CURRENT SITUATION IN TUNISIA

Tunisia’s democratic transition remains at a critical intersection of conflict and peacebuilding. While the country made significant political progress with parliamentary and presidential elections in 2014, it confronts threats of violent extremism with roots at home and in the surrounding region. The government is focused on border security and on development policies to alleviate underlying causes of conflict in communities far outside Tunis. Despite recent economic and security challenges, Tunisia continues to show perseverance and patience in its transition.

USIP’S WORK

USIP supports 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 develop and reform civil society and government institutions. The Institute’s recent work in Tunisia includes:

Alliance of Tunisian Facilitators: USIP offers training and support to Tunisian professionals, including civil society leaders, lawyers, and journalists, who serve as mediators and facilitators to manage and resolve conflicts in their communities without violence. The network provides a vehicle for them to share conflict-management resources and experiences to advance this work.

Middle East and North Africa Regional Forum of Facilitators: This forum fosters regional peer learning among experienced, practicing facilitators by helping them share their experience and improve their skills. It will develop a resource book of proven practices for use in the design, facilitation, and management of dialogues, including in Tunisia.

Justice and Security Dialogues: USIP has begun facilitating dialogues to 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.

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. Working with border security officials from each of the three countries, USIP provides frameworks and analytical exercises to assess capacities to address these issues from a strategic perspective.

Training on Establishing a Community Policing Ethos for Countering Violent Extremism: USIP’s curriculum in policing and countering violent extremism is helping senior police leaders in the region, including in Tunisia, develop strategies to enact and institutionalize reforms in their countries.

Mediated Intervention with Student Unions: Since July 2012, violence has erupted on multiple occasions at the University of Manouba just outside of Tunis between student groups aligned with the country’s two main political parties. Members of the Alliance of Tunisian Facilitators, working with university administrators, are engaging student union leadership from both parties with the aim of establishing an ongoing dialogue to resolve conflicts without violence.

Regional Taskforce for Security Sector Development: Fifteen government, law enforcement, and
civil society representatives from across the Maghreb and Sahel, including Tunisia, advance institutional reforms through individual and collective initiatives that promote rule of law and counter violent extremism.

**USIP EVENTS**

USIP frequently gathers scholars, experts, policymakers, and elected officials to analyze global events and peacebuilding efforts. Recent events on Tunisia include:

**Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution: On 5th Anniversary, What's Next?** Tunisian Ambassador Faycal Gouia joined experts from USIP, the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the Project on Middle East Democracy in January 2016 to discuss the issues facing his country and how the international community can help.

**Can Tunisia's Economy Survive the Terror Attacks?** Houcine Abassi, a leader of a labor union in the Nobel Prize-winning National Dialogue Quartet of organizations that averted a descent into violence in Tunisia's post-Arab Spring transition, reflected on Tunisia's economy and international aid in a November 2015 event that also featured a Harvard economist and a research director at the Project on Middle East Democracy.

**Democratizing Under Fire: Can Tunisia Show the Way?** Sheikh Rachid Ghannouchi, the leader of the Islamist movement Nahda, addressed how Tunisia can consolidate its progress in an October 2015 event with the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy.

**Beyond Security: Why a U.S.-Tunisian Strategic Partnership Matters** Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi examined the values and interests shared by his country and the U.S. in a May 2015 address and Q&A during his first visit to the U.S. since taking office.

**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:

**Regional Security through Inclusive Reform in the Maghreb and the Sahel** (December 2015): Governments across the region are struggling to manage a security environment fundamentally transformed by the Arab Spring. Their efforts to secure their territories and the work of civil society organizations to create accountable and transparent security institutions have proceeded almost wholly divorced from each other. This Peace Brief makes the case for working regionally and through community-security partnerships to address the twin challenges of security and reform.

**National Dialogues: A Tool for Conflict Transformation?** (October 2015): National dialogue is an increasingly popular mechanism for conflict resolution and political transformation. It can broaden debate regarding a country's trajectory beyond the usual elite decision makers; however, it can also be misused and manipulated by leaders to consolidate their power. This Peace Brief includes principles to strengthen such processes and considerations for international supporters, using Tunisia as one of the case studies.

**Toward a Rule of Law Culture** (December 2015): This guide is the product of a two-year partnership between USIP and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau for Counterterrorism to design, develop, and pilot a foundation rule of law course for the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law. The 5-day pilot courses were delivered between November 2014 and July 2015 to mid- and senior-level legal, penal, police, judicial, and civil society personnel from 15 countries across Africa and the Middle East.