the National Constitutional Assembly with 40 per cent of the votes. It is also considered to be the ruling party in the government, along with two other parties (Ettakatol and CPR). The question of the legitimacy of government leaders was raised throughout the focus-group discussions. Most of the opposition leaders to Ben Ali were jailed, sent into exile or harassed. Their militant track record has also been used before, during and after the elections as a source of legitimacy. The results of the elections, where oppressed Islamists in Ben Ali’s time gained the largest number of seats, reinforced that ownership of a ‘legitimate’ power. As one youth put it, ‘those in power came as militants, as those who were in prison and facing injustice. For me, the people voted for Nahdha because they thought they would go to heaven for this.’

Nevertheless, the legitimacy of leadership seems to be confusing to some of our study participants as they wrestle with the dilemma of determining legitimate leadership in the country. Some participants suggested that the real leaders of the country are different to those elected. ‘We don’t know who is leading the country, a government or the people behind it.’ In fact, it is Ennahdha that controls the most powerful ministries, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice. The Prime Minister, being a member of this party, is believed to be one of the puppets that Rached Elghanouchi (the President of Ennahdha, who did not run for the elections)

used to keep the country under his party’s and family’s control. One participant suggests that, ‘We don’t know who is leading the country, a government or the people who have positions in its parties. There is no transparency.’

## ISLAMIST-SECULAR POLARISATION

The political debate, enriched by a diversity of perspectives including those that were suppressed during the era of Bourguiba and Ben Ali, reveals two main opposing discourses: a discourse carrying an Arab-Islamic identity and calling for more conservative and religious legislation, and a discourse advocating a secular identity defining Tunisians by a civil state which recognises Tunisia’s diverse identities. This polarisation is observable in different arenas of debate, such as universities, where young people are most concentrated.

Universities closely mirror the Tunisian political scene. The two major student unions are l’Union Générale des Etudiants de Tunisie (UGET) and l’Union générale Tunisienne des Etudiants (UGTE). UGET is a left-leaning student union while UGTE is Islamist and is supported by the ruling political party, Ennahdha. However, in Tunisia’s first transparent student-board elections last year, the leftist student union scored a landslide victory. One participant lamented the increasingly polarised atmosphere in Tunisian universities,

**‘Universities have become a battle scene between leftists and Islamists. The university needs to reclaim its primary role as a place where research is done.’**

The political scene is similarly polarised. The country’s secular and Islamist camps are in constant confrontation. This polarisation is carried into the discussions at the National Constituent Assembly and onto the streets in the form of demonstrations. As one participant declared,

**‘The National Constituent Assembly is not doing anything. It is not revolutionary. They just care about each other’s political affiliations. All they do is slander each other.’**

Or as another put it,

**‘I don’t like how people have been divided into two categories; heretics and non- heretics.’**

This increasingly polarised scene is reflected in people’s voting preferences. The leading opposition coalition, Nidaa Tounes, has made it clear that the different opposition parties have joined together with the same goal: that of forming a united front against Ennahda. One of our participants pointed out that people now are unable to base their vote on convictions and instead tend to think of themselves as voting not for a party but rather against a party,

**‘Those who voted for Ennahdha, they are not all for Ennahdha but are rather against liberalism. Voting is not for whom but against whom.’**

The active political youth can be divided in two categories and is just as polarised as the political scene in Tunisia at large:

**‘You have young people who work on two levels on the street and in civil society and others who still believe in the left in its strictest sense and then you have the right: Islamists ranging from Nahdaoui to Salafists.’**

Others believe that youth can react and influence the already divided public space through social media, yet they feel that their freedom in terms of their ability to criticise the government has not improved much. While social media is still considered to be a relevant platform for criticising the government and applying pressure for change, alternative means of public expression such as rap and graffiti were popular both during and after the ousting of Ben Ali. The youth speak of a counterculture of resistance built upon the limited resources they have.

Significantly, the past year marked the emergence of a new form of political mobilisation: the state use of non-state actors to control the opposition through manipulating the popular committees which themselves in the beginning were so fundamental to societal empowerment. The fervent opponents of Ennahda have dubbed Lejan Hemayet al Thawara (The Committees of the Protection of the Revolution) as Ennahda’s militias. This issue has sparked controversy, as the opposition in Tunisia is demanding they should be dissolved. Some youth think that the Committees of the Protection of the Revolution have deviated from their primary role and are used to intimidate the opposition through the violent acts they commit against them. As one participant says,

**‘The Committees of the Protection of the Revolution were at first spontaneously created, that is, everybody was part of it. It was natural we all wanted to protect our houses and our neighborhoods. But now this same committee is involved in some shady things like what happened with the Nidaa Tounes guy. They are the ones that attacked his office and might have caused his death.’**

## INFORMAL/NON-INSTITUTIONALISED POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In the midst of this politically divided climate, Tunisian youth have come up with an informal and indirect type of political participation that rejects the political traditions of the past. One participant who belongs to a youth movement called Al jil al jaded (The New Generation) describes his movement as providing an alternative structure that does not follow a real structure. This participant thinks that youth prefer informal types of political participation to traditional institutional ones:

**‘This unorganised type of work not only exists in Tunisia but all over the world. It is a new form of organisation because the traditional format of having a President and then a Secretary General, this type of hierarchy creates tension [...] Instead, in our movement we have agreed on a set of ideas, certain goals, and then we discuss how we would like to achieve those goals. But everyone is free in how they want to do it; no one imposes his way of viewing on the other. It is something quite new – a new form of resistance, a new structure that has no structure.’**

Several participants have suggested that civil society stands as the ultimate third way for youth. However, it is unfortunate that their political involvement is still marginalised. Some point out that the youth who are attracted to civil society are of a different mindset and have a different commitment to the revolutionary movement:

**‘There is a difference between active youth in political parties and those who are active in CSOs. Those working in political parties are thinking about the positions they want while those working in CSOs are working for the organisation itself and not due to political motivations.’**

According to another participant, civil society offers shelter to those who despise the manipulations of politics. One participant speaks of a youth that has reached a state of political flux:

**‘I think that the most obvious and tangible contribution of youth is seen in civil society’s work. I see young people participating and contributing all the time and I believe that it is due to their high motivation and their desire to contribute with something far from politics because I have a feeling that young people are not very satisfied with politics.’**

Youth activism, however, does not present a Hobson’s choice between their involvement in politics or their non-involvement. One study participant who joined the CPR party after the revolution and then withdrew and now works in an NGO, considers civil society as a good alternative to a failed political experience:

**‘If you tried to be in a political party but you didn’t like it, you should not stop but try to be active in civil society, for instance.’**

## A REVOLUTION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

When the socio-economic demands at the heart of the revolution are not being fulfilled, can we speak of a successful revolutionary path? As one participant says,

**‘What is a revolution? Why did we take it to the streets? Water and bread and no to Ben Ali; employment, freedom and national dignity. But if we were to dissect these slogans what would they show? We want an equal distribution of wealth, a fair development plan between the regions, the inland regions, between first-class Tunisia and the other Tunisia (*Tounes al oulaa w Tounes al o5ra*). Unemployment is one of the main issues.’**

Most participants denounced the failed attempt to fulfill the goals of the revolution. Issues like drafting a constitution and establishing a democracy have taken precedence over the social-equality demands of the protesters of 14 January. Regional inequalities have not been adequately dealt with. The unemployment issue, which is intimately linked to Tunisia's economic challenges, remained and has been further affected by the wave of sit-ins and protests that followed the revolution. At 18 per cent, the national unemployment rate is still high, but peaks at about 40 per cent among youth.

According to one of the young people surveyed in our study, we cannot consider the revolution to have happened because it did not achieve its goals; it did not lead to a better life for all or to social justice:

**'If in two years nothing changed in Sidi Bouzid, then we didn't do anything [...] We had a revolution because we were hungry and we are still hungry. We are even hungrier now.'**

Another laments the poor attention that has been given to social justice:

**'Most people are speaking about politics as if they know what they are talking about. There are more important things than politics; there are still people who are dying of hunger.'**

The majority of participants consider regional development and unemployment to be a priority in the list of problems to be tackled.

According to our participants, some political parties managed to gain a high number of seats in the National Constituent Assembly elections by adopting a speech impregnated with promises of social equality. Promises of democracy at the time being are not so important to them as much as putting an end to the former regime's policy of marginalisation. One of our participants explained that democracy is not a priority, as it is a universal value with no added value to them.

**'The Popular Petition (Aridah Chaabiah) got second place because they knew how to speak to people in really poor areas. Most of those people don't care about democracy, for instance, they just want somebody to build a well for them, or governmental aid when it comes to buying seeds, and that's what Al Aridah Chaabiah promised them. After five years you can talk to them about democracy but not now, they wouldn't be able to relate or care.'**



CHAPTER TWO:  
**THE POLITICS  
OF CIVIL  
SOCIETY**

# EGYPT

## UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE CIVIL SOCIETY LAW

The end of Mubarak's rule has ushered in tighter state controls over civil society as well as a near monopoly for Islamist parties over formal political institutions.<sup>8</sup> Ongoing debates over the draft bill of NGOs continue to dominate the scene. Concerns are being raised that the proposed law is more restrictive than Law 84/2002, which is currently in force. This draft law is more repressive and hostile to civil-society organisations. It allows the government to strongly interfere in organisations' daily activities, as well as opens the door for security control over the funding of particular activities. It prevents NGOs from conducting opinion polls, field research or from carrying out any development or humanitarian-oriented activities without first obtaining consent from security forces.<sup>9</sup>

What makes this complicated is that there are some indicators that the new law will give the Muslim Brotherhood a kind of exceptional existence. In December 2011, Egyptian authorities stormed 17 offices belonging to several Egyptian and foreign non-governmental organisations suspected of 'conspiring against the state'. When the investigations concluded in February, about 43 defendants, including 17 foreigners, were accused of operating in Egypt and receiving foreign funds without the appropriate authorisation. By the end of February 2012, a controversial decision to lift a travel ban on the foreign defendants was taken. They were rushed through Cairo airport onto a private plane after having each posted bail of LE2 million (around US\$330,000 or €247,000).

8. Asya El-Meehy, Egypt's Popular Committees: From Moments of Madness to NGO Dilemmas, Middle East Report [MER] 265, Winter 2012

9. Strangling Civil Society with Repressive Laws: Morsi's Bill to Nationalize Civic Activity Must be Retracted, Institute for Human Rights Studies, press release on 7 February 2013 [www.cihrs.org/?p=5875&lang=en](http://www.cihrs.org/?p=5875&lang=en)

## A SPIKE IN INFORMAL ACTIVISM BUT A LACK OF VISION

Participants in our study argued that existing NGOs lack the vision, theory of change and willingness to collaborate with CSOs. After 25 January, none of the civil-society organisations was actively involved in facilitating a smooth transition period. Human-rights organisations were, however, an exception: they have been very active and supportive of the revolutionary momentum.

**‘After the revolution, many NGOs were established but for charity and community service such as distributing aid and cleaning the streets. No one has a broad vision for Egypt or any strategic solutions for our problems. We didn’t revolt for such temporary solutions.’**

Participants underscored a spike in youth activism and citizen engagement through groups and initiatives that remain uninstitutionalised. Popular committees are a prominent example. Neighbourhood watches, typically led by young men, sprang up to fill the security void during the intense 18 days of the revolution, as reports of criminal violence mounted. By word of mouth and via Facebook, these ‘popular committees’ quickly organised themselves and spread beyond urban centres, driven by the imperative of communities rising to protect themselves. Some of the popular committees disbanded after Mubarak fell and police slowly reappeared. Nonetheless, many popular committees remained independent and active, holding their first national conference in April 2011.

Since 25 January 2011, young people have been creating their own social spaces outside the sphere of state regulation and influence. Such spaces provide youth with the opportunity to explore and create an alternative place to an already divided public space. Mesaha is a non-profit, simply equipped and volunteer-run organisation that works to support youth-led initiatives and groups working for the sake of their communities’ development. Mesaha provides such youth-led initiatives and groups with meeting, learning, co-working and networking space. Beyond the physical space, Mesaha is building a supportive community that can help youth groups to pursue their own ideas and initiatives. Such spaces are increasing daily after the revolution and they describe themselves in many ways. Some define themselves as focusing on arts and culture, while others have environmental or social entrepreneurship foci.

## THE KEY ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES AND STUDENT UNIONS

Before the revolution, students unions were a tool for Mubarak’s regime to suppress any window for opposition among the youth. After 25 January and during the transitional period ruled by the Military Council, public universities were still headed by Mubarak’s allies. This has led to newly elected students’ councils, especially in Ain-Shams University, demanding a change of their university’s leadership. In addition, the newly formed student unions found themselves in a power struggle with the old unions and students aligned with the old regime, in addition to the struggle with university management.

**‘After the revolution, we thought that the universities were liberated and that political activism would be enabled from inside. On the contrary, student union bylaws were disappointing and banned any political activism inside the universities.’**

The situation in private universities was not any better. While some private universities, such as the non-profit American University in Cairo, foster an atmosphere of student activism, many others have lacked any form of on-campus politics until recently, and their students were widely perceived as being apathetic. Protests took place simultaneously at many of these universities to claim their right to form student unions that could represent them and advocate for their rights.

The German University is case in point. It expelled a student and a teaching assistant after they organised a protest at the campus demanding punishment for those responsible for the 74 people killed at a Port Said football match because one of their colleagues had been killed in the violence. Thousands of students gathered in and around the university campus to protest the decision which also led to the Student Union President resigning in protest. Eventually, the students were allowed to return to the school, but only after being forced to offer a public apology.

Since 11 February 2011, student activist groups have been aiming to implement a new set of laws and rules that would allow for more freedom and participation in student life. Accordingly, the first elected student union after January 2011 has found itself involved in many struggles with university management and the Military Council, who have issued their own bylaws for student unions. So far, the imposed bylaws have not met the students' aspirations and expectations. Government intervention remains an obstacle to reforming the organisation and makeup of university student groups, with high-ranking government officials having more influence on their structure than the students themselves. In April 2012, student union heads from seven universities withdrew from meetings of Egypt's Coalition of Student Unions after Muslim Brotherhood students insisted on electing the head of the Union of Students in Egypt before any new student bylaws are endorsed.

# LIBYA

During the revolution, all forms of civil-society organisations emerged in the country and their role evolved along with the various stages of the transition period. The youth of Libya are confident that they have contributed more ideas and work than their elders to these organisations. However, despite the boom in the number of new activities and civil-society organisations, it has been observed that over time this boom has lost momentum. Volunteerism in general has ceased and some civic organisations have evolved into political organisations. However, most of the participants in our study agree that the one particular aspect of civil society in Libya that has been extremely successful is in raising awareness. Civil society, through its various activities, has managed to fill the vacuum of information about the political transition period and most importantly the elections.

This was not its only success: it is widely believed that the strong civil society played a key role in making the elections a success. While the government's response and awareness of the needs of the voters was sluggish and ineffective, civil society was more agile and focused and could respond to the voter's needs. According to one of our participants, a 22-year old female with secondary education,

**'Frankly, there were many things that we did not know but we have learned because of the efforts of civil society in organising activities and seminars and forums that have changed our culture and our way of thinking in a very short period.'**

Most participants in our study believe that civil society provided the means and channels to empower youth and has given them a role in building their country. In contrast to the political arena where youth feel marginalised, in civil society youth feel empowered and effective.

The relationship between the government and civil society is non-confrontational; indeed, one could claim that there is a basis of a partnership being built. The government recognises how influential civil society has become, as well as its potential for playing an important role in the transition process. For example, the government insists on avoiding confrontation with the Thuwar armed groups at any cost and so it continuously solicits the help of civil society to exercise pressure on these organisations and to fortify the government's role. Despite the limited support provided by the government, there are, however, very few obstacles to forming a CSO in Libya; three people can establish an organisation within days.

Government officials argue that the government should not be funding civil society in order to ensure independence. In response, some CSOs argue that they need funding to maintain their activities, especially as levels of volunteerism have significantly diminished since liberation. This lack of funding has created a vacuum that was eagerly filled by the international community. There are abundant sources of international funding available to Libyan CSOs. The EU, US, UK, Germany, Finland, Canada, UN, and others have all provided grants to the newly emergent civil society.

It is now believed that the obstacles to creating new CSOs are not in the lack of funding available but instead in the lack of capacity for Libyan CSOs to absorb more funds. The problem with international funding is that it is inaccessible, due to the lack of technical capacity on the part of the CSOs to design a project and seek funding for it. Other obstacles are the lack of dissemination of information about these opportunities added to the fact that some organisations still feel uneasy about obtaining funds from international sources.

In addition to providing funds, the international community plays a key role in supporting and developing the potential of civil society: there are continuous capacity-building opportunities, exchange visits and technical support. For example, the EU is running a network of support centres for civil society in Tripoli, Benghazi, Sebha and Misurata under the name of Civil Initiative Libya. The government's response so far has been minimal but it does not interfere or resist such programmes. The increased dependence on the international community to develop civil society should raise concerns over the sustainability of these support programmes and how it will affect national civil society should these programmes cease.

So far, civil society has been the most effective channel towards empowering young Libyans and integrating them in the political process. It is expected that young Libyans and their organisations involved in civil society will soon gain the confidence, momentum and experience to increase their political participation and finally reclaim their ownership of the 17 February revolution.

# TUNISIA

## A CIVIL SOCIETY OPEN FOR YOUTH

There remains a culture of politicising the work of civil society in Tunisia that is best explained as a result of Tunisia's historical development. The example that best illustrates this is the creation of an NGO whose sole purpose was promoting the image of Ben Ali's regime: BASMA. The BASMA Association for the Promotion of Employment of the Disabled is an NGO that was founded by Tunisia's ex-First Lady, Leila Ben Ali. BASMA's mission was publicised as:

**'Seeking to support the state's efforts in the integration of the disabled, particularly by contributing to enhancing their employment, offering them assistance in finding jobs in both the public and private sectors and also in starting their own projects.'**

On visiting BASMA's official website, it is obvious that the NGO served as a propaganda tool of the former ruling power. The website portrays Leila Ben Ali as a symbol of altruism in an attempt to help disguise the human rights and fundamental freedoms violations committed by her husband's regime.

Several of our study participants question whether it can be considered that there was a true civil society during Ben Ali's time,

**'Before, we didn't even have a civil society, we only had a civil society that is allied with the government.'**

Or another:

**'You didn't even have the right to make an NGO before. To make one, you needed to have a particular opinion at the time.'**

The legal and regulatory environment of post-revolutionary Tunisia, however, has facilitated the creation of numerous NGOs. There has been a shift towards making it easier to obtain a permit for starting an NGO, which should help in solidifying the presence of youth-led NGOs.

**'I think that after the revolution youth have more opportunities to create NGOs. It became very easy to start an NGO. Just two people and if you're older than 16 I think.'**

**'They changed the law: before it used to take up to six months to get an NGO licence. Now you can get it within a week but you get no funding.'**

The issue of foreign funding of NGOs is not subject to the strict regulations that foreign funding of political parties is subject to, which is forbidden by the law. The process of creating an organisation is now governed by Law Decree No. 88, adopted on 24 September 2011. This relatively liberal text facilitates the creation of NGOs and allows for the full development of civil society. Law Decree No. 88, 2011 stipulates that an organisation may be supported by the following resources: 'subscriptions of its members, donations, national or foreign, and goods that originate from its activities and projects'. All foreign funding should be reported to the public authorities indicating its origin, value and intended use.

Some of the participants in our study voiced strong reservations about the motives of foreign NGOs in Tunisia. As one says,

**'I am very sceptical of the intentions of most civil-society associations. There's no foreign country that would spend millions to save you from being tortured. Freedom House is like the secret service. Countries that kill their people give money to us; the number of people getting executed each year in Texas alone is harrowing [...] There are CSOs that are doing great work, but most of them are not, they are just living off the support of foreign organisations.'**

Another participant similarly denounced the reliance of NGOs on foreign funding and reported that the most prominent NGOs are either connected to foreign NGOs or to political parties,

**'But the major NGOs in Tunisia are the ones connected to international NGOs, the one that have big funding like Freedom House, and of course the NGOs that are connected to political parties get money from those same parties.'**

## THE EXPANSION OF CIVIL SOCIETY POST-BEN ALI IS A KEY ACHIEVEMENT

Our research shows that civil society in Tunisia is now perceived to be very active. Many participants consider that the post-revolution period has offered excellent conditions for civil society's work. As they say, 'I think that this is civil society's golden time.' A significant change in the creation, development and sustainability of NGOs has been noted with civil-society organisations becoming increasingly valuable players in the transition period. The youth in our study believe that civil society can safeguard the revolution. As one participant says,

**'We have a very active civil society and NGOs. I feel we are on the right path when it comes to democratic transition and people are being very vigilant, which is always good.'**

For most participants, the mushrooming of CSOs is considered to be one of the key achievements of the revolution, as it has demonstrated the engagement of the public in the political and civic arenas and has provided a new tool for transparency and accountability.

**'The other thing that was good is solidarity and the good thing as well is the spirit of initiative and the number of CSOs. Everyone now wants to participate and this is new. In Tunisia, we started to know real figures that were hidden before (such as how much poverty there is, etc.)'**

Civil society seems to present an uncontested third sector beyond the dichotomies faced in politics. Indeed, civil society in Tunisia is seen to have succeeded where politics have failed. It is viewed as sharing the responsibility with the government in making the transition phase successful. As one participant says,

**‘Since politics is not moving really fast, civil society can undertake many changes rather than just waiting for the government. In particular, there are many opportunities for grants for projects that can really help improve the situation of so many people [...] Civil society needs to work on awareness campaigns and I would like to see the reform role of the government come to life. They need to share responsibilities.’**

Young people’s desire to contribute is often translated into the work of civil society due to the negative perceptions attached to involvement in politics,

**‘Young people play a major role in civil society though they don’t participate in the NCA or the government. They do, however, exert pressure on the people in power. There’s no competition and that’s what makes civil society’s work so effective.’**

Other participants highlight the advantages of having an active civil society as the guardian of the revolution through exerting pressure on the government and shedding light on instances of injustice in the media, such as highlighting the plight of neglected regions.

**‘Now that we have a civil society, we’re able to monitor and apply pressure for accountability. You can now ask for transparency; it is no longer a favour but a right. All of these benefits civil society can use to act on.’**

**‘Civil society is like a house that holds all of the youth, where youth can expand their creativity and their abilities.’**

## YOUTH-LED AND YOUTH-TARGETING ORGANISATIONS ARE EXPANDING

Our study indicates that the expansion of CSOs is considered by young people to be one of the key achievements of the revolution, offering a space of active engagement for youth. There has been an increase in the number of organisations that are youth-led and youth-targeting. As one participant says, ‘a new culture of volunteerism is being set into motion.’ Organisations such as Al Bawsala (The Compass) and Ana Yaketh (I Watch) are among the best known Tunisian youth-led NGOs. Even those that are not youth-led rely on youth volunteerism and participation and have a focus on youth, like Reprieve and IWPR, whose project managers and volunteers are young people. Al Bawsala is a Tunisian democracy-advocacy NGO. It aims to achieve greater transparency by keeping citizens updated with their elected representatives. It promotes transparency by monitoring the activities of the NCA through its project called Al Marsad.

**‘They did a lot of good things. For instance they followed very closely the process of drafting the constitution; a lot of NGOs are putting pressure on MPs to respect the law and to propose articles [...] They made their voices heard and they delivered the message. This counts a lot. They have had an effective role so far.’**

I Watch is a Tunisian civic-engagement organisation that describes itself as a watchdog organisation. I Watch works on voter education and pre- and post-election monitoring, in addition to fighting corruption. It also organised a model of the Constituent Assembly last year. Another participant commends the work done by these two organisations and considered it a sign of the effectiveness of civil society,

**‘I Watch conducted a model NCA and one of their law propositions was later adopted into law by the real NCA. Civil society is certainly effective.’**

Another organisation founded by the Tunisian youth is Sawty: Sawt Chabab Tounes (My Voice: The Voice of the Tunisian Youth). It describes its mission as,

**‘Seeking to make Tunisian politics (which has for years been closed off, cryptic and exclusive) more accessible to young people through awareness and grass-roots campaigning.’**

Additionally, there has been a noticeable growth in informal initiatives in Tunisia. These initiatives appeal to young people who dislike the traditional type of formalised work. One is compelled to notice the artwork showcased everywhere on Tunisia’s streets since the revolution. The Ahal el Kahf is an alternative art group, influenced by the work of British street artist Banksy. This group produces art pieces that they categorise as ‘aesthetic terrorism.’

Our study shows that the engagement of young people in Tunisian civil society has been remarkable and offers hope to some of our study participants when they evaluate change in their country. For one participant,

**‘We need to be positive: youth have become more active in NGOs, art has become better and more progressive. Change is in simple things (like street art) but it is nonetheless a development. It is good to have people who are creating.’**

## TRADE UNIONS ARE PLAYING A KEY ROLE

Key players in Tunisian civil society are workers and students trade unions. Tunisia’s biggest trade union, l’Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT), played an important role in Tunisia’s struggle for independence and in the 14 January revolution. This 67-year old labour union is credited with helping to mobilise the demonstrators by declaring strikes during the revolution. Accused of being too political and leaning towards the leftist progressive forces in this transitional period, it had threatened to organise general strikes, which were cancelled after reaching an agreement with the government. As one participant says of the new ability to hold the government accountable,

**‘The climate of liberty now gives me the possibility to apply pressure on the government. So I am happy and I believe that the situation now is positive.’**

Tunisia’s major student union, UGET, was founded in 1952 and attained notoriety due to its longstanding opposition to Ben Ali’s regime. The fact that Ennahda’s sympathisers’ now choose to vote for UGET candidates is not unsurprising, given that the union’s founder is a key figure in Ennahda.

## THE NEED FOR SYNERGISING EFFORTS AND BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY

The immense growth of civil society as measured by an increase in the number of organisations is not an accurate reflection of the level of civic activity, as there is a high degree of overlap. As one participant says, 'there is no unity when we have the same objective but are working separately instead of working together'. To many participants in our study, the main challenge for civil society is to learn to collaborate, create coalitions, and exchange information. Another issue is a lack of continuity in programming due to poor management. As one participant says,

**'Awareness-raising campaigns are rare and not well organised. There is a lack of continuity. Campaigns are badly run because of the lack of experience in the civil-society domain.'**

Continuity is affected by another main hurdle facing civil society in Tunisia: financing. As one participant says, 'the young people are active but they lack funding so they struggle with their own limited resources.' Another participant emphasises the high level of commitment of young people in his movement, Al Jil Al Jadid, and the hardships that an absence of funding poses. This participant identifies money as their biggest obstacle and says,

**'There are youth movements. I am in one and I am not trying to do some sort of publicity for the stuff we do. We have potential and capabilities, really hardworking dedicated people, but our biggest obstacle is financial. We have about 200 members but we still don't have an office. We meet up in school and are self-funded.'**

## REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT AND RESTRICTIONS

Some participants express the need for state regulation of organisations. This stance is shared by many Tunisians who blame Lejan Hemayet al Thawara (The Committees of the Protection of the Revolution) for being behind the violent acts committed against members of the opposition. Lejan Hemayet al Thawara is also accused of being Ennahda's militia. The main problem of informal groups is their lack of transparency and unclear agenda:

**'I don't have a problem with any group that has a clear strategy and recruits a clear group of people. They need to have a clear idea of their goal and purpose and respect the rules of society so that they can expose their ideas to others.'**



Tunis City Hall Square



CHAPTER THREE:  
**THE ROLE  
OF THE MEDIA**

# EGYPT

## THE MEDIA PERCEIVED AS MANIPULATIVE

The media have been deeply criticised by all of our study participants as being biased, lacking credibility and conveying false news in a way that has led to the current fragmentation of Egyptian society. Social media has not been any more innocent in terms of spreading rumours and lies. It was highlighted throughout the interviews that while the media cannot create such divisions or bring about the fragmentation of a society on its own, it does amplify and reflect already existing divisions or fragmentation. Participants described the media in Egypt as being urbanised, centralised and politicised, speaking only about either the middle or high social classes, while the poor and uneducated do not have the chance to access or influence the media. The second shortcoming is that the media is centralised in a way that ignores the smaller provinces; this urban focus means that only events in big cities are considered newsworthy, while rural areas are neglected completely, despite the fact that Egypt is mostly rural.

The result is that Egyptians are living inside media bubbles or virtual islands. Everyone selects the media position that is aligned with his or her own political ideology. These media bubbles are disconnected and they amplify the polarity in Egyptian society. Youth activists have sobered up to the fact that the media is amplifying these divisions and is misleading the public, rather than being led by good journalism which aims to be truth-revealing. Accordingly, they have changed their mobilising strategy towards the public and instead of relying on social media, they now seek to have their ideologies and videos screened in the streets and squares. This was evident with the 'Liars' (Kazeboon) campaign, which worked on raising awareness about violations made by the military council.

## **THE NEED FOR SELF-REGULATION, AS OPPOSED TO CENSORSHIP, IN THE MEDIA**

The critiques listed above highlight the importance of media regulation. All of our participants agree that the media in Egypt needs to be regulated in a way that can enhance their professionalism and objectivity, but at the same time there is legitimate concern that regulation may lead to increased censorship. Participants argue that the media should be self-regulated without any interference from the state, and emphasised that decision-makers should realise that people cannot be immunised from media and that the age of censorship belongs to the past.

The new constitution has brought into existence two new regulatory bodies for private and state-owned media according to articles 215 and 216. The first is entitled The National Council for Journalism and Audiovisual Media. This council's mandate is to organise the affairs of radio and television broadcasts and printed, digital and other journalism and to supervise them in a way that ensures freedom of the media. In addition, the council is charged with protecting the interests of the public and ensuring that the media's commitment to ethics mirrors the values and principles of society. The second entity is The National Bureau for Press and Media, which was set up to manage and develop state-owned press and media institutions. It is supposed to ensure a commitment to perform according to internationally recognised professional and objective standards for journalism.

## THE NEED TO SHIFT FROM CLICKTIVISM TO ACTIVISM

The Oxford English Dictionary defines clicktivism as 'the use of social media and other online methods to promote a cause'.<sup>10</sup> On 25 January 2011, social media became a major hub of political activity. In the interests of the advocacy of street protest, over 400,000 people signed up on Facebook. Moreover, throughout the protests, Egyptian Facebook users believed that 85 percent of Facebook usage was organising activism, raising awareness and spreading information about events. Analysis of Twitter also illustrates the extent to which the conversation was driven by political events, with mentions of the hashtag #jan25 correlating closely with total Tweet volumes.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout our interviews, the participants identified the need to shift from activism (clicktivism) of social media to ground activism through community development and practising democratic accountability, which requires different skills and tools that the youth need for their development, such as building initiatives, mobilising resources for change and working in groups. The Liars (Kazeboon) campaign is a good example of this shift: it moved its ideas and videos from social media sites to street screenings in order to raise awareness about violations made by the Military Council (SCAF). The initiative was launched to counter the narrative portrayed by state media. Youth used grassroots media tools, such as video screenings held in public spaces, characteristically done by projecting video clips against building walls to make citizens aware of the violations committed by military personnel against civilians since SCAF took power in February 2011.

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10 [www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/squeezed-middle-is-named-oxford-dictionaries-word-of-the-year-2011-134361588.html](http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/squeezed-middle-is-named-oxford-dictionaries-word-of-the-year-2011-134361588.html)

11 Tim Eaton, Online activism and revolution in Egypt: Lessons from Tahrir, New Diplomacy Platform

# LIBYA

## THE MEDIA, THE REVOLUTION AND ITS EVOLUTION

There seems to be a complex relationship between Libyan society and its newly emerged media. Media has been an integral part of the revolution since its early days. Within a few weeks of the start of the revolution, one of the icons of the revolution, Mohamed Nabous, in Benghazi, established the first independent television channel, Libya AlHurra. As with the other Arab Spring revolutions, social media played a key role during the revolution, and that has continued to the present. Government and political entities in Libya are paying extreme attention to the news and opinions circulated on Facebook and Twitter. The key challenge for the government and the people in dealing with the new media is the circulation of rumours and unconfirmed news. This is a cause of distraction to the government and is leading people to fret over rumours and speculations. Some even believe that there is a deliberate use of the media to destabilise the country.

Most Libyans use television, radio, and social networks to obtain information, but word-of-mouth remains one of the most important sources of information: from friends, colleagues and family. As with the media, this has also been a fertile environment for rumours and speculation.

The government's initial response to media developments was to launch two official television stations, a radio station and a newspaper. However, the official media outlets have a limited capacity to keep up with the fast-moving news on Facebook. The government's media activities evolved from a reactionary position towards the news or rumours circulating among the populace. The government's weak control of the media frustrates its efforts to establish a level of control over news messages. It is clear that the government has a limited repertoire when it comes to communicating with the public.

During the last days of the National Transitional Council (NTC) and Abdul Rahman Keib's government, there was an attempt to establish a Supreme Media Board. The objectives of the board were to create a self-regulated body for media professionals in order to regulate the industry and implement a code of professional ethics. The plans to establish the board failed over differences of opinion in the selection or appointment of board members, among other political issues. During the early days, the new government, led by Ali Zidan, was clear of its intention to introduce a Ministry for Media. Also, the new General National Congress (GNC) was very active in dealing with the media and in satisfying their need for information. There is often live coverage of GNC sessions, which has managed to some extent to thwart the rumour mill. There is a noticeable presence of most government agencies on Facebook in an attempt to fill the information vacuum and take control of the daily messages being circulated.

### **THE MEDIA IS VIEWED AS BIASED AND IS DISTRUSTED BY YOUTH**

Our research participants have a negative perception of the current media channels. Despite the fact that the media has increased in number, our study participants feel it did not contribute to any noticeable benefits for increased access to reliable information. Most problems in Libya are blamed on the media, with the participants in our study viewing the media as a source of nuisance, whether publicly or privately owned. The problem is that most of the media is politically biased and takes a subjective approach, which diminishes its integrity in the eyes of young Libyans. The perception of the media is so low that many of the participants agreed with a 21-year old male student, who describes the Libyan media as having 'no credibility, and even when they lie, they don't know how to lie, and don't know how to maintain the lie.' Nevertheless, participants believe that during the transition period the media played a critical role, with youth leading the media during the revolution. However, this trust no longer remains.

As a society that has lived decades in complete repression of freedom of speech, this newfound liberty is causing Libyans a lot of anxiety. Libya is facing the complex question of how to deal with this media machine and what, if any, limitations should be imposed on the media. The only attempt to put legal boundaries on the media's scope of liberties was by the Dar il Iftaa (an educational institute that represents Islam) and the Mufti Sadeg Ghariani. The law establishing religious authority makes it illegal to discuss fatwas in the media. This raised concerns that the Mufti has overstepped his didactic role and is becoming more political. Despite the existence of legal restrictions, there have been no enforcement of such laws.



تحيا  
ثورة  
مستقلة

السلط / DEGAGE! SOYONS REALISTES

yes.. WE CAN..

Demonstration in Al Qasba Square, February 2011

# TUNISIA

## A MEDIA REVOLUTION IN THE MAKING

Following decades of censorship and propaganda, the 14 January revolution enabled the Tunisian media to throw off a despot's shackles only to find that the media sector needs to undergo a revolution of its own. The Tunisian state-owned television that shockingly showed animal documentaries while the country was revolting against a dictator is now trying to redeem itself by casting off its propagandist image. The first step it took towards a more neutral stance was to change its name. During Ben Ali's rule it was named Tounes 7, the number seven is in reference to 7 November 1987, the date of his ascension to power. The logo of Tounes 7 was purple – known to be Ben Ali's favourite colour, which he used on most of his campaigns. He also decorated certain places in that colour. The new name of the National television is Al Wataneya, which literally translates as The National. To many of our study participants, however, media institutions did not change because their leaders are the same. One participant suggested that the shift to nonpartisan media needs, as a first step, the resignation of old media directors because of their corruption and political affiliation,

**'Just like in administrations where employees were saying to their directors *'dégage'* ('go away'), why didn't they do the same for journalists, and stop them from writing anymore? There is a problem in journalism. There was no revolution. For them no change has happened.'**

The shift from a media that suppresses reality to one that exposes it has proved to be a more arduous task than expected. One of our study participants noted the fact that the local media did not help during the revolution and that this might fuel the youth's resentment towards its newfound freedom. The media is seen as a body that benefited from a revolution it did not contribute to. The affiliation of media to political parties and its incapacity to provide transparency and neutral news is what has made Tunisian youth criticise its role for the past two years. According to one study participant,

**'From the revolution till now, the media didn't give fair attention to political parties; some parties were more promoted by media than others. Each TV channel chose its political party [...] Transparency doesn't exist at all. A lot of news is not transmitted at all, some big events they make small, others that are too small they make big [...] The way they analyse what is happening in Tunisia is unfair. The media has gone from bad to worse.'**

Another participant was more sympathetic towards the media's handling of its recent freedom of expression, with an understanding that objectivity and fair media is a skill that must be learned.

**'The state-owned media used to be a propaganda machine: they didn't do anything. But I think now they are improving [...] They don't have experience. Democracy is new to them, as it is to the whole country.'**

Yet while some changes in the state-owned television's propagandist tendencies have been noted, overall the media is perceived to have failed to have updated itself to the extent needed by most of our participants and that major news still fails to be reported.

**'They need extremely deep reform because they are still working the way they have been working for 20 years now. I feel that state media is really archaic. For example, when President Moncef Marzouki won a prize from Chatham House in London, UK, public television did not communicate this event or follow it at all. While international TV channels were talking about this event and providing live coverage of it, the state media were literally just playing some songs.'**

Or as another participant says,

**'The state media is not up to date with the concerns of the people. They put on a documentary while the NCA [National Constituent Assembly] is in a mess. They pretend that they are criticising the government but they are not. They are not honest.'**

Several newspapers that were banned under Ben Ali are now back in business and many others were newly created. Yet while media outlets have increased, most participants recognise that what is really needed is not additional media channels but good investigative reporting and a move away from sensationalism.

**'They need to learn to become like archeologists, digging and collecting information.'**

Other participants note that state media holds pre-scripted debates, which do not provide a true forum for contestation and public expression – they have their own ideas about how such debates and investigative reporting should be done,

**'[...] they do these really pathetic debates where they just monitor the debate trying to placate both sides. A journalist in a political debate should not just play a monitoring role. He should be the one coming up with the questions; he should be the one cornering the participants, exposing the truth and asking for it, putting the participants into the hot seat where they are exposed to the public.'**

Overall, our participants accuse the state media of being lenient in its portrayal of the current government and of being disconnected from what really matters to the population. They sensationalise facts they find on Facebook and turn it into news, basically seeking a media buzz and entertaining audiences instead of informing them. The media is slow and reactive in covering events, and often devotes attention to information that is not newsworthy and therefore, while the state media claim to have changed, they still have a long way to go.

**'What they do is always discuss things a day later [...] You find that foreign media has already spoken about it and we have discussed it among ourselves and we have moved on but the state media is still staggering behind.'**

Some suggest that what is lacking in Tunisian media is not independence and neutrality but the basic skills to produce good content. The language used is unprofessional and as one participant noted, the content is so disconnected from the lives of the people that, 'it is as if you were watching a foreign channel.'

## THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA HAS SHIFTED: FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE

The role that social media has played in the Tunisian revolution is undeniable. As one participant said,

**‘In the absence of real journalism, it was the hub of our information. ‘Dégage’ [the slogan used] was a Facebook event. It brought people together. Secrets were revealed. It linked people from different regions.’**

However, in the post-revolution period this role has shifted and the majority of participants in our study voiced concern over its influence and the high risks of its misuse. As one participant said,

**‘Social media can be a double-edged sword. It can be good in terms of following what’s happening in the country and criticising and giving recognition to good works. But we should not believe everything we see or read on social networks because most of the stuff posted is rumours that are unverified.’**

Many other participants echo this sentiment and view the role of social media today as more negative than positive. As one participant says,

**‘Facebook is our worst problem. I can have a page of 10,000 fans and put wrong news in it. We don’t analyse the information critically and that is why we are easily influenced.’**

Some study participants believe that social media can no longer play the same critical role it played during the revolution because the youth were the ones that granted it that role but now they have shifted their aims from a common goal towards fulfillment of personal aims through a combination of ‘insults, defamations, gossip and rumours’.

Further, social media has become used by political parties as a tool to influence voting behaviour. These parties realise how effective social media can be in influencing public opinion and therefore are investing a great deal of money towards this. As one participant says,

**‘Its role shifted from raising awareness, to bringing ignorance (tajheleya). Its original mission is now over. During the elections it became a place of advertisements, attracting voters. All those pages and groups had millions being spent on them, with professionals paid to do that, spreading news that makes certain groups more popular [...] I know that even certain pages were sold by those who have about 800,000 likes and then the buyer uses the page for political publicity.’**

Other participants described the use by the different political parties of social media to achieve their political aims as a sort of virtual political battle that takes place on their newsfeed and of which they have no control. The division that can be seen in those social networks mirrors the political divisions at large. As one participant said,

**‘Facebook pages that have more than 100,000 likes are used to lobby for or against a party. The Liberals and the Conservatives are fighting on your wall and you can’t do anything about it. It’s really frustrating.’**

Several ministries have their own Facebook page or Twitter accounts on which they release their official statements. This new trend is considered by this participant as a blow to traditional media:

**‘It got to the point where the Ministry of Interior’s public statements’ were released on their official Facebook page.’**

On the other hand, many NGOs like Bawsala, which monitors the National Constituent Assembly and report on its activities, are in fact using social media as a tool to achieve transparency and open governance.

**'The votes at the NCA are being live tweeted, social media is being used for more transparency and open governance so that the people know what is going on.'**

**'The role of the media is to be a watchdog and to be critical of the government, so this is good.'**

One participant suggests that the media is one of the most powerful players in Tunisia, along with civil society, in putting pressure on the government to become more accountable:

**'There is a power relationship between media, the government and public opinion. It's a triangle. Each one will try to get more power, but sometimes you feel there is no balance. And this is why we feel there is instability, and we feel the government doesn't have the legitimacy it should have.'**

## **A PERCEPTIBLE FREEDOM IN MEDIA POST-BEN ALI**

When asked about post-revolution gains, our study showed a consensus that people's voices and the right to express themselves freely had been major achievements. Despite all the challenges cited by the participants above, most participants agree that the freedom of expression that has begun to emerge in the media (traditional and social) marks a positive change:

**'What has changed now is that people are not afraid and are speaking up.'**

**'There is opposition, dialogue and freedom of expression. Before we couldn't criticise at all.'**

**'The youth are being more expressive and this is good.'**

The participants, however, view the amount of freedom of expression in a mixed way, with some viewing it as a common good and others more sceptical, particularly by those who have been jailed for expressing their views. This fear over freedom of expression was even noted within our focus groups, as participants nervously joked about how their statements were being recorded and how their 'free expressions' could be used to ultimately get them into trouble.



The Headquarters of former President Ben Ali's RCD Party



CHAPTER FOUR:  
**A BETRAYED  
GENERATION**



Tahrir Square, Cairo, February 2011

# EGYPT

## A GENERATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

**‘From the first day of 25 January there are two conflicting visions. The first belongs to the past while the second represents the present and future. The Muslim Brotherhood and the political elite that form both Islamist and liberal parties are a part of the past. They were raised up in the era of Nasser and Sadat in addition to belonging to Mubarak’s one. They aren’t able to translate the anger of Egyptians into steps for change and are unable to provide any vision for a reformed Egyptian state.’**

Our Egyptian participants all expressed concerns about a widening generation gap. Stereotypes of youth as lacking in experience persist in spite of the revolution and their celebrated key role in it. The media continues to play an adversarial role in widening this gap, marginalising and typecasting youth as inexperienced, while at the same time upholding them as heroes.

**‘We blame our parents – that they were passive and accepted to be ruled with such a semi-military regime for over 60 years. They have passed on to us a heavy legacy.’**

Participants blame the older generation for the stalling of the democratisation process after Mubarak’s toppling. The current political leadership is not inclusive of the generation that led the revolution and that allowed for the existence of this leadership after the ousting of Mubarak.

**‘On the first days of revolution, they celebrated us – the youth. However, once the situation became complicated and the security personnel had withdrawn, they instead turned towards blaming the youth for the revolution.’**

The initial celebration of youth that followed the excitement of the ousting of Mubarak demonstrated, according to study participants, that this attention was superficial, as it has not been reflected in any policies or institutional changes. Another example is that the Military Council has kept marginalising youth movements and coalitions like the April 6th Movement and the Revolutionary Youth Coalition during transitional process negotiations. The participants of our study believe that bringing change to Egypt requires fostering a new consciousness of a young generation that is hopeful for a better future, one that is creative, young, and simply new in its strategies and policies. Young people must enter the political space.



# LIBYA

## A PERCEPTIBLE SHIFT IN GENERATIONAL DYNAMICS

Most youth activists in Libya describe positive change in intergenerational relationships after the revolution due to youth's key role during the revolution. However, some believe that the older generations respected the youth only for their work in volunteerism, but abused them on the main issues with which they needed help. A participant from Benghazi, a 26-year old male engineer, described positively that shift in society's perspective of youth,

**'[It] changed drastically. I noticed it in the university and also in work. *Subhan Allah* (thanks be to God) how it has changed! They no longer look to the youth as being young but they look for their ideas. Before, there was the general feeling that no one cared or listened to youth, but now people enquire about education degrees and qualifications and are no longer concerned about age.'**

Generally, the majority of activists feel that, as a generation, they are much more respected and appreciated than before the revolution. However, this improved relationship has not translated into tangible opportunities so far. Although the older generations may concede that it was youth that instigated the revolution and were pivotal to its success, they are not yet willing to make space for them in political leadership.

Understanding the background of the older generations, this should not come a surprise. For the older generations this is the last opportunity for them to realise their political aspirations and dreams. Consider a Libyan who was born in the 1940s and 1950s, and who has lived through a prime time in Libya's history but who has also lived through a series of devastating events. After they dreamed of liberating Palestine and the leadership of Jamal Abdul-Nasser, they were shocked with the 1967 defeat against Israel. After believing in nationalism and independence they went through Gaddafi's devastating coup d'état in 1969. After believing in their recently gained independence from a foreign occupier, they found their countrymen to be exceedingly ruthless and oppressive. In the 1980s, their properties were confiscated, their opposing politicians were assassinated in Europe, and students were publicly hanged in university campuses. After a series of confrontations with the West, Gaddafi always ended on the winning side.

The 17 February revolution came and gave this generation an unexpected opportunity to finally realise their dreams. They will not let go of this easily. Though the young Libyans now realise that they have new opportunities to reach their potential, the older generation realises that this is their last opportunity. And of course they now appreciate the young Libyans more, because they are the ones who suddenly made their lives relevant again.

During the early days of the revolution, both the national anthem and the flag of the pre-Gaddafi Libya were re-adopted for the new Libya. This may have signalled to the older generations that Libya is ready to go back in time, making the pre-Gaddafi period the most important reference point in today's discussion regarding Libya's future. Today, political debates are bombarded by opinions making reference to the 1951 constitution,

discussing the federalism system of the 1950s and using the same names for the regions used decades ago: Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fezzan. Even the process to draft a new constitution in 2013 is based on the structure used decades ago. Some Benghazi activists are demanding that the public institutions that were based in Benghazi almost 60 years ago should return to the city now. To some, the revolution has succeeded not in advancing Libya but in giving it a safe passage to its prominent past. Using pre-Gaddafi's Libya as the reference point empowered the older generations and qualified them to take the lead. After all, they lived the golden age of Libya's development. As long as Libyan society continues to refer to that era for guidance, youth will find it very difficult to regain ownership of the revolution and the path to a better future.

# TUNISIA

## A SACRIFICED GENERATION: THAWRAT CHABAB YAHSOUDOUHA AL KOHOOL

In Tunisia, young people feel disappointed by the political parties' unwillingness to include them in the transition process. Young people consider their inclusion in political life as a right they deserve since they proclaim themselves as the main actors of the revolution. Their leadership status in the revolution increases their feelings of frustration at their exclusion in the post-revolution process.

**'Young people are less engaged and motivated than before. We feel deceived now by the older generation. We are giving up.'**

The participants point out that the older generation has reaped the benefits of the young people's fight for democracy and social equity. As one participant says,

**'Young people are the fuel of revolutions, because being young means being creative and innovative [...] Roughly 90 per cent of the martyrs were young people [...] These are the people that chanted slogans and they were in direct confrontation with the police using only rocks and Molotov cocktails. But the ones who reaped its benefits are the older generation.'**

**'Youth participation is still a big problem, especially with respect to the need to involve the youth in decision-making. All we see is old people taking stupid decisions.'**

**'There is a saying: The revolution is like a bus, the old ones sit on the chairs and the youth stand up.'**

Young Tunisians consider their exclusion as a result of people's mistrust in their abilities. Scepticism about their potential remains prevalent and can be traced back to an rigid stereotype about youth.

**'In political life there are no youth. They are all old and they see youth as irresponsible. They don't trust youths' capabilities and they don't want to encourage youth.'**

One participant says that this mistrust stems from a misunderstanding of their current circumstances and the different socio-economic realities that today's generation has to face:

**'Tunisia has changed over the past 20 years but the older generation can't realise this and still believe that Tunisia is the same as in the past. They are nostalgic about a certain period in Tunisia's history, when they were young. They consider the times of their youth as perfect because that was during the 1970s, and Tunisia was then building itself so it was a prosperous country at the time. Now things have changed; we are living in a time of financial crisis.'**

Another participant elaborates on this point by also explaining that the older generation is unaware of the changes that have occurred in Tunisia. Their times are different but yet they are dealing with the present with a strong sense of nostalgia towards the past. Current problems are set against past accomplishments, which make youth's credibility ever harder to achieve:

**'When you look at statistics, the majority of the unemployed are youth. They are the ones directly affected by the current conjuncture. So you feel that there is a huge generation gap between a group of people still living in a golden age and the youth who are living in today's hard times, I would say.'**

## **'WAITHOOD' CONTINUES**

Tunisian youth find themselves caught in a vicious circle set by an older generation that accuses them of being inexperienced but yet that does not allow them to gain experience. This prolongs the waiting period of the youth. As one participant voices this frustration,

**'My family encourages me to do what I want but there is this huge problem of mistrusting youth. They don't have faith in us. They just see us as a generation that's into banalities [...] It's another vicious circle where they don't do anything and they don't allow us to do anything.'**

For many participants, Tunisia is going through a difficult phase of transition where both generations should collaborate and trust each other's competencies and skills. As one participant says,

**'There are positions where you need people with experience from the older generation but there are others who are young and very good and they have a lot of ideas. They could be consultants (...) We have different ways of seeing things. We need to integrate youth who have competencies.'**

## LEADERSHIP DISCONNECTED FROM YOUTH NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS

The revolution is currently being managed solely by the older generation, who are in power now. Some participants believe they are totally disconnected with the needs and aspirations of the youth:

**‘Even in the youth ministry there isn’t a young consultant [...] The Employment Ministry as well doesn’t have a young consultant. They should have such consultants to understand the people better. The youth that made the revolution, the people, they are just cards politicians use for their own benefits and from time to time they tell us ‘the revolution was made by youth’ but without turning this into real action.’**

One of the participants proclaims it is the right of the youth to carry on what they have started. He denounces the appropriation of the revolution by the older generation. He uses the word ‘experience’, which can be interpreted as a desire to test their capabilities and see what they can do with what they have begun:

**‘Despite the fact that young people have the biggest potential and capabilities, they are being ignored and the ones in power are in their 60s and have about just 15 more years of productivity. They want to monopolise power. The same political elite that appears on TV and that creates trouble and conflict have been politically active from 1961 until today. They have been active on the political scene for more than 50 years. They have had their chance and time and today they want to take away ours.’**

## THE YOUTH ARE BECOMING A CLICHÉ

One of the main challenges in Tunisia as described above is that young people have difficulty in shaking off their reputation as frivolous. It is an image that Ben Ali sought to strengthen during his rule, by engaging the youth with football and low-quality music festivals. Their capacities are always under scrutiny and they are kept on the periphery of the reform process while the older generation plays a central role.

**‘Youth has become a cliché word again, just like in Ben Ali times.’**

Youth discourse has become emptied of meaning, say the participants; there is a need to move beyond tokenism and make youth participation a reality in more than just a superficial way.

**‘They want to do it in the style of a Council of the Wise because they have experience and they consider young people as frivolous. But then this frivolous youth that was raised on football and low-quality music festivals took it to the streets. But now their role is decorative [...] If the only way to be part of a political party or an NGO is just to play a decorative role I would rather not be part of it at all.’**

## DEMOCRACY AND CHANGE NEED TO START AT HOME

Rare are those who deny that this revolution was youth-led. However, the consolidation of that role and the incentive to continue to support the prominence of youth is not felt by many of the older generation.

**'Things changed when we were happy about the revolution. Everyone was talking about youth and they used this rhetoric for the elections but then nothing happened afterwards. The revolution that happened was not a complete one, it didn't touch the society deeply, as in families for example [...] You can't change the position of youth in the society so easily.'**

For many of the participants in our study, the revolution happened in the street but not in their homes. The old mindset towards youth remains firmly the same within families. Further, family members have a hard time communicating with one another when they share different views. One participant declared that she does not feel more empowered by her family due to this mental stasis: there is tension because her family's traditional mindset is challenged by her active lifestyle within civil society:

**'My family is sort of a train wreck. My family and I have totally different opinions, we don't really talk; rather, we argue about politics. It's just that we don't get along when it comes to politics. But even talking about it is something new – even if it turns into an argument at least it's a new subject to talk about. But I don't feel more empowered by my family because it's my same old family.'**

Another participant encounters the same misunderstanding from his family. His family considers his activism in politics a waste of time. The notion of engagement is foreign to the older generation and meets with their disapproval.

**'We were always told by our parents to keep a low profile. It is the way they raised us. During Ben Ali's regime I used to operate in secret. They are still very suspicious. They don't want me to be involved in politics; they see it as a waste of time. Maybe it was also this generational frustration that fuelled the revolution too.'**

The revolution did not help in bridging the gap between the two generations. Trust seems to be a topical question for most participants who think that the older generation does not trust them. They attribute this lack of trust as the main reason for their alienation from the political process.

**'It's frustrating because you have old people and young people who are sceptical of your performance. They ask you 'what are you going to do? You're young; you still haven't gone through that much in your lifetime.' It's very demoralising.'**

While some are still in awe of youth's role in the revolution, others tend to belittle it. One participant describes a positive response and views youth as a divine force that managed to accomplish an extraordinary feat.

**'Old people respect young people and are proud of them. They know it was done by them. They feel they are the hope of this country. I talked that day with my mum. She was fascinated by the 26 January bread revolution and she said 'this is so much better'. The youth is divine. Maybe the word is too big, but that's how I see it.'**

Another participant points out that youth's abilities and accomplishments shocked the older generation. Toppling a regime was not something that they viewed them as capable of doing. The youth explains that the intergenerational conflict is not between him and his parents but rather between him and the political elite,

**'I think they [our parents] trust us more. They are still in shock by what we have done [...] I don't feel that there's an intergenerational conflict between me and my parents, but rather between a new young political elite that is trying to find its place and between an old worn-out political elite that still wants to impose its point of view on us.'**



CHAPTER FIVE:  
**THE ROLE  
OF WOMEN**



Women talking in Cairo

# EGYPT

In Egypt, a number of our participants, both males and females, expressed that women's rights have been dismissed as a priority. The women's-rights discourse is perceived as narrow and participants urged an approach to that agenda within the context of human and citizenship rights. They suggest that a more inclusive approach is needed that would not reduce women to a single unit of analysis but would acknowledge the diversity of women. In general, advocates for women's rights were associated with negatively perceived women such as Suzanne Mubarak and cultural challengers like Aliaa Al Mahdy, who posed nude to express her refusal to be restricted by societal limitations.

**'The problem is that women's-rights issues are stereotyped in connection with Suzanne Mubarak. This unfortunately has discredited women's activism.'**

**'Now, our concern is not with women's rights but with all Egyptian citizens' rights.'**

**'I'm against women's-rights NGOs. They represent a new kind of gender racism.'**

**'We should close organisations working on women's rights. None of these organisations represents women as similar to ordinary Egyptian women. You feel they are not Egyptians and are more like foreigners in their look.'**

Participants highlighted that the core problem in women's rights is how women are perceived. They think that the women's-rights issue is trapped in a dichotomy of either very controversial liberal freedoms or very suppressive conservative practices. During Mubarak's era, progress was made on women's rights but not all of these gains were as a result of female activism or advocacy that led to a change of collective consciousness. Some of these gains were implemented only to polish the image of Egypt internationally.

**'Before the revolution, the biggest milestones in securing women's rights were not made from the work of feminist NGOs and activists. On the contrary, these advances were merely handouts from the government.'**

**'It is time now to double efforts to regain the rights that were endowed before.'**

The final draft of the new constitution has raised concerns that it may not only impede women from accessing greater social, economic and political rights, but may open the door towards reversing gains and overturning laws that protect women and children and undermine the principle of gender equality.<sup>12</sup>

**'The concern about women's rights is a reaction against being ruled by Islamists who have a conservative position on women's rights. The core problem is the perception and whether it is balanced or not.'**

12. Silent spring: women's rights in Egypt, The Network of Women's Rights Organizations in Egypt (NWRO), February 2013.



Woman voting in Libya after fall of Gaddafi

# LIBYA

## LIMITED EMPOWERMENT FOR WOMEN IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE

As the political and social system in Libya is positioning itself between the pillars of Islamism and liberalism, women's rights is at the crux of both. In the midst of the fast and significant changes during the political transition process, there are many concerns about how these changes will impact the status of women in the society.

Since the early days of the revolution, Libyan women have asserted themselves strongly and exercised a key role. Efforts to empower women came to fruition with the design of the electoral system for the GNC. The system required political entities to provide a list of candidates with equal numbers of men and women. This provided almost 33 per cent female representation in the GNC. However, only two women out of 120 won seats independently, which signals that the path for full and equal political participation may still be long. One of our participants in Benghazi, a 28-year old male doctor, described the situation,

**'Politically, I have not seen any change, and did not see any women as a potential political leader. In my opinion, women have the right qualifications, but so far they have not found the right climate to start. The role of women in civil society and volunteerism has been won and deservedly so, but politically, women still fight and still our mentality remains that women should participate only as volunteers because the perception is that men have no time for this whereas women have the time to volunteer.'**

Many of the young Libyan activists that we interviewed believe that politically, there has been no change for women. They also believe that the marginalisation of youth has likewise happened to women. Politically, some activists believe it is very difficult for women and should be made easier, whereas others believe that (at least for now) the role of politics should be reserved for men. The former Minister of Health was a woman who is frequently cited as an example of how women are incapable of taking up political responsibilities at this critical stage in Libya's political transformation process. Though there is a general consensus regarding the improvement of women's status after the revolution and the need to increase their participation, there are split opinions regarding the role of women in politics in general and specifically related to the magnitude of the current political challenges.

It is evident from our research that women still have a glass ceiling to break. Participants believe this is partially due to societal norms but others believe that this lack of inclusion is imposed by women themselves. A 27-year old male engineer from Benghazi candidly stated that,

**‘There is a 180-degree difference in the role of women before and after the revolution. Before the revolution women were marginalised but now they take their rights and more. But, I feel that women are still not sufficiently competent for this responsibility. I feel that everyone is demanding the participation of women but when it comes to actually involving them, you don’t find anything and with the first social occasion you find that women leave politics and everything behind.’**

This scepticism in Libyan society of the capabilities of Libyan women to become political leaders was also captured in a recent household survey undertaken by IFES in early 2013, which showed that 13 per cent of female respondents and 26 per cent of male respondents do not support women becoming involved in politics as candidates for office. In the same study, it was shown that 83 per cent of women respondents agree that men are better in politics than women (IFES, 2013, pp. 14–16).

Though most Libyan activists concede that women did not find a suitable environment from which to emerge politically, the majority agree that in civil society women were successful. Despite the challenges clocking women from increased political participation, most activists believe that women significantly benefited from the revolution. Now, they say, women can participate in any activity.

# TUNISIA

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS MANIPULATED FOR POLITICAL ENDS

The rhetoric around women rights in Tunisia has been used by political parties throughout the elections as one of the playing cards in their agenda, along with the youth card. For some participants, the discourse on women's rights is fake and unnecessary: it is an invention that distracts from empowering women.

**'I think this is a 'made-up' question. I don't understand why we talk about women's rights. My father treats me and my brother in the same way. For me, there is no difference between men and women. Okay, there are some differences, like cultural ones, but it has never been a problem for me. This is a new issue that we talk about to raise new questions.'**

The concern with women's rights being in danger was considered by most participants as a non-existent problem. One participant explained that the fears some might have with women's rights are due to the ambiguity of certain terms and to their fear of the unknown:

**'It is unjustified fear. They have managed to gain assets that no one can take away. They are just afraid of the unknown. It is due to the ambiguity of certain terms and they all interpret it differently.'**

The Code of Personal Status is a set of laws that regulates the rights and duties of women and men in marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance issues. This 1956 text profoundly changed family law and the legal status of women, imparting many gains on Tunisian women, namely, banning polygamy and repudiation and granting women and men the same divorce rights. Women and men have the same right to vote and stand for election in Tunisia. In the National Constituent Assembly elections that took place on 23 October 2011, it was ruled that women and men had to feature in equal numbers as candidates in electoral lists.

The inheritance law is the only law in the Code of Personal Status that favours men over women. It stipulates that a male heir receives twice as much as females, in accordance with Islamic Sharia law, unless a will specifies exactly how a parent's estate is to be divided among children. In spite of the longstanding presence of the code, the legal status of Tunisian women remains a controversial issue, as some contend that Tunisia has gone too far in imposing modernity, and others insist that further progress must continue to be made.

Participants stressed the importance of not recognising women as a single unit of analysis. They expressed the urgent need to go beyond the centre (geographically and mentally) and to reach out to women that are less represented, such as those living in rural areas. One participant asked,

**'What women are you talking about? Are you talking about women in villages? Or are you just talking about those in the capital? Which women are taking their freedom? You know, there are women that are working for 12 hours in the villages in the south of the country.'**

The same participant pointed out that,

**'Before the revolution, there was a gap between those in central Tunisia and those on the shores of the sea. We have different profiles of women. There are different women in Tunisia: those who are educated and those who don't even know the Code of Personal Status.'**

Another participant reproached the superficial approach used to address women's issues. He criticised the elite's focus on women's rights and their disregard of the real issues that women in the countryside have to deal with. He pointed to the fact that the elite that has money speaks out in the name of the silent marginalised majority of women, whose actual concerns are not conveyed:

**'They should focus on more important issues like sexual harassment and women in the inland regions. Polygamy and women's rights are issues that have**

**been already settled. But the real issues that women in the countryside are facing are being overlooked.'**

Another participant believes that the rights of Tunisian women cannot be taken away. She stressed that more importance needs to be paid to improving women's social standing, the main problem that women face. Women's problems are believed to be inherently economic and that their situation does not require rights empowerment but economic empowerment:

**'Women's issues are looked upon as superficial. Women here have reached a position that they are not going to lose but they choose to focus on women's issues in a very superficial manner like Ben Ali did, instead of tackling real problems.'**

The disapproval of the focus given to women and their empowerment is not out of disregard for women's rights but rather stems from a strong belief that women should be seen first and foremost as citizens. Paying attention to gender is seen to reinforce their second-class citizenship status. Cosmetic representation and the use of women as a tool seems to be a habit that has not changed after the revolution.

**'I don't see a change between Ben Ali's era and now. They are still using women as a tool.'**

Positive discrimination seems to be a controversial issue, as some view it as a way of achieving equality and others as an unfair set of policies that are not based on merit. The Parity Law that was imposed by the independent committee, ISIE, that supervised the October 2011 Constituent Assembly elections sparked different reactions. ISIE demanded gender parity in the electoral lists, requiring political parties to alternate between males and females. However, few were the lists where women occupied first place. This resulted in only 49 women elected to the Constituent Assembly out of 217 seats. Even the participation of these women is considered by some participants to be a cosmetic one.

**'Those women representing us in the parliament are passive.'**

Women are expected to have rights within the framework of citizenship; citizens are expected to be treated equally without taking into account their gender, race, etc.

**‘There are people asking for the right of women to have a job to be written into the constitution. What sort of an issue is this? It should just say that every Tunisian citizen has rights and duties, regardless of their gender, race, etc. It’s a very traditional form and has no positive discrimination. A woman is a citizen isn’t she? These issues are laughable.’**

## FEMINIST ORGANISATIONS ARE PERCEIVED NEGATIVELY

Feminist NGOs’ bad reputation in Tunisia is another legacy of Ben Ali’s regime. The propagandist methods used by the former regime to exploit feminist causes and to enhance their false feminism policies in the West underscore the notion of feminism in post-revolutionary Tunisia. Several participants voiced their scepticism with regard to the complaints of NGOs about the degradation of women’s rights:

**‘Democratic Women was a propaganda tool used by Leila Ben Ali. She was at their head. Ben Ali was supposedly protecting men and she was protecting women. Now you only hear about the fears of the Democratic Women, they don’t do anything, they just create a buzz and that’s it.’**

Another participant pointed to a change in the mindset of some Tunisians in the way they view women. This shift is believed to be a great obstacle to the empowerment of women. He denounced a regression in people’s mindsets and explained it as a form of counter-reaction to a history of state-imposed feminism.

**‘No, no, no. They are not empowered at all. I am seeing their situation going backwards rather than forwards. I don’t know whether I feel that women are more repressed and pressured. I am talking about people’s mindsets. When I talk to people, even my flatmates, who are young, they want their future wife to stay at home. They criticise young girls; they judge every little detail of their way of dressing and lifestyle, like cigarettes or drink. When they see a girl walking late at night they say, ‘How come this happens in Tunisia? [...] I hear from time to time this kind of saying: “Oh, it’s all due to Leila Ben Ali, who made women more powerful than us and now it’s over.”’**

## THE ROLE OF WOMEN LEADERS IN ADVANCING THE WOMEN’S-RIGHTS AGENDA

The issue of women’s empowerment represents a concern that one participant voiced in her scepticism of the role that female MPs will play in advocating women’s issues:

**‘At the National Constituent Assembly I think we have more women now. But the issue is, are these women using their power to advocate women’s rights or not? That’s the main issue that I had the chance to discuss with other women from civil society. There’s this kind of concern about the future of women’s rights because we have an Islamist government. They fear that more laws will be based on Sharia.’**

Another participant also displayed her disappointment with female MPs’ role in reinforcing the empowerment of women. As she says,

**‘We have 46 women in the National Constituent Assembly. These 46 women can actually change a vote. They hold huge sway, but here’s the thing: half of them are from the ruling party Ennahda. They represent Ennahda, they lobby only for Ennahda’s goals; they don’t lobby for women’s rights.’**

The legitimacy of the fears over a setback in women's issues or the overconfidence in the immunity of women's rights is not the right attitude according one participant. He suggests that a more moderate and rational position needs to be taken towards women's issues. Women are expected to be the lead actors in this approach:

**'Even if a man tried to defend women's rights this is a good step, but on the other hand, he cannot really understand what women are expecting and how they want to improve their own situation. It would be really good if women tried to defend more and more their own rights so we can try to make a balance between how society is evolving and how women who are also a part of this society see themselves in this society.'**

## THE CASE OF THE COMPLEMENTARY ARTICLE

Article 28 is certainly the most infamous constitutional clause in the draft of the Tunisian constitution. The article stipulates that women are 'complementary to men'. It says that

**'The state guarantees the protection of women's rights and the promotion of their gains as a partner of men in the mission of homeland building, and the roles of both should complement each other within the household.'**

This wording was believed to be an attempt to erode Tunisian women's rights. This contentious article drew the attention of civil society and of local and foreign media as they all mobilised to have it changed. On Women' Day, thousands of Tunisians took to the streets to protest against this article. The Office for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights put out a news release saying they thought it put women on unequal footing with men. One participant considers Article 28 as an example of the shift in the state's strategy from women's empowerment during the former regime to a government marginalising women:

**'Before the revolution the old regime adopted a clear plan to empower women [...] but actually you feel that there is a shift in this strategy. For instance, the law project that was proposed by Ennahda that considers women as only complementary to men.'**

A new version of the draft constitution was released on 14 December 2012, with no mention of women as 'complements of men'. Instead, Article 28 reads:

**'The state shall guarantee the provision of equal opportunities between men and women in the bearing of various responsibilities. The state shall guarantee the elimination of all forms of violence against women.'**



Demonstrations in streets of Tunis, February 2011



CHAPTER SIX:  
**TRUST AND  
SOCIAL  
COHESION**

# EGYPT

## A DECLINE IN TRUST AND SOCIAL COHESION POST-MUBARAK

Participants raised concerns about a decline in trust and social cohesion levels among Egyptians in the post-Mubarak era.

**'If one was aligned with Mubarak's regime, you would be labelled and banned from participating in any kind of activism related to the revolution.'**

**'I've been labelled as belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood although I'm not. This label came out during my work in the student union. I was making efforts to keep all students involved, whether they were Muslim Brotherhood or not. At this time, I experienced how hard it is to be labelled and that you need to defend yourself all the time.'**

This labelling deepened divisions among Egyptians and showed how a wide segment of Egyptian society was intolerant towards those of different or shifting political positions:

**'If you open my inbox, you will find many messages insulting me, just because of my affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood.'**

**'Belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood was enough to get people [in the student union] mobilised against me and my position regardless of the details. They always keep themselves on the opposite side.'**

## IKHWANOPHOBIA EXPANDED

Distrust and phobia of the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) was expressed by a majority of the non-Islamist participants. The March 2011 referendum was a key moment in the polarisation of Egyptians on the basis of either ideological orientation or religious belonging. The media was mentioned as having negatively contributed to this with an absence of validation and objectivity:

**'The March referendum was the first incident that marked the start of bringing division to Egyptian society in the post-Mubarak era.'**

**'I can't say that all the people who were part of the National Democratic Party are corrupt, or that all the people who were against Mubarak are remnants of Mubarak's regime [...] The critical point for me is whether they were accused of corruption or killing during the protests.'**

**'None of the remnants of Mubarak's regime should be allowed to play any political role in Egypt. They have been a part of the regime that ruined our country. They were silent and accepted the corruption that happened right in front of them. They participated and benefited from this corruption.'**

Participants showed zero toleration with the Mubarak regime's former leaders, who were accused of corruption and violating Egyptians' rights. Indeed, bringing them to justice is a principal issue for many of them. Article 232 of the new constitution bans the dissolved National Democratic Party from practising political rights for the coming ten years. However, the current government has announced its intention for reconciliation with businessmen who were connected with Mubarak's regime. Reconciliation was rejected, however, by the majority of the participants in our study.

Participants regarded consensus building as a utopian dream, especially now that distrust has escalated, even within families. Family ties have been harmed due to differing political positions: parents, in most cases, do not show tolerance for the different positions that their sons and daughter have chosen. Friendships have similarly come to harm, to the extent that political positions have become a key breaker that can end long-term friendships.

**'Fragmentation has reached some very personal areas. Some families even start to suspect their sons' and daughters' religion and whether they are still Muslims or not.'**

**'I know from many of my friends that their relationships with their families has been harmed badly due to differences in political positions.'**

**'My father was shocked by me and decided not to talk to me as result of my interview on TV when I said that the Muslim Brotherhood is an unfair group and that Morsi is a pharaoh in progress [...] Me too, I have avoided talking with him in order to avoid conflict.'**

# LIBYA

## RECONCILIATION AS A PRIORITY; DISTRUST TOWARDS THE POLITICAL PROCESS

Cohesion and trust among Libyan society is one of the most troubling issues following the revolution. People now remember nostalgically a time when people were united and committed to working together for one cause – the fall of the Gaddafi regime – during the revolution. After the revolution, this changed.

One of the critical factors to the success of the revolution was the unity that people displayed, whether on the political or the social front. Since any criticism of the NTC was considered tantamount to treason there were very few political disputes or rivalry – all was postponed until liberation. Once Tripoli was liberated, all political groups saw this as a suitable time to start competing politically. The romantic oratory of the revolution was over.

In November 2011, the International Republican Institute (IRI) conducted a public opinion poll in the eastern region of Libya and asked the following question (The IRI, 2011, p. 18):

### **‘How do you feel about the following individuals and groups?’**

As can be seen in the following responses, people had a more favourable perception of Mustafa Abdul Jalil, the head of the National Transitional Council, than of the council itself. It also shows negative perceptions of Islamic movements in the eastern region, whether it was the Salafis or the Muslim Brotherhood, and a negative perception of certain tribes that are widely perceived to be supportive of Gaddafi’s regime. This opinion poll was well reflected in the elections of July 2012, where Islamic movements did not do as well as Mahmoud Jibril.

Study by the International Republican Institute (IRI), November 2011						
	Strongly positive	Somewhat positive	No feeling	Somewhat negative	Strongly negative	Refused to answer/ don't know
Mustafa Abdul Jalil	87%	5%	1%	1%	0%	6%
February 17th Youth	76%	20%	2%	1%	1%	0%
Mahmoud Jibril	70%	17%	3%	3%	2%	6%
NTC military	67%	24%	3%	1%	1%	3%
Local volunteers	59%	31%	3%	2%	3%	3%
NTC members	58%	31%	4%	2%	1%	3%
Local brigades	52%	34%	4%	3%	2%	4%
NTC police	46%	37%	6%	3%	3%	6%
Obeidi tribe	42%	34%	8%	5%	4%	8%
Amazigh tribe	37%	29%	6%	3%	7%	18%
Ali Al-Issawi	24%	20%	10%	5%	6%	35%
Jihadists	20%	16%	13%	6%	18%	27%
Tribal leaders	16%	39%	19%	9%	13%	4%
Ahmed Hussein Al-Darrat	15%	16%	10%	2%	2%	54%
Jalal Al-Digheily	14%	18%	10%	3%	5%	49%
Abdullah Shamia	14%	14%	7%	2%	2%	61%
Salafists	11%	17%	18%	10%	15%	29%
Muslim Brotherhood	9%	22%	17%	9%	16%	26%
Tebus tribe	8%	16%	13%	7%	13%	43%
Maghara tribe	6%	24%	14%	14%	20%	22%

Study by the International Republican Institute (IRI), November 2011						
	Strongly positive	Somewhat positive	No feeling	Somewhat negative	Strongly negative	Refused to answer/ don't know
Touareg tribe	4%	15%	14%	10%	21%	36%
Ghaddafa tribe	2%	21%	10%	20%	34%	13%
Genturyah tribe	2%	2%	4%	6%	81%	5%

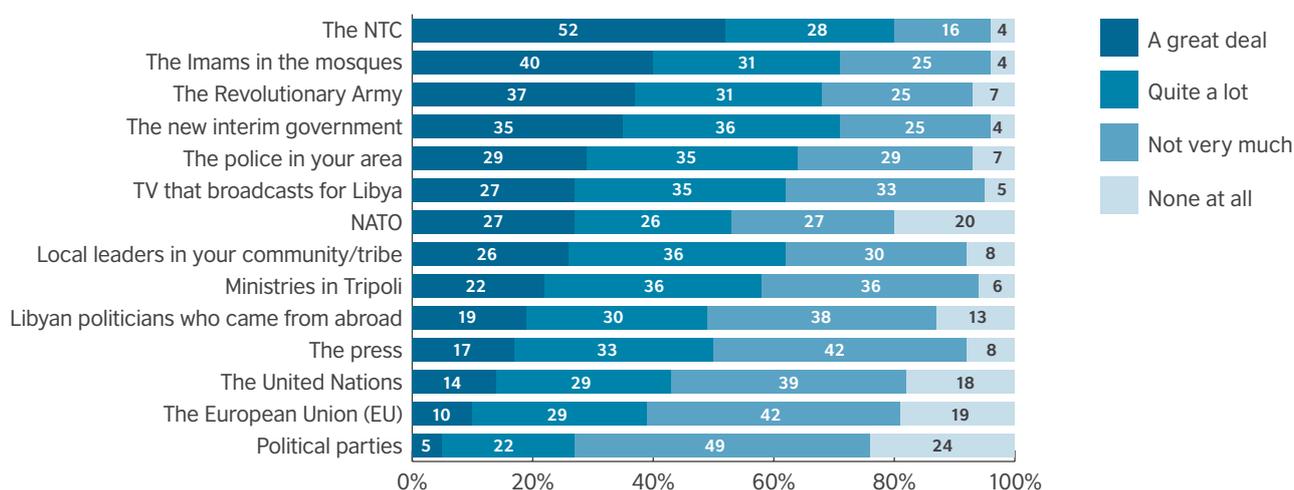
The negative perception of Islamic movements is also shown in another opinion poll conducted in the same period (Oxford Research International, 2012, p. 15) where 57 per cent of respondents believed that the Muslim Brotherhood should not play a role in the new Libya.

Libyan society felt uneasy about the new political process in which opponents disparaged one another. They felt that this could endanger the country's stability and future. The GNC through its early televised sessions was clearly not politically astute and did not understand the public mood and eagerness for a show of unity. Some say the publicised GNC sessions encouraged defamation of aspiring politicians. Also, political rivalry gave room to regionalism.

It was noted in the following poll (Oxford Research International, 2012, p. 17) that people had more trust in NATO, the EU and the UN than in the new political parties.

### People and organisations – trust

Q21B – How much confidence do you have in (organisation): is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?



National survey of Libya 2011–12. Valid N = Variable (1,156 to 2,010)

Base = Respondents who have heard of people/organisation.

Members of different regions competed on settling the point of which city did the most for the revolution and which city suffered the most because of the revolution. People would be occupied for many hours on social-networking sites arguing over trivial matters such as where the first martyr died or how their cities always stood up to Gaddafi. These regional and political rivalries come at a cost. When the new government was formed, it was a test to see how representative it would be both politically and regionally.

On a social level, changes were significant. After 42 years of a deeply entrenched political system, the changes in the social structure of the country were rigorous. All individuals, families, tribes or cities associated with the Gaddafi regime that had once enjoyed social and economic privileges were now outcasts. On the other hand, those who had been outcasts were now in leading political positions. After decades of repression, Libyans

are now faced with significant political questions regarding their future that require them to rediscover their political and social identity. As shown in the public opinion poll result, 82 per cent of respondents believed that they should be very careful when speaking politically with other people and only 18 per cent believed that most people can be trusted (Oxford Research International, 2012, p. 7).

However, the biggest challenge for social cohesion is reconciliation and Libya still has no answer for this. The problems range from families being forced to move by their neighbours, to complete towns being forced to relocate to refugee camps across the country; this was the outcome for some communities supporting, or perceived to have supported Gaddafi during the revolution. According to UNHCR, there are now approximately 35,000 displaced Libyans.

UNHCR 2013 planning figures for Libya					
Type of population	Origin	January 2013		December 2013	
		Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR
Refugees	Various	8,000	8,000	12,000	12,000
Persons in refugee-like situations	Various	5,500	5,500	8,000	5,000
Asylum-seekers	Various	7,000	7,000	8,000	8,000
Returnees (refugees)	Libya	500	500	10	10
IDPs	Libya	47,000	47,000	35,000	35,000
Returnees (IDPs)	Libya	46,570	46,570	12,000	12,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>114,570</b>	<b>114,570</b>	<b>75,010</b>	<b>75,010</b>

There is an expected division across the political spectrum. Political entities differ in their adherence to political Islamic principles.

There is also the issue of where these groups were living before the revolution. One group is the returning opposition, that existed for decades abroad. As they took an early position against Gaddafi, they consider themselves the political gentry. They claim higher purity because they never mingled with the Gaddafi regime. Despite their clear position against Gaddafi's regime, they are looked upon with scepticism by Libyan youth. Most sceptics allude to the fact that they spent decades away from the country and are divorced from the daily problems and aspirations of the average Libyan citizen. Many of our participants believe that this separation makes them incompetent to govern at this perilous juncture. Yet both the head of the GNC and the Prime Minister belong to this group. Mohamed Megarief, the

President of the GNC, was a political outcast for more than 30 years and so is the current Prime Minister, Ali Zidan. There is no unified political orientation among this group.

The other group is the technocrats, who were in Libya. Though this group was never associated with Gaddafi's political machine they held leading positions in a different capacity. This group has the disadvantage of having to continuously defend themselves on how close they were to the former regime. In addition, this group played a key role during the revolution by speaking out against Gaddafi from the platforms of the NTC and the Executive Office. Its most notable members are Mustafa AbdulJalil, the former Minister of Justice, who led the NTC, and Mahmoud Jibril, who headed the Executive Office during the revolution.

Our research shows that despite the noted rise in tribalism and regionalism in the country's social structure, most activists believe that social cohesion has improved following the revolution. Most activists say that the level of cohesion and trust was at its peak during the revolution and up until the liberation when people were united with one common goal: defeating the Gaddafi regime.

Yet trust in groups has been deteriorating as fast as the political process began right after the liberation of Tripoli. Young Libyan activists seem to distrust political entities that are working to advance their own political agendas. However, Libyan activists seem to trust the GNC and the government more than other political parties and groups. The main reason for this is the fact that the GNC is elected and together with the government is continuously scrutinised. Yet some activists are unhappy to give their trust until tangible results have been achieved by the GNC and government. One of the participants, a 27-year old male engineer, said,

**'I trust the new government, and despite the General National Conference mistakes, I still trust them. My trust is assured because their mistakes are visible and there is nothing hidden as it was in the National Transitional Council, where we do not understand a thing; but for the General National Congress, we see their mistakes very clearly, and this does not mean that they are good, but I trust them.'**

# TUNISIA

## THE OLD REGIME IN NEW GARB

It would seem that young people believe there are two conflicting forces in post-revolutionary Tunisia: one that is trying to rebuild the country from scratch and the other that is trying to reproduce the old regime in new garb. This should come as no surprise, as those who monopolised the political scene for so long and were the sole decision-makers cannot be expected to hand over the reins of power without first putting up a fight.

**‘There are those who want to put an end to the system that governed Tunisia from 1956 until 2011, heading towards another Tunisia, which they label the ‘second republic’. The other group wants to regroup again in another format but with the same content and the same old system as before but with different attire. They want to change appearance and enter into political life again.’**

The promises that were made in electoral campaigns cannot be applied. Managing a country is certainly not an easy task: it requires experience and insight that they lack:

**‘The coalition that’s in power, the Troika, they say that they want a national unity government and that the others, the opposition parties, were against that idea because they don’t want to work with them. On the one hand, a country has to be managed and on the other hand, electoral promises need to be respected. They tried to marry two contradictory things. They speak about cleansing and that we had this revolution to get rid of RCD (Ben Ali’s party) figures but then when they were faced with reality they realised that they needed their [the RCD’s] help. They didn’t think about it, they were so sure of themselves and did not think of what it takes to be able to manage a country.’**

Another participant also denounced the influence that former pro-Ben Ali people still have:

**‘They are still playing a role, pulling the threads. Every time we hear about someone getting caught, but then you don’t hear anything else afterwards and others are still on the run. They say ‘he has done this and that’, but we don’t have proof to convict him. There are many people working behind the scenes.’**

The fears and concerns that most participants share over the safety of what one of them dubbed the ‘revolutionary path’ stems from their lack of trust in the government and its inability to set its priorities straight. One participant declared that she mistrusts all of the different political players:

**‘I don’t trust the government at all, or politicians in general. The NCA is one of the mistakes after the revolution. What the NCA is doing now can be done with a much lower budget. I think it’s a waste of money and energy. As I said, I don’t trust politicians in general, whether Islamists, liberals – and I am defiantly not pro-Ben Ali people.’**

Those in power and those in opposition are seen as the anti-heroes of the revolution. They have not gained the trust of the youth and the absence of an alternative to them is what causes some to be quite pessimistic about the outcome of the revolution. Young people fail to trust them because they feel that none of the political parties (those in power and those in opposition) is collaborating for the good of the country, as demonstrated in this focus group discussion:

**‘What is happening now in Tunisia is very normal. People are not collaborating and political parties are not working together. We still do not understand that the country needs everyone, together. If we come to understand each other, even on the political level, even if there are different parties, we will get to agree on one point.’**

**‘But we can’t agree on one point.’**

**‘We can agree on the the good of the country.’**

The trust issue seems to be getting worse, as the government is considered to have failed in meeting the expectations of the people. One participant sizes it up by saying that the government has taken actions that go against the spirit of the revolution. These mistakes are deemed to be uncharacteristic of a democratic body and resemble the practices of the former regime:

**‘What united us was the rise of a new democratically elected government that could respond to the aspirations of the revolution. But now many people are not satisfied and they feel they have been betrayed. One year after the elections a lot of people regret voting for certain groups. They committed mistakes that should not have been committed by a democratic government. Their complacency with violence and their use of bullets against their own people is unacceptable.’**

## DIVIDED PERCEPTIONS OF RETURNING EXILES

A high number of exiled dissidents were able to return to Tunisia after 14 January 2011. While these former militants highlight their activist legitimacy (*Chariaa nithaleya*), those who remained in Tunis, and the youth in particular, deny them this reputation, with some describing them as opportunists riding on the revolution wave:

**‘I think it’s stupid to claim that you are a revolutionary because you were exiled or have done things in the past and now you are more likely to get power, because you were a militant or I don’t know what.’**

Others do recognise the sacrifice of these militants but see that they bear a great responsibility to ensure that the demands of those who did participate in the revolution are fulfilled.

**‘Well yes, they fought in the past but they didn’t die in the revolution. It’s those people who went out between 17 December and 14 January who deserve the biggest share of the revolution’s benefits, yet they don’t get it. It’s the people who came from abroad who actually got the biggest share of the ‘revolution pie’ [...] They have a duty to help the people who helped them get that share, helped them attain positions of power.’**

**‘The exiles portray themselves as heroes of the revolution and as martyrs, but it is those who stayed and stood for their rights that are the true heroes.’**

## NOSTALGIA TOWARDS REVOLUTIONARY UNITY

The unity that was felt during the revolution, where no political affiliations or ideologies infiltrated the slogans chanted by the protestors, began to fade in the pre-election period. Social cohesion is described as almost nonexistent, and differences that were not visible before the revolution now threaten to tear society apart. As expressed by one participant,

**‘Now people are less united. Polarisation creates tension. After 14 January, people were together. And media had a role in it, for example with the story of snipers that made people united. But after that, things changed.’**

Polarisation is a new phenomenon in a Tunisian society that has been exposed to different political ideologies after living for decades under one. According to another participant,

**‘There is polarisation. You are either a secular infidel or not [...] My biggest fear is that this is a theatre play to distract us from the real mess.’**

A major reason behind the crisis in trust is believed to be the failure of the government to introduce a system of accountability during the transition process. The biggest accountability taboo is the identity of the snipers. The Tunisian Army, which supported the revolution and guaranteed the protection of citizens before and after 14 January, is the most popular body in Tunisia. Though rumours have been circulating that the snipers responsible for the killing of hundreds of protestors belong to the army, it is a subject that no one seems to want to discuss:

**‘The political police’s archives haven’t dealt with the issues of corruption or snipers. Everybody knows that they belong to the military, people do, the government also. A lot of blood has been shed, but everybody is turning a blind eye to it.’**

Another participant pointed out the importance of accountability and the reconciliation process to guarantee a smooth transition. He considers these two steps as the basis for a solid transition and warns against the threat of falling into a revenge mentality that will be translated into a form of witch-hunt:

**‘The simplest way to see this is to think that you cannot build a clear future if you don’t have a clear past. It’s as if you’re building a house that fell and crumbled. When you’re going to rebuild it you need to clear up the space and clean the land and then you can build the new house on a solid foundation.’**

The rise of violence by unorganised groups was interpreted by another participant as a consequence of skipping the cleansing process. She criticised the government's complacency in dealing with such issues, and feels that their lack of action in holding people accountable has led to vigilantism.

## FORMER REGIME FIGURES ARE RISING IN POPULARITY

Some participants remarked that the increasing popularity of prominent figures from the former regime is a result of the government's failure. Beji Caid Essebsi, who held several prominent ministerial positions during Bourguiba's reign, is seen to have benefited from the failures of the Troika, for example. Young people consider his recent attainment of becoming a symbol of the revolution as a travesty:

**'We saw this even with Beji Caid Essebsi (the former Prime Minister). He's an ex RCD and for sure he was involved in many torture cases but he's daring and I heard yesterday that he proposed himself to be a candidate for the presidency. He said 'based on the people's will' (*bi nan 3ala talab al jmahir*).'**

Participants explain that it is because of a lack of a better choice in the ranks of the opposition and the Troika that Essebsi's popularity is increasing:

**'Beji Caid Essebsi presented himself and his party as a shelter for those who are afraid of Ennahda's darkness. He made himself out to be the shining light that will give hope back to all Tunisians and shine on all Tunisia. That's why people are supporting him and forgetting about all that he did, but you can't trust someone like that. He worked as a Minister of Interior during Bourguiba's era. He's probably involved in torture crimes.'**

Bel Ali and Bourguiba are often also blamed for not only oppressing people violently but of robbing them of their identity by imposing onto them a state-imposed vision of what they wanted for society. The participants in our study declare that now people are choosing different values and distancing themselves from those imposed by the former regime:

**'Some have an identity crisis. They want to live in France while they are in Tunisia. People now have more pronounced values, of pan-Arabism, Maghrebism, values no longer related to just athletic achievements. The wrong traditions died.'**

People seem to have developed a more acute sense of nationalism as well. Another participant rejoiced in the recovery of the people of the pride that Ben Ali had managed to take away from them.

**'People now take pride in being Tunisians. I am very happy about this. This was one of the most horrible crimes that Ben Ali committed, he took away our pride but we have it back now. But it is sad to see that political leaders chose to focus on issues related to identity rather than focusing on the development problem. It is, after all, the reason for all this.'**

## INITIATIVES TOWARDS SOCIAL COHESION NEED TO BE SUSTAINABLE

The attempts of certain parties to create chaos were identified by participants as the biggest threat to the reform process. For some, it is the parties that are behind the creation of separation:

**'Even with all these clashes, you feel that people are still united. I feel that the separation is between the political parties, not between the people.'**

Some deny the existence of a social crisis in Tunisia, but admit that there are attempts by the political class to create one:

**'The opposition is exaggerating and scaring the government by calling it a foreign agent that has betrayed its country and consider themselves [the opposition] as the true revolutionaries. Even in the opposition they are pointing fingers at one another, calling each other traitors. They all consider themselves as the pure revolutionaries and label the rest as traitors.'**

A fear shared by many is that the absence of national unity will result in a deadlock when it comes to adopting the constitution. They think that the Troika and the opposition won't manage to reach a consensus concerning the constitution:

**'They need to assume fully their social and political responsibilities and put their petty differences aside. I am afraid they won't be able to draft a consensual constitution.'**

According to one participant, social peace is achieved through revolutionary speech, not a dividing one. He considered the youth to be the safety valve of the revolution, ensuring social peace:

**'Instability is linked to anti-revolutionary stakeholders. Social peace needs to be guaranteed through real revolutionary discourse, not one that would divide the country. The youth was the safety valve, constantly defusing a ticking bomb. For stability you need to ensure there is development.'**



Statue of Ibn Khaldoun surrounded by barb wire. January 2011



CHAPTER SEVEN:  
**AL THAWRA  
MOSTAMERRA  
– THE PATH  
FORWARD**



Youth in El Azhar Park

# EGYPT

In our study, we noted that youth perceptions of the future are widely influenced by their political positions and affiliations. Scepticism is prominent among all participants, who feel great uncertainty about their future. In their view, the current leadership will not lead to meaningful change in Egypt. Further, an immense concern is present that a Mubarak-style regime will be set in place again. The Egyptian revolution, according to these activists, did not end and shall continue. A second revolution is expected, since they feel that neither progress nor reform is taking place. In addition, there is deep consternation that people will not continue to choose peaceful methods of revolt, and that a second revolution will lead to violent confrontation between protesters and the formal authorities.

**‘After the revolution I thought it was an issue of just a couple of years and we would reach the new Egypt we had dreamed of. Now I discover I was wrong. It will take many long years and a lot of struggle to achieve our dreams.’**

**‘It will take not less than five years of instability to start to build the Egypt we want. It will not be easy and will require great patience.’**

**‘I’m not frustrated but I do fear the future. Regardless of how optimistic or persistent I am, I don’t know what awaits me tomorrow. I don’t have the power to keep myself optimistic in this context of uncertainty.’**

**‘I don’t want to live to see the day when all of the sacrifices that have been made amount to nothing.’**

# LIBYA

Young Libyans describe the future as ambiguous and unknown. They have a lot of optimism and hope, yet they are cautious about making any confident statements about the progress of the country. They are conscious of how critical the current process is in determining the future of the country. The range of possible outcomes is wide.

It was noted among young Libyans that the level of frustration and disappointment runs deep. All of the respondents were concerned over the current perilous conditions and blamed armed groups for hindering the political transition process. Though the government promised to put a stop to the rampant signs of disorder that plagued the country, many fear that Libya will be sundered by centralisation and lack of political progress. The government is criticised for making decisions that pander to the *thumar* and their petulant behaviour.

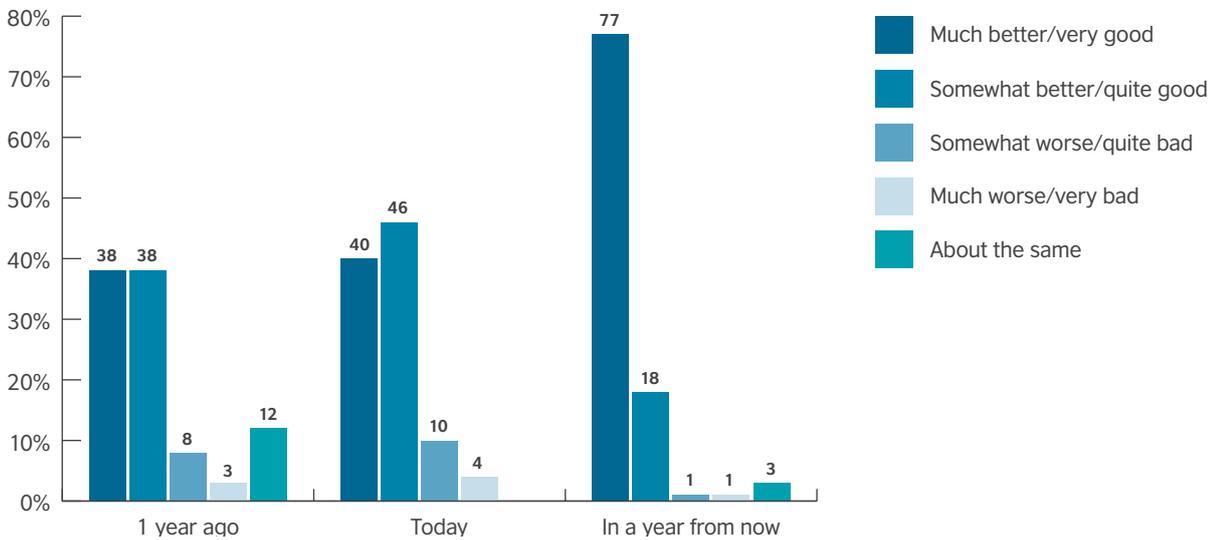
To understand the level of frustration among Libyan society, it is worth reviewing the following opinion poll from 2012 (Oxford Research International, 2012, pp. 1–2), which shows the level of optimism among respondents:

**Life satisfaction in past, present and future**

Q1 – Taking all things together, would you say you are...

Q2A – Compared to a year ago, overall are things in your life much better now, somewhat better, about the same, somewhat worse or much worse?

Q2B – What is our expectation for how things in your life will be overall in a year from now? Will they be much better, somewhat better, about the same, somewhat worse or much worse?

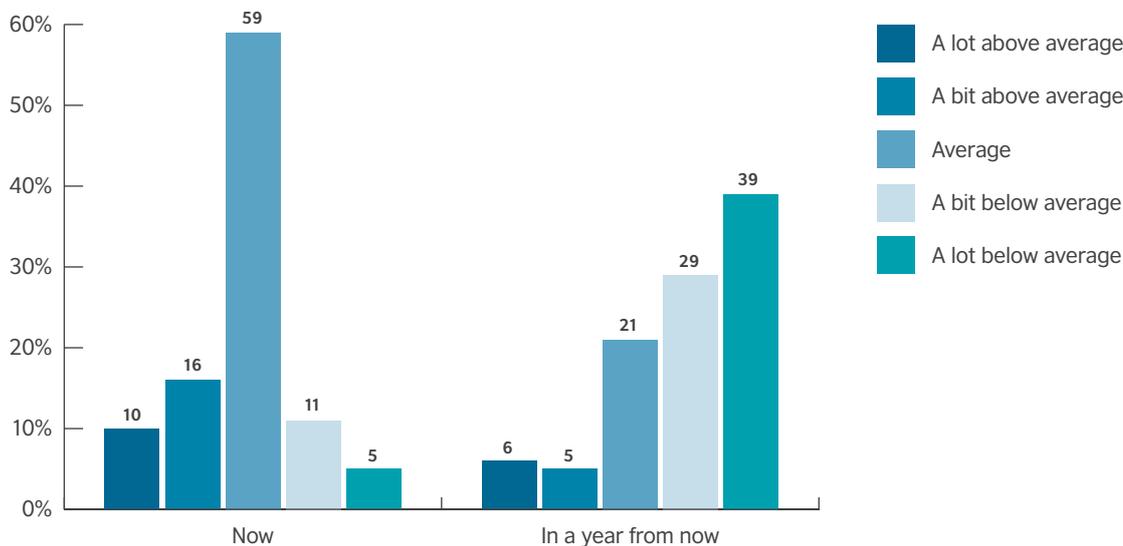


National survey of Libya 2011–12. Valid N = 2,050 (Today), Valid N = 2,029 (In a year from now)  
Base = All respondents.

### Standard of living in present and future

Q3A – How would you judge your household's standard of living compared with other households in your community?

Q3B – What do you expect your household's standard of living to be in 12 months time?



National survey of Libya 2011–12. Valid N = 2,053 (Q3a). Valid N = 1,981 (Q3b).

Base = All respondents.

However, very few developments happened, apart from the significant milestone of the election of the General National Congress.

The political transition process proved to be more strenuous than anyone expected. Upon the election of the GNC, the Libyan people were tantalised by the possibility of achieving political stability and progress. Most Libyans expected that their aspirations for a stable and peaceful transition had finally come to fruition. However, the GNC, as seen in its early public sessions,

was clearly not politically astute. The tipping point came when GNC members discussed their financial and other benefits before they faced the country's challenges. They did not choose to be modest when allocating salaries to themselves. In addition, most people did not appreciate how some members become quite belligerent in their discussions in the GNC sessions. On the other hand, the GNC feels that it is continuously faced with pointless criticism. GNC defendants argue that most people had quixotic expectations of the revolution.

The high level of expectations for the GNC elections was also captured in a focus group discussion researched by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), which concluded that: 'despite concerns over a potentially flawed electoral process, many Libyans have high expectations for governance in the post-election period. Most respondents realise that it may be too soon to judge the GNC. Respondents questioned whether the recent performance of the GNC was a full systematic failure or a mere aberration. However, some respondents are starting to doubt if it is beyond the GNC's capabilities to affect the country's progress. Most activists mentioned security as the main priority that the country should focus upon. They believe that the political transformation process is highly dependent on the ability of the government to maintain security.'

This 25-year old female participant, who is a teacher from Benghazi, best described the level of anxiety when she said,

**'If I get an opportunity, I will leave the country. Libya's future is ambiguous and every time we start to stabilise something comes out and ruins it for us. For example, we just started to settle and then the police HQ issue started, and then each time someone is killed and an explosion happens. There is a plan to destabilise the country and our future is linked to the country's future.'**

Others warn against an obsession with security and the need to focus instead on economic development and building the state. They believe that increased economic activities will gradually improve the security situation. Most of the young activists in Libya are optimistic regarding their own futures and are consumed very little by worries. They describe their own future careers with confidence and optimism in far more positive terms than they describe the future of their country.

# TUNISIA

The change that would ‘complete’ Tunisia’s revolution is perceived by most of the activists in our study as a societal change in mentality needed to revolutionise youth roles and leadership in the country. For most participants, their future role is envisioned primarily in the education sector and in civil society. Our research shows that the revolution also influenced the scholastic orientation of young people. Fields of study connected to the revolution, such as civic engagement, politics, human rights and international relations, have become quite popular. The youth clearly desire exploring new fields of interest that would enable them to learn how to benefit their country.

**‘I want to do my grad school education abroad in international relations and political science and then benefit my own country with the skills I will acquire there. I really need to help empower this country by learning more.’**

The near future remains a challenge to most participants, as they see a lot of issues ahead that need to be dealt with, such as security, transparency, political and administrative reform and social cohesion. Some participants fear a return to a dictatorship and hope for a democratic constitution and for all political parties to ‘work for the good of the country, then Tunisia can be a diverse country that is modern and looks like Turkey’. Others, however, believe that Tunisia can never return to authoritarian rule and that ‘the era of dictatorship is over for good’.

**‘In the long term, I have hope; history won’t be back and things won’t be the same. In the short term, for me the problem is with the elite and the political representatives. We need to have an alternative; one that empowers youth to bring a new way of doing things, even at a small scale in our non-governmental organisations.’**

Others are confident that Tunisia will rise above the current instabilities and stay on an overall positive trajectory into the future. They explain that the country has surpassed many hardships before and that this one will not be unsurpassable either.

**‘Tunisia did not crumble during colonialism or the many financial crises it has gone through, it’s not going to crumble now.’**

The revolution in Tunisia was a cry for dignity. A dignity that can be achieved through work and a policy that promotes social justice. It is a social movement asking for change and making the fulfillment of social-equality demands that the protestors raised a central issue. This means looking beyond the urban centres and developing the areas that were left marginalised by the former government and making the country a place that is safe for investment and job creation. The youth recognise that this is not an easy goal, but feel optimistic that through a 'spirit of unison' an effective roadmap for change can be implemented. Part of this spirit of unison needs to be facilitated by overcoming prejudices and creating an environment of social cohesion that can surpass the different ideological divides currently facing Tunisians.

**'If we forget about ideologies and difference and we put only one objective: Tunisia in 20 years, we will get better.'**

Most participants identified the lack of security as a pressing issue that needs to be fixed to ensure economic and overall stability. However, despite the current difficulties faced by the economy, the revolution helped to create many job opportunities that were not previously available and this positive impact of the revolution on employment has mainly benefited the young people. It also helped in opening young people's eyes to new job prospects that they would not have thought of before:

**'The revolution has opened a lot of doors for many people. Now even if you can't get a job you can at least be active in civil society and explore all the potential you have inside of you.'**

For most of the participants, the future is very promising on a personal level, as the revolution was entrepreneurial and it helped foster a spirit of entrepreneurship:

**'At least now you know that there is something waiting for you. Before people were pessimistic about their future. We couldn't really dream you know? But now you can.'**



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## SEIZING THE MOMENT: TOWARDS THE MEANINGFUL EMPOWERMENT OF YOUTH IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Our study highlights the gap between the expectations and aspirations of young people in light of the revolutionary promises made in 2011–12 on the one hand, and their actual experiences on the other. The analysis explores myths around youth empowerment and action in the region, and throws light on young people's frustrations, as well as the resilience of their hopes, despite a growing sense of social, political and economic exclusion. The fact that these two elements, hope and frustration, co-exist and surface repeatedly across our study points to the fact that the current moment is one to be seized – young people have matured politically, some of their illusions have been shattered but they are still willing to devote a large part of their energies towards improving the situation. The aim of these recommendations is to outline where it might be worthwhile to focus support for youth, how to enable them without stifling them, and how to make the most of the learning that has occurred, as well as the energy that is still present. This particular configuration of power, energy and commitment will not last forever – these recommendations are made in part to avoid a situation where realism turns to cynicism, and the resources and creativity of a large part of the population in these three countries go to waste.

Discussing youth issues does not necessarily translate into improving their lives. Far from it. The very idea of 'youth' in the region runs the risk of becoming nothing but an emblematic discourse, a theoretical and political nod to the roots of recent change, but with little practical follow-up and little impact on the targeted demographic itself. There is a need for informed action grounded in an understanding of how young people perceive the challenges around them. A number of themes were addressed in three countries of the Arab Awakening; similarities across all three have been noted, coupled with a recognition of the specificity and complexity of each context. The seven themes that structure our research are deeply interconnected and their division into chapters is the reflection of our analytical concerns, as well as our commitment to readability. In no way does this structure suggest that these themes can be addressed separately.

Eight months of interviewing and analysis reveal a major gap between an ever-present youth discourse and the failure to empower young people within political, social and policy spheres in reality. Hope lingers in the background, but remains unfulfilled – *Al thawra mostamerra*. But it is clear that while young people still feel marginalised by the political leadership, they have managed to carve out a youth-friendly space within civil society, though more so in informal and non-institutionalised initiatives than in formal ones. Informal initiatives and movements, however, run the risk of diffusion, and their consolidation into functioning entities is now threatened by a restrictive regulatory environment. For example the latest draft of the NGO law in Egypt forces restrictions on funding as well as activities, and that may bring the youthful energy of civil society to an end unless it is channelled and supported effectively in ways that guarantee both its continued survival, and above all, its impact on the lives of these countries' youth and the wider society.

Paradoxically, youth initiatives are also threatened by the nature of the support they receive – support that is often well-meaning and genuine but seldom focused or effective. These recommendations are designed to address these twin challenges.

Our research findings point to one overarching conclusion: a meaningful and practical youth agenda is critical to the transition that is being experienced by the entire Arab region. There is a need for an integrated, multicomponent strategy that can support youth initiatives; consolidate the learning and skills acquired over the past few years into functioning, resilient organisations; and help to bridge the generational (and other) gaps that polarise populations in each of these countries and exclude youth from the crucial spheres of decision-making and professional life. In sum, far more concerted efforts need to be made to address issues of youth social, political and economic exclusion (including along gender lines). These initiatives need to involve different stakeholders in their formulation and in their implementation phase, and operate on regional- and

country-specific levels. An informed, evidence-based approach to youth empowerment that would include young people as key partners in policy formulation and not only as a mere target group is necessary. That said, our recommendations focus on three key areas: policy and representation, addressing major trust gaps (generational, media and gender), and supporting existing structures of youth civic engagement, both formal and informal.

## AREA I – FOR YOUTH WITH YOUTH: POLICY, REPRESENTATION AND INCLUSION

Meaningful empowerment of youth requires a shift from a focus on the incremental to a more holistic and sustainable approach. This will require the involvement of different stakeholders, mainly policymakers, civil society and business leaders, as well as youth, in addressing young people's presence in political, civic, social and economic spheres through a comprehensive long-term strategy. The instability of the sociopolitical environment is a challenge: the majority of political and social actors are reactive rather than proactive, made to pause and await clarity of vision. Nevertheless, in such an environment of flux, there is an opportunity to revisit and restructure the machinery responsible for the marginalisation of youth from the public sphere.

Alongside a comprehensive multi-stakeholder strategy, the creation of innovative channels can help fast-track and sustain young people's integration. Politically and civically, young people in the region need to be **informed, heard and represented** in policy formulation; and economically and socially, young people need to be **integrated through economic participation and integration**.

### a. Inform and engage

Significant attention needs to be paid to developing practical mechanisms through which youth are able to track and understand policies that will affect them directly, as well as the environment in which they live. Campaigns, online and otherwise, with a wide

geographic scope and a participatory approach that extends beyond the capital should be run to keep youth informed about new and existing policies.

‘Rehlat Watan: Journey of a Nation’ – an example from Libya

In December 2012, Lawyers For Justice in Libya (LFJL) and H2O, a youth-led organisation in Tripoli that targets social and civic change in Libya, held constitutional awareness bus tours aimed at informing the public on the drafting process of Libya’s constitution. The journey began in Benghazi, the seat of the revolution, on 21 November 2012, with the plan to visit about 20 towns. At each stop, Deestori (‘my constitution’) guides and volunteers hosted events for locals, such as holding town-hall discussions, visiting schools, hospitals and shopping areas. More information is available at [www.libyaherald.com/2012/12/08/ngos-organise-constitution-awareness-programmes/](http://www.libyaherald.com/2012/12/08/ngos-organise-constitution-awareness-programmes/)

#### b. Integrate and reward

Networks of young people involved in policy analysis, policy formulation and policy evaluation should be supported and extended, as well as systematised. Youth should be recognised as providing vital information to the policy-making field and its contributors should be recognised as leaders in their field.

Example:

The Young Arab Analyst Network (YAANI) is a British Council initiative that aims to promote the active engagement of young people in shaping public policy in MENA through informed policy analysis and policy debate. The project was piloted in 2012 in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia and the pilot phase has confirmed that this initiative is needed and widely welcomed. The first cohort (38) of YAANI participants has been through a four-module training programme and produced policy briefs supported by mentors that was showcased during a MENA Public Policy Forum at Chatham House in September 2012. The YAANI project has the potential to transform how young people engage with the policy process and will

empower them to include their voice in forums and political structures from which they have previously been excluded.

## AREA II – ADDRESSING THE GAPS

The picture that emerges from the research is one in which gaps rather than connections structure the relationship between young people and the rest of society. Some of these gaps (religious, gender, economic) extend well beyond the realm of young people and affect the whole of the societies in question, but the research highlights the particular ways in which these are being experienced by youth and the specific manner in which they affect them. Our recommendations focus on the specific ways in which they can be addressed for this demographic.

#### c. The trust gap

##### Start with the media

Our research suggests that plummeting levels of trust in institutions are a feature of young people across our three case studies. Declining trust creates more gaps, less dialogue and more frustration. One of the key factors in creating or undermining trust is the set of institutions responsible for allowing information to circulate, and dialogue and understanding to emerge – the media. Yet trust in the media is dangerously low in all three countries.

We suggest supporting the development of a Media Charter of Ethics for self-regulation. Entirely voluntary, such a charter would allow some champion organisations to send a strong signal to their potential audiences about the standards to which they abide, the code of ethics and their professionalism. This can be in the form of a pilot effort to teach basic journalism skills to unemployed youth at a local level to help them to start up community newspapers or newsletters. The effort might be funded by local business leaders in exchange for advertising, but also promoted as part of corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts directed towards youth engagement.

### Tackle funders and grant-makers

Systems of support are increasingly viewed with suspicion, not just by the authorities but by young people themselves. Chief among the suspects are the grant-making organisations and funders who cannot afford to lose the trust of the people they wish to help.

*A strong framework for transparency, accountability and the collating of research results is needed. This could mean re-visiting the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), a forum for selected OECD member states, in order to discuss issues surrounding aid, development and poverty reduction in developing countries. The DAC could be turned into an effective framework that creates more robust, resilient and effective youth NGO systems.*

### d. The generational gap

The gap between generations is one of the key drivers of frustration in our three case-study countries: young people feel they were at the forefront of change and that the fruits of the revolutions have been taken away from them. The gap between an older elite and these drivers of change is one that needs to be urgently and directly addressed. Empowering young people and creating channels for their contribution to policy needs to be matched by efforts to bring the generations together. Two possible strategies strike us as good starting points:

- **Localising intergenerational dialogue.** This could include a number of round-table discussions and workshops at governorate level in order to address issues of concern, with input from different parties, as well as **a campaign for intergenerational partnerships** – in schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods.
- **Developing intergenerational programmes** that bring different generations into conversation with one another. Mentoring or coaching programmes in the workplace are an example. These programmes should focus on joint activities and the exchange of skills.

### e. The gender gap

Finally, the gender gap, discussed in varying terms across the three countries, is one that continues to divide not only the sexes but across generations and within groups. It is an issue of growing salience for which, despite some efforts, there is no proper space for discussion. Youth, for example, have knowledge to be shared with elders, especially in the IT and social-media arenas. In particular, there is no safe space for the discussion of women and faith; nor is there a system for the monitoring and protection of gains made by women thus far. Both need to be brought into existence.

- The creation of mentoring programs for women to pass on their expertise and confidence

Example: 50 foot Women

50 foot Women ([www.50footwomen.co.uk](http://www.50footwomen.co.uk)) is a mentoring project that facilitates thoughtful, supportive and productive mentoring relationships between inspirational senior professionals and talented young women. The aim is to equip young women with the skills, confidence and networks they need to gain quicker, fairer and better access to professional life. This is done by facilitating supportive one-to-one relationships that are specifically tailored to each mentee's profile.

50 foot Women mentors provide a point of trusted professional contact, offering the expertise, support and encouragement mentees need in order to set and work towards targeted goals, to address challenges and to pursue opportunities.

- The creation of a **network of 'sentinels'** – support for webpages, networks, groups and round-tables tasked with monitoring developments and with raising the alarm when there is a danger of rollback.

### AREA III – IMPROVING AND SUPPORTING FRAMEWORKS OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT (FORMAL AND INFORMAL)

The youth in our three studies need support that is tailored to their specific talents – support that makes the most of their creativity and spontaneity but that helps them to build more resilient and effective organisations and organisational leadership. The following three recommendations can help.

- **Maximising the role of student unions as a nucleus of change.** Networking student unions across the national level and providing channels of exchange of expertise across the region. An expansion of the role of student unions beyond university campuses is also key: they need to have access to different policy actors and to be integrated within public discourse.
- **Developing youth-friendly grants.** It was clear that young people found some of the international grants offered to them challenging to apply for and to secure. Donors are advised to make a shift in their work towards opening up a space for young people who wish to develop their initiatives into institutions and organisations by building their capacity to write proposals and by simplifying reporting requirements.
- **Developing protected spaces or ‘incubators’ for young people** in order to test out creative ideas, whether entrepreneurial or related to addressing social problems. These should be localised and supported by businesses that will benefit from identifying promising talent for their enterprises.

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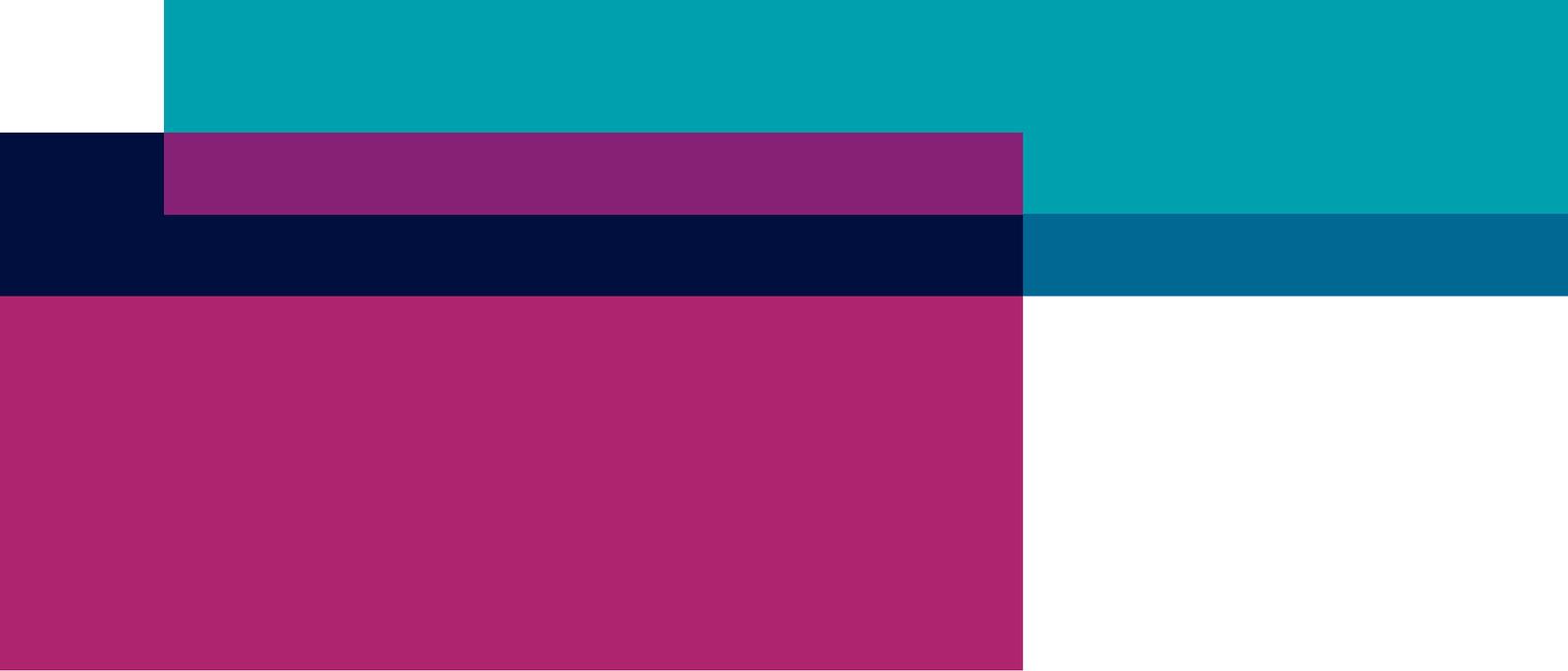
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