CURRENT SITUATION

Tunisia’s transition to democracy remains incomplete and under stress. Since the presidential measures to suspend the parliament, dismiss the government and draft a new constitution were enacted in 2021, socioeconomic conditions have continued to deteriorate, and risks of unrest have increased. Meanwhile, the ambitions of the 2011 revolution for rule of law, accountability, economic prosperity and human dignity are far from being realized. USIP works with Tunisians to improve national and local governance and security, rebuild trust and strengthen civil society.

USIP’S WORK

USIP works directly with the Tunisian government and civil society to improve governance, manage conflict, implement security sector reforms, rebuild trust between citizens and the state, and help create conditions more conducive to a democratic transition. The Institute also conducts research that informs future programs, analyzes ongoing efforts and helps develop new approaches to peacebuilding in Tunisia. From its offices in Tunis and Washington, D.C., USIP convenes thought leaders, government officials and international visitors.

Localized Peacebuilding Processes with National Impact

Drawing from its pioneering work in local conflict resolution and violence prevention, USIP established the Tunisian Coalition of Facilitators (TCF). Together, USIP and the TCF develop and implement field-tested peacebuilding processes in locations where conflicts...
have national and international implications. The TCF includes national and local peacebuilders who understand local conflict dynamics. USIP empowers these leaders to resolve underlying conflicts that affect community and national stability. Examples of the TCF’s peacebuilding work include:

**Douar Hicher.** In this marginalized community, a heavy-handed response by security forces to high levels of violent extremist recruitment has contributed to the community’s fragility. USIP and TCF are building resilience by empowering women from the community to reintegrate families who have been alienated due to ties with extremists, as well as address drivers of radicalization in collaboration with local authorities and security forces.

**Medenine.** In this southern region, TCF addresses a major trigger of conflict in Tunisia: the violent relationship between youth and security forces. USIP and TCF have led a reconciliation process that culminated in the creation of a sustainable conflict mediation unit (CMU). The CMU actively prevents and addresses daily emerging tensions between security officers and youth from marginalized neighborhoods.

**Ben Guerdane.** In 2016, an ISIS insurgency broke out in the Tunisian border town of Ben Guerdane. USIP’s conflict analysis revealed that post-revolution policies affecting informal trade drove conflict and fragility in the area. As a result, the TCF has worked with informal vendors and local government to mediate the longstanding tensions between them.

**Supporting Community-Focused Policing**
Internal security forces are on the front lines of Tunisia’s political transition. They are critical to protecting communities and deepening their trust in elected governance after decades of authoritarian rule. To sustain Tunisia’s democratic institutions, the nation’s security forces need to become inclusive, citizen-centric, skilled in handling emerging security challenges such as unrest and violent extremism, and proactive in institutionalizing reforms.

With these objectives in mind, USIP supports the internal security forces in reforming training systems. The Institute is providing technical assistance as they transform their training systems to develop a professional, public service-oriented security sector.

**Improving Regional Border Security**
Informal trade with Libya is the largest source of livelihood in southern Tunisia. Since 2015, USIP has engaged with North African governments on human-centered border security approaches. Following the failed ISIS uprising in Ben Guerdane in 2016, USIP engaged with Tunisian border stakeholders to analyze conflict drivers along the border with Libya. In 2020, USIP’s Tunisia and Libya programs co-launched a research project that builds on previous conflict assessments and provides a more comprehensive understanding of fragility, conflict and opportunities for programming in the Tunisian and Libyan border regions. The research project is implemented in partnership with U.N. Women and the World Food Program.