CURRENT SITUATION IN TUNISIA

Tunisia’s democratic transition, often hailed as the only real success of the Arab Spring revolutions of 2011, remains at a critical intersection of conflict and peacebuilding. While Tunisia made significant political progress with parliamentary and presidential elections in 2014, the country confronts threats of violent extremism rooted both domestically and in the surrounding region. The government has focused its recent reform efforts on border security and on development policies to alleviate underlying causes of conflict in communities far outside Tunis. With a thriving civil society and newly elected Parliament, Tunisia serves in its region as an example of perseverance and patience, steadily progressing in its democratic transition.

USIP’S WORK

USIP supports a sustainable peace in Tunisia by engaging local, national, regional, and international actors in peacebuilding, using both top-down and bottom-up approaches. By conducting analysis, programming, and policy development, our programs are helping Tunisians to develop and reform civil society and government institutions. The Institute’s recent work in Tunisia includes:

**Developing a Corps of Peacebuilders:** USIP offers training and support to Tunisian professionals, including civil society leaders, lawyers, and journalists, who serve as mediators and facilitators to non-violently manage and resolve conflicts in their communities. USIP helps these peacebuilders through the Alliance of Tunisian Facilitators, a network for them to share conflict management resources, best practices, and lessons learned. Also, USIP promotes cooperation among experienced peace facilitators from across the Middle East and North Africa through a Regional Facilitators Forum. The forum helps these practitioners share experiences and improve their skills. It will develop a handbook of best practices for use in the design, facilitation, and management of dialogues, including in Tunisia.

**Justice and Security Dialogues:** USIP recently launched a program to facilitate dialogue and build relationships between police and the communities they serve in Tunisia, aiming to help them jointly identify and solve security challenges through transparent and participatory processes. Similar dialogues have helped reduce legacies of mistrust between communities and police services in other countries. The program in Tunisia also seeks to develop peer-support networks across the Middle East and North Africa, and with countries beyond the region.

**Security and Justice Sector Reform:** USIP works with government and civil society professionals across the Maghreb and Sahel who are seeking to reform criminal justice systems to better protect the rights of citizens rather than the power of regimes. USIP provides training and helps facilitate dialogue among these reformers, notably to encourage local and regional ownership of these efforts. USIP supports the Regional Task Force of Security Sector Development, made up of civil society and security practitioners, to help them apply best practices in advancing reform.

**Building a ‘Rule-of-Law Culture’:** With advisors from the Middle East and Africa, USIP developed a training course for participants in criminal justice systems from those regions. Those taking the course include judges, prosecutors, lawyers, civil society leaders, and police, prison and government...
officials. The course, being tested this year at the new International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law in Malta, promotes an exchange of knowledge among participants. It uses real-life case studies and problem-solving exercises to explore how a “culture” of the rule of law can strengthen the ability of governments and their societies to address justice and security issues.

Improving Border Security in North Africa: This project analyzes the economic, political, ideological, and social causes of violent extremism and crime along the borders of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. With local participants, USIP assesses capacities to address these challenges, and convenes workshops and dialogues to help them approach issues from a strategic perspective.

**COURSES AT USIP**

In Washington, USIP’s Academy for International Conflict Management and Peacebuilding provides education, training, and resources for practitioners. It also offers training in conflict zones abroad and distance education and training online. The Academy in 2014 hosted a course focused on North Africa—**New Peacekeeping Strategies Following Violent Regime Change**—which examined approaches for the international community to help emerging governments control their national borders, police their cities, and protect their citizens.

**USIP EVENTS**

USIP frequently gathers scholars, experts, policymakers, and elected officials to analyze global events and peacebuilding efforts. In June 2013, USIP hosted a discussion with Hamadi Jebali, Tunisia’s first post-revolution prime minister. In February 2014 and September 2014, USIP hosted Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi, the leader of Ennahda, the country’s Islamist political party.

**USIP PUBLICATIONS**

USIP staff and experts publish in-depth reports as well as timely policy briefs that offer policymakers, practitioners, and scholars a distillation of expert research, lessons learned, and solutions from USIP’s work around the world. Recent publications on Tunisia include:

**Border Security Challenges in the Grand Maghreb** (May 2015): Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco—which have struggled since independence to fully control their frontiers—face new border security challenges following the Arab Spring, notably the erosion of state power in Libya. The long-established smuggling of food, fuel, and tobacco now includes a more dangerous and violent transport of drugs and weapons. Terrorist groups use these networks to build their region-wide presence. This report—based on interviews with border community leaders, journalists, NGO personnel, and border security officials—suggests new strategies for the Maghreb states. They must work collectively (rather than just bilaterally); improve their technical border-control capacities; and address the economic and social needs of border communities.

**Participatory and Inclusive Constitution Making** (January 2015): The countries of the Arab Spring struggle with societal divisions and citizens’ demands for transparency, accountability, and greater political, social, and economic rights. Drafting new national constitutions has been a central challenge. Tunisia’s process, while imperfect and still incomplete, shows that true public participation and inclusion—which goes beyond exercises in public relations—can lead to a more legitimate social compact and a more durable peace.